CRITICAL HUMANISM IN ACTION: IDEOLOGY AND PEDAGOGY AT THE NEW SCHOOL OF DAWSON COLLEGE

- A report of research on the developing ideology and pedagogy of The New School of Dawson College -

by

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The New School
Dawson College
Montréal

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INTRODUCTION

For the past thirty-two years I have been an educator, for the last fifteen of which I have worked at The New School of Dawson College. When we started in 1973, there were numerous "alternative programmes" in Montreal, to say nothing of North America. While we at The New School shared with some programmes a critique of the status quo in education, we also had many differences of response and focus.

Over time, it became clear to me that the ranks of alternative education were thinning and had been replaced by a movement of "back-to-basics" and the revival of the notion of "education-in-reference-to-the-great-canon." These cultural chestnuts,often tarted up as "innovations" to be lucratively marketed by producers of educational materials, were no news to us. We had always been concerned with improving literacy through our emphasis on literacy across the curriculum. As for the "great canon" approach, we had always considered the "classics" an excellent object of study for those sutdents interested in them. However, it should be obvious at this historical juncture when the nature of traditional "western knowledge" with its pretension of objectivity is being widely questioned, that the blitheness of the "great canon approach" cannot be accepted uncritically by anyone truly interested in epistemology. It takes more than a compendiumn of "Great European Men Talking to One Another About Their Causes," to be epistmologically convincing. It must be added that we have

always used techniques of critical thinking which is now enjoying a renewed vogue in North America.

As the very notion of "alternative" came to be locally manifested by the creation of elitist institutions (such as high schools demanding that students wear uniforms), it became apparent to me as an educator that before humanistic and critical notions of education became totally eclipsed by renewed Social Darwinism,an account must be made of the first fifteen years of The New School's ideology,**praxis** and history.

Originally I had hoped to mount numerous objective questionnaires. It soon became clear to me that the information I wanted was essentially qualitative, not quantitative. The viability of quantitative information in examining the New School experience has always been problematic. The second director of the school, Ron Witort, did make and oversee several primarily quantitative studies devoted to various aspects of the school. These, however, were done with a very small sample of the student body. Furthermore,the most interesting and informative part of his presentations was usually based on anecdotal information gleaned from accompanying interviews or open-ended questions.

Since my interest is primarily in establishing **what** the New School ideology is and in describing **how** it has developed,my focus here will be primarily on process rather than quantifiable product. This is consistent with the usual description of qualitative analysis as suggesting "... how ...expectations are translated into daily activities, procedures and interactions." Consistent with the

techniques of qualitative analysis, I have analyzed data inductively rather than formulating a hpothesis for a study based on quantitative techniques.[1]

Like many other qualitative researchers,I have depended very much on the perspectives and the voices of my subjects... current and past teachers, staff and students of The New School of Dawson College. I have obtained their opinions from the following resources: taped interviews in 1984 and 1987-88; written works, letters, evaluations, papers, and submissions to the New School Annual Reports. I have also relied heavily on documentation of the school's internal and external correspondance to provide me with the background information necessary to describe the school's development over time.I have acknowledged the sources of quotations from interviews and Annual Reports. Quotations from class work, evaluations and profiles have been annotated only with the authors' permission.

This has been a difficult task requiring a self-enforceed objectivity,especially at those junctures where my own memories differed from contemporary written records. At such moments, I always reconstructed events from the historical records.

There were personal reasons for writing this account.Having taught with only a year's respite for 32 years,I wanted a chance to reflect on and make sense of my experience.It has been a most interesting time,studying the works of others and also reviewing and reorganizing the considerable archival material at The New School. It is my hope that this study will be useful in the future

training of New School personnel and the informing of interested students, parents, and colleagues.

Having completed this project,I would recommend this kind of reflection to other seasoned educators. While it might occasionally evoke doubt and sadness,it also cannot help but demonstrate that the vocation of education brings with it much gratification as well as labour. To me the greatest satsfaction in the long and painful labour of this study has been the revived memory of so much potential acted upon and great personal growth in the lives of numerous members of the ever-expanding New School community. It is to all my colleagues...both students and staff...of The New School and all future members of our community that I dedicate this work.

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1. Robert C. Bogdan and Sari Knopp Biklen,Qualitative Eesearch or Education: An Introduction to Theory and Methods.Boston: Allyn and Bacon,1982,p.29.

Chapter One

CONTEXTUALIZING THE NEW SCHOOL

This study will trace the dialectical development of theory and **praxis** at the New School of Dawson College, an alternative pre-university Arts programme in operation since 1973. The New School is distinctive as the only extant "alternative" programme within the CEGEP system, and its long life makes it exceptional among North American "alternative" programmes started in the early 1970s. Throughout its existence, The New School has articulated and dialectically developed its educational philosophy through the cyclical application of theory to **praxis** which is then evaluated, restructured and articulated as theory to be applied to a **praxis** which is informed by additional theoretical and pedagogical considerations. The school's philosophy has been culled from many disparate sources and developed in variable ways by numerous faculty and students. Based on extensive archival material on this process, this study is also based on taped interviews with students, graduates, faculty, staff and administrators of the school and of Dawson College.

The New School opened during an era of expansion for educators everywhere. The Parent Commission, formed to investigate the educational needs of Quèbec, published the Parent Report in 1963-66. In order to meet the needs of a complex society at a time of technological change and economic growth, the report recommended the creation of another echelon of education between high school and university: the CEGEPs are institutions unparalleled elsewhere

in North America.[1] The Parent commission was concerned not only with democratizing education and meeting social and economic changes, but also with preserving the positive aspects of Québec's heritage and culture while at the same time recognizing the needs of a new kind of youth.

The Parent Report recognizes the need to address the changing values of the youth through the search for "...a broader and more varied humanism in harmony with the contemporary world..." which should be the "...the major preoccupation of both teachers and programmes of study."[2] While the Parent Report recommends instilling "...a passion for the truth and a respect for intelligence," it also wishes to ensure that character and civic responsibilty are "moulded" to realize positive human inter-action and, in each person, a sense of community which transcends individual interest.[3] While the Parent Report was very influential at its time, it no longer guides educational policy in the CEGEPs where decisions are most often informed by available resources and the exigencies of collective agreements. Recently the basic values and objectives behind CEGEP education have been brought into question as a result of research on the surprisingly elevated level of failure and drop-outs in the CEGEP system.[4]

Dawson College opened in 1969. As the first anglophone CEGEP, it would model a new kind of institution for the English-speaking community. Its founders were determined to establish an unique institution rather than to replicate university structures and objectives. They favoured a democratic approach in which all

members of the community would participate in the decision-making processes: students, faculty, support staff, professionals and administrators would participate on an equal basis. Although the situation was "rife with ambiguity," at the outset "...everyone ...adopted the vision with enthusiasm and was prepared to work out the day-to-day-to-day problems which were sure to arise."[5]

Between 1969-73, Dawson's registration and the number of faculty members more than tripled. The college had to expand to more campus sites in 1973-74. Consequently, plans were made for three main campus buildings as well as satellite facilities. This decentralization of facilities led to a "muted" sense of community and significant intra-programme competition for resources. With the change in scale,Dawson experienced difficulty in maintaining its slogan, "Dawson is Students."There was an increase of theft and student vandalism and:

> ...despite the best of intentions in some cases, some Dawson teachers were not able to perform at their best in the Dawson setting. Some wished to have more student-centered classes, but simply did not know or learn how...and the college did very little in the first years ot help them. A few simply refused to accept the institutional commitment and stubbornly refused to adjust their practices to the Dawson approach...And there were many teachers who periodically faced the dilemma of trying on the one hand to respond to student individuality and expressed need and, on the other, to the demands of their disicplines and courses or their own perceptions of student needs.[6]

It was at this juncture of expansion and disillusionment that a Humanities teacher, Guy Millisor, and his class decided to possit an "ideal" CEGEP programme. They had concluded that it was virtually impossible to ensure a strong level of participation and

commitment in a large and diffuse community. They claimed that strong feelings of individual self-worth were necessary conditions for people's willingness to contribute to a group. They judged the consolidation of structures emerging at Dawson to be unconducive to strengthening people's self esteen or helping them to build community. As a result of these deliberations,

> ...a forceful and compelling demand from a small group of students and teachers was tabled to open a "new school." ...its proponents were aggressive, persuasive, and insistent and Dawson simply said "we've got to give them a fair hearing, despite all the other problems."
>
> The fair hearing revealed several features which would have to be respected if the New School of Dawson College were to have a legitimate chance of success...it would have to have its own separate facilities,almost certainly non-institutional in character, and its own operating budget to ensure its freedom to pursue its own priorities;its programs would meet college diploma requirements but would be organized distinctively with clusters of courses and an emphasis on workshops rather than formal classes and institutional timetables; it would place great emphasis on "community" participation and mutual help and trust among its members;most significantly,it would give concurrent emphasis to affective and cognitive learning. Staff members would be selected with extreme care, their experiences would be carefully recorded and evaluated and, as the crowning achievement, the New School of Dawson College would model a whole variety of learning experiences and settings which could then be applied to the rest of the college and to other colleges.
>
> Because New School advocates addressed themselves to some of the most critical educational issues of that time, the college's Board decided to support the establishment of the New School and to meet its needs to an extent equivalent to the support planned for the new campus. Staff was hired, building searches were undertaken, students were recruited...and the New School got underway.[7]

The founders of The New School based their proposal to the Board of Governors on these assumptions: 1) There must a be new relationship between students and teachers where the teachers

"...must trust that students want to learn and tell their students that they do so trust." They must help students "...develop feelings of self-worth...and encourage this newly expanded self confidence to further fuller growth rather than self-complacency." They must "...approach learning situations as a learner, jointly pursuing goals and pedagogy with the students" in a manner which precluded the teachers "taking over;" 2)The New School must "...meet the individual needs of the learners ,...provide relevance to their purposes and development so that what they learn is real and important to themselves." The students' responsibility for making learning choices implied that they had to accept the consequences of those choices; 3)The method of group discussion was encouraged for the examination of individaul values, helping community members to strengthen their abilities at assent and dissent. Through this "new methodology," they would achieve self-actualization by a more "...open exploration of the inner self through exposing and nurturing unrevealed talents and values" originating within each student; 4)the curriculum would comprise the inner self and would explore new ways of learning. Students were to develop a social conscience and make social contributions to work in some "field of general social betterment." They were also to be encouraged towards self expression in aesthetic and creative ways. This holistic curriculum would help students to develop "a philosophy of life and to learn to live an examined life;" 5)There was to be a dissolution of distinctions between school and other learning. The home, community, school, and other

organizations would all be recognized as sites of learning where students could pursue the objective of intellectual, emotional and ethical personal growth.[8]

In order to address the cognitive, affective and social needs of the students, the school developed a central unit of organization called "the Band." Each Band was to be a primary affiliative group comprising 30 students, one full-time and two half-time teachers. Time would be set aside to deal with the students' personal growth; all their academic work would take place in the Bands which would each be organized around the concentration of Social Sciences, Language and Literature or the Creative Arts. Each Band would elect members to a governing body, a Community Council, which was to develop and maintain policies and procedures for the school. The Director, an ex officio member of the Community Council, was responsible to Dawson College for the proper functioning of The New School. A more informal mode of governance by "community meeting" evolved and has functioned erratically ever since.

During the summer of 1974, some students and staff met to recommend changes to the school.Their major critique was that the Bands were too ungainly for comfortable self-disclosure,and their curriculum too circumscribed for students to pursue their most strongly motivated interests.As a result of these deliberations, the Bands were cut to 14-16 members. They would focus entirely on personal growth and group skills.Students would formulate learning

groups or tutourials with faculty on the basis of common needs and talents.This format has remained constant throughout the school's history.

The site of The New School was originally non-institutional, located in lovely decaying mansions on and around Wilder Penfield Avenue in Montréal.Because we could not conform to building codes and zoning laws,from 1973-1975 we were forced to move seven times. From 1975-1988 we occupied two spacious floors designed for our use in the Victoria Campus of Dawson College in Old Montréal. In Fall 1988 we moved into the Atwater Campus where we occupy a pleasant attic in the north-west wing. While our fortunes have changed from oak paneling and brocaded walls to large unshared spaces and now to greatly reduced spaces,we have managed to maintain our distinctive character.

In its first year, The New School had 180 students and planned was to expand to accomodate 1000 students [33 Bands] in Science and Technology as well as Pre-University Arts. However, in 1974 the school was cut to 120 students, a number which remained fairly stable until 1979. Since that time its registration fell to 100, leveling over the last three years to about 75 students.

There have been numerous hypotheses for our decline in enrolment. Certainly humanistic values are not congruent with the materialism fostered in the 1980s,although we continue to attract students searching for values of greater depth. The central reason for our decline relates to our declining resources. We are no longer able to provide the services or curriculum spread we had

some years ago.This greatly reduces the options for prospective students. [See chart I-A for an account this decline of New School resources.] The greatest single blow to our morale,however,came as a result of the decree of 1983 which increased faculty workload by 11%. This reduced the portion of each faculty member's time available to the school. An increasing number of our faculty are M.E.D.'s [teachers on surplus] who are very demoralized with their situation which creates an asymmetry in the cohesion of New School faculty, where good faculty morale is a necessary condition for good community morale. One of the most important original organizing principles of The New School was teacher availability for informal learning. With a faculty which is "slotted" into hours throughout the college,and only very peripherally available to The New School,this is no longer possible. Students,having no real model of constancy and little maturity and having increasingly troubled lives,need more attention from and access to teachers than they did in 1973. In a time of increased workload,decreasing pay and public support,it is difficult to provide the commitment of faculty time necessary to the maintenance of our educational objectives.

Cutbacks are never frivolously inflicted;they always come at a time when the college's resources are strained. However,they are usually imposed without reference to our mandate. The principles upon which The New School was founded were consistent with both the spirit of the Parent Report and the founding principles of Dawson College. Indeed,we are probably more in line with original CEGEP

New School's Resources 1973-90

	1973-75	1974-75	1975-77	1978-80	1985-87	1987-1988	1989-90
# Students	180	120	115	110	70	70	74
# Disciplines	unlimited	15	16	14	11	9	9
# Teachers	12 FTE	8 FTE	7.5 FTE	7.5 FTE	5.44 FTE	4.111 FTE	4.111 FTE
Director	1.000	.5	.5	.5	.5	.333	.222
Community Facilitator	1.000	.5	.5	-	-	-	-
In-House Worker	2.00	-	-	-	-	-	-
Librarian-Researcher	1.00	.5	.5	-	-	-	-
Admissions Officer	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1 .00	.5	-
Administrative Assistant	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	.5	[16 hrs. part-time]
Academic Secretary	1.00	1.00	-	-	-	-	-
Total # Staff	20.00	12.00	11.00	10.00 FTE	7.9 FTE	5.4 FTE	4.3 FTE
Disciplines	Anthropology Art Cinema Ceramics English French Humanities History Music Philosophy Political Sc. Photography Psychology Sociology Religion Theatre Art History	Anthropology Art Cinema Ceramics English French Humanities History Music Philosophy Political Sc Photography Psychology Sociology Religion Theatre	Anthropology Art Cinema Ceramics English French Humanities History Music Philosophy Political Sc. Photography Psychology Sociology Religion Theatre	Anthropology Art Cinema Ceramics English French Humanities History Music Philosophy Psychology Sociology Religion Theatre	Art Cinema Ceramics English French Humanities Music Philosophy Psychology Sociology Theatre	Art Cinema Ceramics English Humanities Music Psychology Sociology	Art Cinema Ceramics English Humanities Music Psychology Sociology

A. From 1973-74 to 1989-90:
   1. There has been a 59% reduction of student numbers;
   2. There has been a reduction of 65% in FTE;
   3. We have had a reduction of 82.4% of total staff available.

B. From 1987-89 we have had a gain of 14.3% in student numbers and a loss of 19.8% in staff.

C. From 1985-90 we have lost 36% of our disciplines.

Figure I-A

and Dawson ideology than most other programmes within the system. This does not,however,rescue us from frequently bearing a disproportionate percentage of cuts within our college. Because we are a local "alternative" programme and have no Cahier number to validate our existence, our needs are considered less legitimate than those of disciplines validated by the Ministry. We have developed various strategies for counter-acting our lack of adequate human resources,although it is difficult to offer the consistent attention and cohesion necessary for the kind of education we have developed.Indeed,when the New School opened its doors to 180 students in August,1973,there was an impressive array of resources,a strongly articulated sense of purpose and innovation, and excitement at being in a position to revive some of Dawson's original mission and fervor and to correct some of its mistakes. We were sure we would create a new and enhancing educational setting where individual self-actualization would happen concomittantly with and through the development of strong academic skills and community participation.

It would be simplistic to comment cynically on our original vision of a "brave new world,"considering the numerous changes in the CEGEPs during the past fifteen years. There is also good news:this study will demonstrate the many ways we have modified our goals and methodologies over time in response to a changing ethos and a deepening understanding of our own mission. As we have modified our practices and addressed increasing complexities within our ideological discourse,we have always kept faithful to our

original beliefs and defended them strongly---even in the face of a radically shifting public position during the 1980s on the values of personal growth and social responsibilty.

Our processes have taught us many valuable lessons:the ideology underlying educational institutions must be well articulated; good pedagogy,a passionately important aspect of education,is always predicated on ideological considerations, whether or not they are consciously articulated. In order to respond to changing clientéles and social ethos,schools must regularly reexamine both their ideology and their praxis and be prepared to experiment and effect change. We have also learned to survive in a setting where colleagues are often resentful of the perceived "strain" we impose on diminishing resources. In order to survive within a system which neither validates us nor shares our epistemological base, we have learned to find the validation for our continued work through our processes.Finally,we have learned that it is possible to offer an empowering education to young people and to become empowered by the process ourselves. With all the hardship involved in keeping ourselves afloat and honest,we are continually encouraged by the knowledge that we do make a difference within our own experience and as an actualizing possibility. If school does not make a significant difference in the lives of students, what is its purpose?

> What really pleases me about The New School is that the essential values (humanistic values) that you were talking about are still there. We all must contribute to each other's education. The concept of and the traditional lines or barriers between faculty and student, administrator, support staff were blurred. These things I see as constant and essential...The original mission of The

New School is still there and you have not changed it. Most institutions start off with a reasonably good philosophy and then lose it. New School has never forgotten.[9]

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1. While there is a burgeoning community college movement in North America, it is only in Quèbec that the college diploma, the DEC, is required for generally required for university admission.

2. Alphonse-Marie Parent, Chairman. Report of the Royal Commission of Inquiry on Education. Quèbec,QC: The Government of the Province of Quèbec, 1965. Part I, Volume 1, Chapter 1, p.11. Hereafter cited as Parent Report.

3. Parent Report, p. 14.

4. See: Conseil des collêges. La rèussite ,les èchecs et les abandons au collègial: l'ètat et les besoins de l'enseignement collègial Rapport 1987-1988. Quèbec, QC: Gouvernement du Quèbec,1988.

5. Paul Gallagher and Gertrude MacFarlane, A Case Study in Democratic Education Dawson College. Montréal, QC: Dawson College,1976, p. 23. Hereafter cited as Gallager/MacFarlane.

6. Ibid, p. 250-251.

7. Ibid, pp. 165-167.

8. Guy Millisor, An Abstract of the Original Proposal for the Foundation and Development of The New School of Dawson Colege. Unpublished document. Montrèal,QC: Dawson College, August,1973, pp.i-vii.

9. Interview with Paul Gallagher, first Director-General of Dawson College, 27 October,1987.

CHAPTER TWO

[1]THE NEW SCHOOL PHILOSOPHY

A. The Ethos of the Times: Critiques of Education

> Every age but ours had its model, its ideal...Perhaps we shall soon be able to use as our guide and model the fully growing and self-fulfilling human being, the one in whom his potentialities are coming to full development, the one whose inner nature expresses itself freely, rather than being warped, repressed, or denied.[1]

> We must be very,very critical every time we speak about emancipatory education, liberatory or liberating education. We must repeat always that we are not meaning with these expressions that in the intimacy of a seminar we are transforming the structures of the society...We must avoid being interpreted as if we were thinking that **first** we should educate the people for being free, and **after** we could transform reality. No. We have to do the two simultaneously, as much as possible.[2]

From the mid-60's to mid-70's, anglophone institutions in Québec were to become influenced by British and American radical educational critics. Many of these educational critiques were fueled by various movements of empowerment such as the Black movement, the Women's Movement, and the anti-War/Peace Movement. A popular theme was the oppression of the students in schools representing the powerful capitalist hegemony. In order to produce obedient citizens, schools "...mould[ed the students] in its image, stunting and deadening [them] in the process."[3] Even "liberal school reforms" such as increased student participation were to be

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[1] A more detailed account of the philosophical roots of The New School is available upon request as **Appendix A** .

critiqued as hypocritical and piecemeal, allowing students to participate solely in trivial changes: " The real and difficult changes are those which give more and more people power to decide more and more for themselves."[4] Numerous "academic" readers and text books on "radical" or "alternative" education of that period offered similar critiques,accusing schools of systematically processing students with rigid curricula and evaluation criteria. The majority of these "revolutionary" texts addressed elementary and secondary education.Since community colleges had developed extensively by the early sixties, they were spared such scrutiny. Many of the works of the time not only villifed the school systems for oppressing, boring, under-utilizing and misguiding the young, but they also expounded a romantic Blakean vision of the child and ultimately the human adult, who had to be freed from the shackles of knowledge...or perhaps education.

It is not possible or germane to cover all the popular educational writers of the time here.[5] However A.S.Neill's Summerhill:A Radical Approach to Child Rearing [6] articulated some ideas which sould surface in The New School. A.S.Neill begins his book with a quotation from William Blake which illustrates his belief that only honest and disinterested love could rescue children from truncated or destructive lives.The book describes his boarding school,Summerhill,which he founded in 1921 in England for 1921 for children from five to sixteen. To Neill, the "natural" child is:

> ... innately wise and realistic. If left to himself without adult suggestion of any kind, he will develop as far as he

> is capable of developing. Logically, Summerhill is a place in which people who have the innate ability and wish to be scholars will be scholars; while those who are only fit to sweep the street will sweep the streets.[7]

Since he considered the purpose of life to be happiness, proper education prepared people for happiness through ensuring maximum student freedom.

> The function of the child is to live his own life- not the life that his anxious parents think he should live, nor a life according to the purpose of the educator who thinks he knows what is best...You cannot **make** children learn music or anything else without to some degree converting them into will-less adults. You fashion them into accepters of the status quo.[8]

Summerhill was an immensely popular book,selling over 200,000 copies a year between 1960 and 1970. In the early days of The New School,"outsiders" would frequently insist that The New School was "free school" modeled on Neill's where "anything goes." Some prospective students optimistically perceived it as an escape from the thralls of the regular school system and of their parents' control.We would attempt to disabuse them of these expectations; Neill's hopes for the "New Jerusalem" emerging from a rarified environment of unconditional love struck us as inadequate to the complexities of contemporary life. However our mode of governance did have some similarities to Summerhill where: "Each member of the teaching staff and each child, regardless of his age, has one vote."[9]

To Neill one General School Meeting could have more curriculum value than a whole week's "curriculum of school subjects." As at The New School, at Summerhill there was a

continual tension between the needs of the individual and those of the community at large;various ways had to be developed to mediate those conflicting needs.[10]

At the beginning of the CEGEPs, many educators from the English colleges,influenced by "pop" radicatl educational literature, would inquire how New School students coped with hard stuff like writing term papers. We often found ourselves responding to critiques based on an imputed ideology deriving from the educational romanticism of sixties and seventies when people believed that education would save the world.

Some radical analyses of education claimed that alternative education could become a "quiet" revolutionary social force, moving towards a more "open society," in which social class distinctions, racism, religious bigotry,the unjust distribution of resources, and the boundaries of nation-states would all disappear. Rational and flexible decision-making would prevail throughout society.[11] Some reformers wished to organize alternative libertarian schools where relationships would replace "arbitrary discipline" and morality and ethics would devolve from lack of coercion and would foster humane relations.[12]

While there were differences among the critiques and reforms cited above, most of them articulated a philosophy of education in which "growth" was an important factor...not just the acquisition of facts. Growth was defined holisitically and included personal, intellectual, spiritual and social factors. Curriculum and pedagogy must be relevant to students' lives. School were to become an

integral part of society in which social barriers were to be broken down between students and between students and teachers. Education was to be a facilitative force in changing society through empowering students to become more authentic both individually and collectively.

The founders of The New School shared many of these views. They believed schools to be over-controlling, disconfirming of the individual,and generally a pernicious force in society. They found in Humanistic Education a solution which would provide a better and more interesting school environment as well as the tools for basic social change. At the time, we thought that personal change would automatically precipitate social change. We did not really understand the systemic nature of oppression.

B. Philosophical Roots

The New School was founded on the notion that all education should be "people- and process-centered" rather than solely information-centered." True education would devolve from the self-perceived needs of the students, from an understanding of why they wanted to learn certain things, why certain types of knowledge might be important for them personally rather than simply as a means to remote objectives such as institutional pre-requisites or some distant privilege that might accrue to the holder of specific and privileged knowledge. The crucial factors in any educational undertaking were the learners: who were they?

what did they want to know? **why**? **how** did they want to go about learning? Because the school had a commitment to social change, learning would also involve balancing personal needs and freedom with the need to live and work collaboratively with others.

Although The New School's philosophical premises were founded primarily on the works of Rogers and Maslow and other humanistic educators,various texts and experiences informed the development of The New School's educational philosophy:Dewey,the existentialists,the values clarification,critical and feminist theorists. Our philosophy has developed in a dialectical and dialogicalmanner:ideological-position-praxis-experience-feedback-discussion-modulation-of-position-development of praxis-experience-feedback,etc.As the philosophy becomes more elaborated,its basic premises of individual and group empowerment remain constant.

The educational point of departure to prepare young people to better their society favoured in the founder's Abstract of the Original Proposal was the development of a strong self-concept.

> The development of a collection of hypotheses about oneself, the self-concept, is largely haphazard and the product of unexamined and unverbalized experience. Lacking the necessary skills for seeking and processing information about ourselves,is it any wonder that few of us can construct relatively clear and unambiguous accounts of our goals, aspirations, values, traits and abilities? And in the absence of learned skills necessary to the understanding of inter-personal interaction, is it any wonder that many individuals are confused about their relationship to self or to others?[13]

This notion that education must develop from individual students' proclivities echoes the ideas of Dewey, the American philosopher of Progressive Education, almost half a century

before.[14] The progressive education movement began in protest against the narrow formalism and inequities of public education around 1890 in the United States,peaked in the 1920's and 1930's and then "collapsed in the years after World War II. Like the Humanistic Educators, the Progressive Educators also saw schools as levers of social reform and education as an instrument for individual self-realization or growth.[15] However, the concept of growth was quite different from that of Humanistic Education. To Dewey, "Growth in judgement and understanding is essentially growth in ability to form purposes and to select and arrange means for their realization."[16] Growth empowered people to understand objective information and make wise choices on the use of that information. To Dewey, empowerment did not mean "power over," but:

> ...power to frame purposes, to judge wisely, to evaluate desires by the consequences which will result from acting upon them; power to select and order means to carry chosen ends into operation.[17]

Dewey was convinced that the learner must participate "in the formation of the purposes which direct his activities in the learning process" because:

> ... the meaning of purposes and ends is not self-evident and self-explanatory. The more their educational importance is emphasized, the more important it is to understand what a purpose is; how it arises and how it functions in experience.[18]

Dewey did not believe that all experiences were <u>automatically</u> educative; they had to ..."tend both to knowlege of more facts and entertaining of more ideas and to a better, a more orderly arrangement of them." Learning was a progression from personal

experiential connections to a more "objective" sense of reality, thence to the capacities for self-control. To Dewey, freedom was to be ultimately found in the fullest exercise of self-control.[19]

Existentialists share some of Dewey's concern with issues pertaining to freedom. In his book, Existentialism in Education, Van Cleve Morris claims that when people realize how utterly arbitrary the fact of their individual existence is, they undergo a formative "encounter with nothingness...which provides the vehicle for our humanness to exhibit itself... Nothingness, after all, is not a foregone conclusion; it is only a **possibility.**"[20] While causing individuals their moments of darkness and alienation, this state of consciousness need not end in despair but in the knowledge that one may create meaning and purpose.[21]

Creating a raison d'être is one of the tasks of an education for which individuals must consider themselves "worthy" by recognizing their own irreplaceability as well as their own "belongingness" in society. Too often people develop a false sense of affiliation through the arbitrary descriptions imposed by others: nationality, class, race, gender, creed. These "facticités" [as de Beauvoir named them] must be replaced by chosen values in order to infuse our lives with a sense of meaning and purpose. The creation of values is the task of the learner:

> ...I am the starter of the value-making process...In this role, then, I discover that I am the originator, the inventor, the creator of values...**In the act of choosing, man brings values into being.**[22]

The necessary conditions for constructing a meaningful life are: freedom, the awareness of one's own freedom, and the understanding of one's personal responsibility in valuing and choosing action appropriate to one's freedom and life. Only if individuals strive for authenticity in an atmosphere free from moral or material coercion is an authentic society possible.[23] Through their own efforts and unique ruminations, learners may possit what "...a human being **ought** to be", thus moving beyond "mere intellectual discipline, beyond mere subject matter, beyond mere enculturation, beyond mere `fundamental dispositions,'to the ...zone of value creation."[24]

Exercising such freedom to choose ones ideas and taking responsibility carries an emotional load. At The New School the feelings related to choices are an integral part of the data examined before making choices. This is not the trivial "if it feels good, do it" school of thought. Rather, it is based on the recognition that in order to make authentic choices, people must understand the power of their own emotional roots and their impact upon themselves and others.

There is an inherent paradox in supporting the role of the teacher as agent of awakened awareness in the learner while at the same time acknowledging the individual's need to achieve awareness of him/herself as a single and unique subjectivity in the world. This problem arises continually at The New School, and neither Dewey nor Morris comes to terms with this issue: who really knows the "true" dispositions of the learner which should be

encouraged by the teacher? How can a teacher awaken a student to his or her **own** unique subjectivity without influencing the content of the learner's perception? In both cases the teacher must **respect** the learner's autonomy while at the same time precipitating active involvement in what may become a painful moment of insight for the learner.

C. Maslow and Rogers

The New School's founding texts were works on Humanistic Education by the psychologists, Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow. **Abraham Maslow** criticizes the educational system as having as its prime concern,the..."implanting [of] the greatest number of facts into the greatest possible number of children, with a minimum of time, expense and effort."[25] He argues that education should not be "extrinsic" [for various signifiers of status] but "intrinsic," for the pleasure of knowing more about oneself and one's full potential as a human being:

> The ideal college would be a kind of educational retreat in which you could try to find yourself; find out what you like and want; what you are and are not good at. People would take various subjects, attend various seminars, not quite sure of where they were going, but moving toward the discovery of vocation, and **once they found it**, they could make good use of technological education. The chief goals of the ideal college, in other words, would be the **discovery of identity,** and with it,**the discovery of vocation**...part of learning who you are, part of being able to hear your inner voices, is discovering what it is that you want to do with your life.[26]

To Maslow growth was the objective of education, and the highest form of growth he named "self-actualization."The self-actualized person must be "in a state of good psychological health" with basic needs satisfied, and a life's work or "mission in life" which is of intrinsic value to him/her. Maslow identifies as necessary conditions for self-actualization the satisfaction of a "hierarchy of needs," beginning with people's needs for basic biological survival and moving upwards through needs for security,belongingness,dignity,love,respect,and esteem. Self-actualization is a development of the personality which frees the person from neurotic problems so that s/he is able to come to terms with the real issues of the human condition. To Maslow self-actualization was not a static state, but rather a dynamic life-long process.

> Growth is seen then not only as a progressive gratification of basic needs to the point where they "disappear,"but also in the form of specific growth motivations over and above these basic needs, e.g. talents,capacities,creative tendencies,constitutional potentialities. We are thereby helped also to realize that basic needs and self-actualization do not contradict each other any more than do childhood and maturity. One passes into the other and is a necessary prerequisite for it.[27]

Self-actualization is predicated on people's developing coherent value systems in order to take increased responsibility for their lives. To Maslow the need for a coherent value system is univeral,and its lack creates certain kinds of psychological disorder. Humans so crave a coherent value system that they will accept <u>any</u> value system rather than have none at all.[28] Maslow describes the contemporary value system in this way:

> In recent years and to this day, most humanistic scholars and most artists have shared in the general collapse of all traditional values. And when these values collapsed, there were no others readily available as replacements... [many]... are disheartened or pessimistic or despairing, and a fair proportion are nihilistic or cynical...
>
> [We are in] a chaos of relativism. No one of these people now knows how to defend and validate his choice. This chaos may fairly be called valuelessness.[29]

Educational settings can create the optimum circumstances for self-actualization for "psychologically healthy" students by encouraging them to experience joy, refreshen their aesthetic consciousness, control impulses, and find meaning in their lives. Maslow acknowledges that often young people, living in pathological states of passivity and drug and alcohol dependency, do not come from situations of great biological,social or psychological deprivation. He describes their state as a "cognitive and spiritual sickness," and attributes it to the lack of transcendant meaning in their lives. This meaning must come from an appreciation of more abstract qualities like truth, beauty and justice. Once these values are internalised, the boundaries of the self will extend beyond the constricting personal sphere of interests to include the whole world which would enjoy a "great flowering of a new kind of civilization where there would be a movement towards psychological health which is also a movement toward spiritual peace and social harmony."[30]

To counter the existential void, Maslow claims one must create one's own meaning and get in touch with the marvels of the world through cultivating autonomy,independence of culture and

environment,a continued freshness of appreciation,a feeling of belonging [GemeinschaftsgefÜhl],good personal relations,and a good sense of humour. Achieving self-actualization requires discipline and struggle.If teaching stressed personal discovery, this would encourage larners to have "peak experiences, illuminations, experiences,illuminations,the sense of mystery,and of awe" in the process. Creating the appropriate circumstances for this to happen was "...certainly one of the pressing tasks for professional educators."[31] He claimed that the "...power of the peak-experience could permanently affect one's attitude to life...might be able to prevent suicide...and perhaps many varieties of low self-destruction,[such as] alcoholism, drug-addiction, and addiction to violence."[32]

Carl Rogers characterized the traditional classroom as a locus where only the intellect is valued and where authoritarian rule is the accepted policy with the teacher as powerful possessor of all the knowledge and the student as obedient recipient. Teacher-student and intra-student trust is at a minumum in such an oppressive environment. His response to this setting and methodology is to develop a theory of "person-centered education" where cognitive skills may be combined with better knowledge of self and of interpersonal behaviour: "...when students perceive that they are free to follow their own goals, most of them invest more of themselves in their effort,work harder,and retain and use more of what they have learned than in conventional courses."[33] Rogers criticizes the mistrust of students implicit in the

educational system's ordering almost every part of the students' schools lives:

> Consequently at the very age when he should be developing adult characteristics of choice and decision making, when he should be trusted on some of those things, trusted to make mistakes and to learn from those mistakes, he is, instead, regimented and shoved into a curriculum whether it fits him or not.[34]

Rogers' goal as an educator is to facilitate learning in the "functioning person." Most of his hypotheses regarding functional people derive from his therapeutic model. In this sense he is unlike Maslow who derives his notion of self-actualized people backwards by studying people whom he considered self-actualized de facto as a result of his familiarity with them or with their accomplishments and attitudes. To Rogers the dysfunctional person lives in continual fear of himself and the external world. The process of therapy through which Roger's client becomes "functioning" acquaints him with "...elements of his experience which have in the past been denied to awareness as too threatening, too damaging to the structure of the self." By experiencing these feelings fully and intensely,the client realizes they are part of himself and that by accepting them he no longer needs to fear them but may choose to develop with or from them as a functional person.[35]

The characteristics to be found in the functional person are the following: s/he is open to experience; s/he lives in an existential fashion. This means that s/he will not live in anxiety about those things s/he cannot control and will not try to impose

a rigid structure on experience. The person will "...find his[her] organism a trustworthy means of arriving at the most satisfying behavior in each situation."[36] While Rogers claims the person should do what "feels right," he does not suggest impulsive action.He indicates that this "feeling" should be arrived at after factors in a situation have been weighed. He claims that all people are by nature creative, but that they are blocked off from their creativity by fears and social norms.

> There's no question in my mind that we are very much shaped by what happens to us in our childhood, in our family, and in our contact with society...But then there is also the fact that in the present moment, it is the person himself who is able to understand those factors that have contributed to who he is, and to choose his own future...I think as the person becomes aware of these various factors in his background, he can make realistic and sensible choices as to how he's going to both live with and transcend the circumstances of the past.[37]

One way in which people express free will is in the search for authenticity. The person who has embarked upon such search "...values communication as a means of telling it the way it is, with feelings, ideas, gestures, speech, and bodily movement all conveying the same message." This person must be willing to engage in "painful honesty" and to pay the price of this honesty rather than to resort to "tactful generalities."[38] The person who has reached this level of development has worked out feelings of <u>incongruence</u> which arise when his "experience is quite discrepant from the way he has organized himself," when he dares to be aware of what he is experiencing without defending against it.[39]

The means by which people may arrive at the congruence which characterizes functionality is through what Rogers calls the "valuing process." Here people must rid themselves of "introjected" and often highly contradictory values from various formative sources through analysing the sources of those values and the affect attached to them. This means "restoring contact with experience" unmediated by others' introjections. Rogers claims that rigidly held values are a result of insecurity. The mature person must have flexibility in valuing and be willing to test values with an eye either towards self-correction or self-enhancememt. While Rogers claims he cannot set down absolute patterns of value-change, he does identify "value directions"[40] which he says move people in the way of personal growth and maturity. Such people tend to move away from: façades, pleasing others as a goal in itself, and "oughts." They value as positive: "being real," self-direction, themselves and their own feelings, being in process, sensitivity to and acceptance of others, and deep relationships. They show an openness to inner and outer experiences and are open to their own inner reactions and feelings as well as those of others and the realities of the world.[41] Rogers does not expect the kind of total transcendance or the attainment of peak experiences for his "functional" person that Maslow claims for self-actualized people. To Maslow peak-experiences are an end in themselves, while to Rogers they are epi-phenomena, possible results of becoming functional.[42]

Rogers' theories and practice of education were focussed on helping people become self-actualized, mature, and functional. True education, to Rogers, is the **"facilitation of change and learning**...Changingness, a reliance on process rather than upon static knowledge, is the only thing that makes any sense as a goal for education in the modern world." The key elements in this process were to be ..."certain attitudinal qualities that exist in the personal **relationship** between the facilitator and the learner."[43]

The teacher is referred to as a "facilitator" who shares with all participants the responsibility for the learning process. Learners must develop their own programme of learning based on their self-perceived cognitive and affective needs. While the humanistic educator is very important in initiating learning, this leadership role should decline as the class progresses, allowing the students to lead themselves and turn to the teacher as a resource person. The teacher becomes part of the class,sharing his/her experiences, feelings and skills with the students as they require them. [44]

Rogers carefully outlines the qualities necessary to facilitate real learning: "The facilitator is a real person,being what she is, entering into a relationship with the learner without presenting a front or a façade." Part of this realness is expressed in a sense of "puzzlement," where the facilitator has the obligation to express ignorance or lack of understanding. The facilitator must also "prize" the other person's feelings and

opinions and hold the belief that the other person is fundamentally trustworthy. This prizing or acceptance of the learner "...is an operational expression of her essential confidence and trust in the capacity of the human organism." Empathic understanding is a necessary quality. Here the facilitator "...has the ability to understand the student's reactions from the inside, has a sensitive awareness of the way the process of education and learning seems to the student..."

Finally, the facilitator must be willing to live in uncertainty where only what she discovers in the **process** of facilitating will guide her along the way.[45] Rogers knows the doubts these criteria may raise in the minds of possible facilitators: they might feel incapable of fulfilling the demands of "unleashed curiosity;" will they have the academic resources? Do they have the courage, creativity, tolerance and humanity to accept such a responsibility?[46]

Rogers identifies appropriate facilitative **behaviours.** The facilitator: is instrumental in setting the initial mood or climate of the group;helps to elicit or clarify the purposes of individuals and the group;relies upon the motivation of each student to implement those "purposes which have meanings for him;"tries to organize and make available appropriate resources for learning; identifies himself as a flexible resource to be utilized by the group; in responding to expressions in the group, accepts and addresses both the cognitive and affective attitudes in direct relation to their presence in the group; becomes

increasingly integrated as a member of the group; takes initiative in sharing his feelings and thoughts with the group without imposing them; and continually endeavours to keep aware of and accept his own limitations.[47]

Consistent with his philosophy of people's capacity for growth,Rogers believes"...that some people who are not particularly skilled but who possess some basic attitudes can be trained in relatively short intensive periods to become much more skillful as facilitators of communication."[48]

Having identified key factors in facilitative attitudes and behaviours, Rogers outlines pedagogical methods which are enhancing of personal growth. The focus is on an emerging curriculum always connected with the students' self-perceived needs. Students will only be motivated to work on issues which are real to them. Humanistic Education values the continuing process of learning rather than objectively verifiable products. There is an on-going process of self-,mutual-, and group evaluation. Students are empowered in every facet of the learning process,and they are motivated towards self-discipline and accountability within groups. Rogers argues that this kind of learning is deeper, proceeds more rapidly, and becomes more internalized by the students than the learning acquired in the traditional classroom. He suggests the use of contracts which will give learners both security and responsibility; conversely, students who do not desire this kind of learning should always have other options in a course. He

suggests that all learning should be presented as an inquiry with each learner a full participant.

On the more affective level, Rogers believes that the basic encounter group is an excellent **locus** for learning. If it is properly handled,it should result in increased self- understanding, more independence in the individual and an increased comprehension and acceptance of others.[49] The group should start with little imposed structure and the leader's function is to "...facilitate expression, and to clarify or point up the dynamic pattern of the group's struggle to work toward meaningful experience."[50] Rogers gives an excellent description of the kind of processes found in encounter groups; many of these processes take place in successful Bands at The New School.

> In such a group, after an initial "milling around," personal expressiveness tends to increase. This also involves an increasingly free, direct and spontaneous communication betwen members of the group. Facades become less necessary, defenses are lowered, basic encounters occur as individuals reveal hitherto hidden feelings and aspects of themselves, and receive spontaneous feedback---both negative and positive- from group members. Some or many individuals become much more facilitative in relationships to others, making possible greater freedom of expression.[51]

Finally, a sine qua non of Rogerian education is self-evaluation and group evaluation of both the facilitator and the learners. This is an essential step to ensuring that learners take responsibility for pursuing the aims they set for themselves in their contracts and that facilitators are continually learning.

D. Some Humanistic Educators

George Isaac Brown, in a book entitled Human Teaching for Human Learning uses the term "confluent education" to describe the process which he believes will bring human consciousness and society to further heights:

> ...confluent education describes a philosophy and a process of teaching and learning in which the affective domain and the cognitive domain flow together, like two streams merging into one river,and are thus integrated in individual and group learning.[52]

To Brown various civic goals could be met by confluent education. By addressing the students' feelings,one could accord them more power,thus increasing their sense of freedom and consequent responsibility. Properly conducted confluent education could stabilize students' reactions to injustice and frustration. If the intellect and emotions did not work in concert,there could be a veritable "volcano" of feeling which would result in revolution.[53] He characterizes the civic goal of confluent education to be "Americanism and Patriotism."[54] Brown's assurance that confluent education could stem the tide of revolution by turning people to the promise of innovation transforms freedom into a kind of social control totally antithetical to Humanistic Education. While we used the term, "confluent education" during the first two years of The New School,we soon replaced it with the term,"holistic education" which broadens the scope of learning to include the social, political, aesthetic, spiritual and physical development of the person along with the affective and cognitive aspects which, taken alone,are rather limiting categories.

Clark Moustakas, writing in 1972, is much more focused on notions of the self and of personal growth which he characterizes as a process of "becoming."[55] Moustakas does not believe that all experience and learning necessarily lead to growth or becoming. Only "true" or "significant" experiences can lead to self-actualization. The experiences which lead there must be consistent with the person's aims and touch a person "...in his being and in his course of becoming. Then the intrinsic nature, being and becoming merge into the self."[56] Freedom to become oneself introduces an element of responsibility to an individual's life.

> To be positively free is to be simultaneously spontaneous and thoughtful, self-enhancing and other-enhancing, self-valuing and valuing of others, accepting and responsible.[57]

Moustakas calls education "the world of the learner"...a world of "...personal meaning and involvement...centered in the self with individual and peculiar forms of interests, activities and concerns,"[58] where the presence of values must continually be acknowledged and analyzed in learning situations.

To Moustakas, the growth of the learner or group of learners depends strongly on the atmosphere created by the teacher, or "nurturer." The teacher: must listen with respect and acceptance, making elaborations where necessary; must learn to listen beyond the surface for the "real" person; must not impose himself on the learner but must allow the learner's point of view to emerge and evolve; must create an environment of mutual acceptance, trust and love. The teacher must also have and convey a firm belief in the

potentiality of the learner, for...

> ...only when the instructor is present in the full human sense, not hypothetically but truly, is he able to grow as a unified totality and thus provide an occasion for the growth of others.[59]

Moustakas advocates continuous mutually supported self-searching within a community of teachers, "...in an atmosphere of affection where the terrors of loneliness are assuaged and the impulse freely to link hands with others is strengthened."[60] Since it is difficult to develop such trust among teachers, he advocates their openly discussing their possible mistrust and doubt about the process. He emphasizes that if teacher-evaluation or any pressure is associated with the development of intra-teacher relationships,the teachers will not respond with trust or openness. While teachers can create optimum environments and facilitate well,

> The educational situation which most effectively promotes learning is the one in which (a) the uniqueness of the learner is deeply respected and treasured and (b) the person is free to explore the relationships, ideas, materials, and resources available to him in the light of his own particular interests, potentialities, and experience.[61]

Ultimately, the effective teacher must become a learner as well: "He cannot enable another person to grow unless the process he initiates also affects him."[62] Moustakas' primary influence on the founders of The New School was in his emphasis on creating an atmosphere of trust and safety in the staff through on-going staff development workshops and meetings. The notion of learning through teaching has always been an operant value and practice of the school.

E. Values Clarification

The issue of values and valuing is crucial to the philosophical and educational views of the existentialists and the Humanistic educators. Since people must ascertain their own **unmediated** values in order to make appropriate choices for themselves and thus achieve meaning,self-actualization, and mature functioning in their lives,appropriate pedagogy must develop to facilitate their articulation. They must be free to articulate,evaluate,judge and perhaps change their values and priorities in order to exercise their freedom responsibly and choose wisely for themselves.

Values clarification, by means of various exercises and "Strategies," would help people to turn confusion and conflict "...into decisions that are both personally satisfying and socially constructive."[63] Consequently a comprehensive methodology of group and classroom techniques was developed to facilitate the learning of seven broadly defined value skills:

> 1) seeking alternatives when faced with a choice; 2) looking ahead to probable consequences before choosing; 3) making choices on one's own, without depending on others; 4) being aware of one's own preferences and valuations; 5) being willing to affirm one's choices and preferences publicly; 6) acting in ways that are consistent with choices and preferences; and 7) acting in those ways repeatedly, with a pattern to one's life.[64]

Drawing on the work of both Dewey and the Humanistic psychologists, researchers in values clarification then developed seven **processes** of valuing in an educational setting: Prizing and

cherishing---this means supporting the learners' articulating what they value; publicly affirming---creating a situation where the learners must take public positions on their values; three kinds of choosing---from alternatives,considering consequences, and choosing freely from one's own feelings and proclivities; acting---encouraging the learner to act on the basis of his cherished values, thus closing the gap between saying and doing; acting with a pattern---helping people eliminate behaviour patterns which are contradictory to their beliefs.[65]

Authors of works on values clarification identify it as an essential aspect of Humanistic Education.[66] They provide a concrete workable set of strategies whose goals are consistent with a democratic and pluralistic society. It is an excellent tool for accessible pedagogy, although teachers must be cautioned not to present themselves as values authorities. Rather than a loss to subject matter, the use of this pedagogy enhances the students' understanding of subject matter; it is useful to address a variety of issues and subjects using fairly low risk exercises. While it is not meant to replace all other pedagogies, it can be used in conjunction with them.[67]

> When using the activities and strategies for values-clarification, encourage a classroom atmosphere of openness, honesty, acceptance and respect. If students feel that something they say about their own beliefs and behaviour is going to be ridiculed by their peers or frowned upon by the teacher, they will not want to share their thought and feelings about value issues.
>
> The teacher must help the class learn to listen to one another. One of the best ways he can do this is to be a model of a good listener himself. He can indicate by his verbal and nonverbal expressions that he is interested in

what the students think, and will seriously consider their ideas and possibly be influenced by them.[68]

Despite the authors' strong arguments that values clarification is inherent to Humanistic Education, it does not necessarily follow that either their schemata or their exercises are sufficient components to render an educational setting Humanistic. The methodology implicit in some of their exercises can be somewhat antithetical to Humanistic Education since theirs is often a "one size fits all" programmatic approach. The central principle of Humanistic Education is that the point of departure for all discourse in the learning environment is the concerns of the learners. A values clarification approach should be used only when the students' concerns indicate the usefulness of such an approach. There is a significant qualitative difference between responding to hypothesized values conflicts and responding to those which emerge organically through group interaction. It is in the latter case that learners may happen upon insights of a sufficiently compelling nature to encourage them to attempt behavioural changes. Groups at The New School have made very good use of the kind of exercises developed by Simon and Kirschenbaum, but usually in response to specific concerns which arise. [69]

F. Critiquing the 60's and 70's

Many Humanistic educators believed that Humanistic Education could solve problems not only in school but in society itself. However, various critiques emerged of alternative education

as an environment of "excess" in which students were not "taught to do anything." The critiques tended to fall into several categories: the "back to basics" movement which has slowly evolved into the dusting off of fairly arbitrarily chosen selections from the old and hackneyed "great works canon" approach; and the critical theorists who maintain that in order to change schools [and then society], one must subject them to a socio-political analysis which takes into account the dominant conservative interests they protect, their place in society, and an epistemological analysis of the hegemonic nature of curriculum.

While critics acknowledge that there were some valuable innovations in the 60's and 70's which have left an "important residue," they claim that "...the combination of the political backlash and a serious economic recession has worked to wipe out many if not most of the very modest and mild changes of the 1960s." There is a regressive consciousness in which

> ...Freedom has come to mean license to the powerful rather than liberation for the weak; equality is seen as the privilege of competing rather than the right to dignity; individualsim has come to mean greed rather than moral autonomy; and community has come to be oriented around terms of class rather than terms of humanity.[70]

Jonathon Kozol was one of the first writers to critique comprehensively the humanistically oriented experiments of this period, as exemplified by the free school movement. His critique is essentially that "free schools" are the off-spring of the disaffected educated white upper class, whose lives he characterizes as "passive, tranquil and protected" and dependent

on "strongly armed police" and "well-demarcated ghettos." Having characterized the supporters of Free schools in this way, Kozol claims that "Free-Schools ...cannot, with sanity, with candor, or with truth, endeavor to exist within a moral vacuum." He argues that their existence provides an "ideal drain on activism and the perfect way to sidetrack ethical men from dangerous behavior."[71] Free schools, he claims,are "...in many instances, conspicuously and intentionally anti-political."[72] Since Free schools meet the aspirations of the white middle classes, Kozol considers them virtually incapable of meeting the needs of the poor. He attacks the narcissism which he relates to the free school movement's emphasis on "relevance:"

> The Free School that shatters the mirror and turns to face the flames is the one that will not lose its consciousness of struggle or its capability for a continued process of regeneration. When we forget the enemy's name, we turn our guns upon each other.[73]

Kozol is even less enamoured, however, of the American public school system. He describes the goal of the public school system as not to educate good people, but to indoctrinate them into being obedient citizens."The problem,with public schools," Kozol claims, "is not that [they] do **not** work well, but that they **do**."[74] Public schools are there to maintain the social order. To Kozol humanistic educational innovators are not most dangerous when they confine themselves to free schools, but when their pedagogy is applied within the public systems,resulting in their techniques being appropriated

> ... by corporations such as I.B.M, Xerox and E.D.C. in order to develop the most clever methods ever known for

> teaching children how to phantasize a sense of freedom that does not exist.[75]

Kozol indicts mainstream public schooling for deceiving its clientèle by fopping off clichès of democracy and access while hypocritically maintaining the social status quo; thus implicating the oppressed in the creation of their own oppression. He attacks free schools because they represent and protect the interests and narcissism of a privileged class who nonetheless manages to acquire outside the schools those skills denied to the poor.

G. Paulo Freire and Critical Pedagogy

Paulo Freire has influenced many educational thinkers with his theories of critical pedagogy, developed through his work in adult literacy with the poorest agricultural workers in his native Brazil. In reviewing the work of Freire and the critical theorists,it is important to bear in mind that part of their praxis is to "reappropriate" language by developing their own specialized vocabulary. While the critical thinkers are certainly not unanimous on all points, there is virtual consensus on the following points:

> (1) the schools represent a powerful force of social, intellectual, and personal oppression; (2) the reasons for such oppression are rooted in the culture's history; (3) they represent a number of deeply held cultural values-hierarchy, conformity, success, materialism, control; and (4) what is required for significant changes in the schools amounts to a fundamental transformation of the culture's consciousness.[76]

The points of major interest to the critical theorists may also be couched as questions in a "reinvigourated debate about education:"

> (1) What will be the approach to social inequality or social transformation? (2) What will be the approach to social inequality in the education debate? (3) Will curriculum be concerned with traditional and religious values, or will issues of gender, race, and class inequality come to the forefront? (4) Will the curriculum reflect the ethnocentrism of our touted "Western heritage," or will pluralism prevail through multicultural and global education? (5) Will vocational interests prevail, or can critical literacy and teaching be implemented? (6) Will the schools be controlled by central boards or teachers, administrators and communities?[77]

Starting with Freire, the critical theorists have developed a particular vocabulary to describe a set of inter-related and widely shared concepts which have grown through the dialectical process of their discussion and writing. The first concept of importance is that of Critical Pedagogy itself:

> Fundamentally concerned with the centrality of politics and power in our understanding of how schools work, critical theorists have produced work centering on the political economy of schooling, the state and education, the representation of texts, and the construction of student subjectivity...critical theorists generally analyze schools in a twofold way: as sorting mechanisms in which select groups of students are favored on the basis of race, class, and gender; and as agencies for self and social empowerment.[78]

While The New School tended, on the whole, to focus primarily on the affective life of its students from 1973-78, as the economy worsened and the economic and social situations and expectations of our students changed, we had to enlarge the scope of our considerations. One danger in Humanistic Education is its isolation of the "Self" as an entity beyond material consideration. In order to help our increasingly alienated students understand themselves as social beings,the teachers had to understand the students' individual living situations and their relationship to systemic

oppression and to implicate them in examining their own living situations. While we don't relinquish the concepts of self-actualization or authenticity, it has become urgent to understand that:

> If the authentic man [sic] is our aim, then the authentic society is also our aim. That society is authentic in the degree to which it fails to provoke in the individual citizen these urgings to escape from his freedom.[79]

Only when people are aware of the psychological, cultural, and socio-economic determinants in their lives, are they able to negotiate the task of "inventing" themselves and their lives. The aim of The New School has always been an emancipatory one: to free people from the emotional shackles imposed by others' expectations of them and to help them achieve a high level of self-actualization which would result in increased self-esteemn and a reinvestment into their own community. The notion of emancipation (however restrained it originally was) is primordial to our educational objectives.

Freire clearly identifies the hegemonic nature of school-knowledge, and how it effectively silences the masses.[80] Freire rightly does not consider mere literacy the solution to oppression. Learners must develop a critical understanding of:

> ...the reasons behind many of their attitudes toward cultural reality and thus confront cultural reality in a new way...The learners' capacity for critical knowing---well beyond mere opinion---is established in the process of unveiling their relationships with the historical-cultural world in and with which they exist.[81]

That is why:

> On the basis of the social experience of illiterates, we can conclude that only a literacy that associates the learning of reading and writing with a creative act will exercise the critical comprehension of that experience, and without any illusion of triggering liberation, it will nevertheless contribute to its process.
>
> And, of course, this is no task for the dominant classes.[82]

This creative act, also called "conscientization", is a form of "cultural production" as opposed to the standard cultural reproduction in schools. Although he is fully aware of the problematic situation of the dominant classes passing along learning to the dominated, Freire sees ways around this paradox. Because literacy is an "...eminently political phenomenon, it must be analyzed within the context of a theory of power relations and an understanding of social and cultural reproduction and production."

> By "cultural reproduction" we refer to collective experiences that function in the interest of the dominant groups, rather in the interest of the oppressed groups that are the object of its policies. We use "cultural production" to refer to specific groups of people producing, mediating, and confirming the mutual ideological elements that emerge from and reaffirm their daily lived experiences. In this case, such experiences are rooted in the interests of individual and collective self-determination.[83]

Freire identifies as the best learning process a socially contextual one in which learners situate themselves within their social context through a process of critical questioning. He argues that individuals must come to a critical consciousness of their "own being in the world." To him both teachers and students are agents engaged in the process of questioning the dominant ideology and constructing and reconstructing meaning.[84]

The natural result of the dominant ideology is the creation of a "curriculum" which comprises simply the transfer of the guiding principles of the dominant ideology to the dominated. Concomitant with this transfer of the "formal curriculum" are notions of "rigour:"

> We have to fight with love, **with passion**, in order to demonstrate that what we are proposing is **absolutely rigorous.**We have,in doing so,to demonstrate that rigor is not synonymous with authoritarianism, that "rigor" does not mean "rigidity." Rigor **lives** with freedom, **needs** freedom. I cannot understand how it is possible to be rigorous without being creative. For **me** it is very difficult to be creative without having freedom. Without being free, I can **only** repeat what is being told me.[85]

The first requirement for liberatory education, to Freire, is that teachers and students both must be: "critical agents in the act of knowing." Furthermore,teachers must be aware of a contradiction inherent in liberating education: unless the teachers are convinced of what must be changed, they cannot convince the students. On the other hand, although they are convinced of the value of their positions, they must respect students and not impose ideas on them.[86] Freire constructs a very complex model of learning and knowing which assumes **a prior** learner motivation. He is quite dismissive of North American difficulties in inspiring student motivation.

> I think it [motivation] is an interesting issue. I never, never could understand the process of motivation outside of practice, before practice. It is as if first I needed to be motivated and then I could get into action! do you see? That is a very anti-dialectical way of understanding motivation. Motivation takes part **in** the action. It is a moment of the very action itself. That is, you become motivated to the extent that you are acting, and not before acting...This book will be good if at the very moment in which the possible reader is reading,he or she is able to feel motivated because of the act of reading, and not

because he or she read about motivation. [87]

In our experience in The New School, it is often difficult to motivate students to open the book. Reading a book,as a cultural act,frequently presents them with technical difficulty that precipitates low self-esteem in the learners,to many of whom school has been the site of continual defeat. Very often,by the time they have passed through elementary and secondary schools, they have already labeled themselves as "stupid." They are further reinforced by a popular adolescent culture in which, as a result of the often meaningless reading to which students have been setnenced in elementary and high school, they are rightfully suspicious of "book learning." The popular culture of the society is very "thing oriented." The extremely concrete aspirations of owning various signifiers of class or status reduce abstract or even "passionately applied" school learning to utter redundancy. While we generate discussion with them on the nature of these values,on their previous education and the interests it represents, this dialogue is not always sufficient to motivate them to overcome their fears and **engage** with reading and what it may bring them. Their sense of cultural exclusion, indeed, often makes them want to create a strictly "adolescent" culture, or to participate in a pre-packaged culture which can give them immediate gratification with some illusion of meaning and control. It is precisely because humanistic educators address the psychological dimensions of a problem which cannot be fully addressed through the current analysis of Critical Pedagogy, that The New School is continually involved in the

dialectical process of unifying the two strains of theory and developing from this process a pedagogy of Critical Humanism.

Freire, however, does give a very valuable account of a cycle of knowing, which he sees as having two definite and separate phases related to one another:

> The first moment of the cycle...is the one of **production**, the production of new knowledge, something new.The other moment is the one during which the produced knowledge is known or perceived. One moment is the production of new knowledge and the second is one in which you know the existing knowledge.

Freire claims that in regular schools the teacher is simply a specialist at transferring knowledge, rather than someone with the qualities necessary for both phases in the cycle of knowing: "action, critical reflection, curiosity, demanding inquiry, uneasiness, uncertainty."[88]

Liberating education is not just a question of methods or methodologies: "The criticism that liberating education has to offer emphatically is not the criticism which ends at the subsytem of education. On the contrary, the criticism of the liberatory class goes beyond the subsystem of education and becomes criticism of society."[89] Freire emphasizes the importance of dialogic method between students and teachers:

> Dialogue is a moment where humans meet to reflect on their reality as they make and remake it...[it] seals the relationship between the cognitive subjects, the subjects who know, and who try to know...dialogue is a challenge to existing domination. Also, with such a way of understanding dialogue, the object to be known is **not** an exclusive possession of **one** of the subjects doing the knowing, one of the people in the dialogue. In our case of education, knowledge of the object to be known is not the sole possession of the teacher, who gives

> the knowledge to the students in a gracious gesture. Instead ...the object to be known mediates the two cognitive subjects...They meet around it and through it for mutual inquiry.[90]

A dialogic approach has always been used at The New School; Freirean pedagogy provides an enlarged notion of "reality" which includes the political-social-economic context in which the dialogue is taking place. Freire's education of liberation, which must result in social class empowerment, very concretely extends the Humanistic objective of self-actualization:

> Even when you individually feel yourself most free, this feeling is not a **social** feeling, if you are not able to use your **recent** freedom to help others to be free by transforming the totality of society, then you are exercising only an individualist attitude towards empowerment or freedom.[91]

The work of Freire can be of invaluable inspiration and help to humanistic educators. However, while the socio-political dimensions of knowledge and the individual's relation to it are well addressed by Freire, his notion of the "self" or a recognizably individual entity does not account for much of what goes on at the affective level of people's lives:

> The comprehension of the social is always determined by the comprehension of the individual. In this sense, the individualistic position works against the comprehension of the real role of human agency. Human agency makes sense and flourishes only when subjectivity is understood in its dialectical, contradictory, dynamic relationship with objectivity, from which it derives.[92]

While it is true that we know ourselves to a great extent in relation to the society in which we live, and in terms of our relation to dominance, it is also true that we may have

understandings of the "real role of human agency" which derive from other experiences: aesthetic, spiritual, contemplative.

Over time a conceptual structure and methodology have been developed at The New School which are similar in essence to the critical pedagogy of Freire. While certainly some of us were aware of his work many years ago, other faculty contributed from diverse cultural and political sources to the development of ideology within the school. We have drawn ideas from theoretical frameworks of Women's Studies, Black Studies, Gay Studies, Peace Education and Ecology...all of which address the emancipation of oppressed groups and advocate radical change in the distribution and mode of power in the world. In order to meet our ideological objectives and our students' changing needs, we have combined Humanistic Education, Critical Pedagogy and these various "emancipation" studies into a hybrid which I have named **Critical Humanism**. This methodology combines attention to eccentric individual psychological dimensions along with the socio-political contexts of people's lives.

H. Theorists and Theory of Critical Pedagogy

Freire's work has been elaborated by a younger generation of critical theorists, among whom are Stanley Aronowitz, Henry Giroux, Ira Shor and Sydney Simon, who have built on his vocabulary and conceptualization.

One central concept developed by these theorists is that of "voice."In critical theory, the word "discourse" refers to a "family of concepts," composed of discursive practices which are governed by rules relating to the said, the unsaid, and the legitimation of the authority of voice. Dominant discourse is the "language" with which the power-group defines reality.[93] The controlling ideology, structure and dissemination of the dominant discourse is called the **hegemony.** This pervasive class dominance depends on the active participation of the dominated for its perpetuation. Their participation is ensured by the creation of "consensual social practices, social forms, and social structures produced in specific sites such as the church, the state, the school,the mass media,the political system,and the family."[94]

The hegemony asserts itself in schools through a hidden curriculum which comprises "...those unstated norms, values, and beliefs embedded in and transmitted to students through the underlying rules that structure the routines and social relationships in school and classroom life."[95] Radical perspectives on hidden curriculum attempt to explain:

> ...the political function of schooling in terms of the important concepts of class and domination...they point to the existence of structural factors outside the immediate environment of the classroom as important forces in influencing both the day-to-day experiences and the outcomes of the schooling process.[96]

This kind of analysis underlies many learning group negotiations at The New School where we explore not only the groups' affective attraction to particular subject matter, but we also explore the

contextualization of that subject matter in the students' shared world.

Another important concept is that of cultural capital. Cultural capital represents ways of talking, acting, modes of style, moving, socializing, forms of knowledge, language practices and values.[97]

> Certain linguistic styles, along with the body posture and the social relations they reinforce lowered voice, disinterested tone, non-tactile interaction, act as identifiable forms of cultural capital that either reveal or betray a student's social background. In effect, certain linguistic practices and modes of discourse become privileged by being treated as natural to the gifted, when in fact they are the speech habits of dominant classes and thus serve to perpetuate cultural privileges.[98]

Many New School students come from immigrant families where their parents have had very little formal education. Others are from Canadian born families who have lived through generations of subsistence income either earned through labour or welfare. Other students identify themselves as "system kids,"who have lived in state-financed foster care or "group homes" for varying periods of their lives, usually due to various forms of abandonment. Their cultural capital puts them at a definite disadvantage in the mainstream educational system where students from the milieu most likely to benefit from the dominant culture have inherited substanially different cultural capital which is reinforced and confirmed, while that of the "disadvantaged" is systemically devalued. This is a situation where Freire uses
the pedagogy of "conscientization that "takes the notion of student experience seriously...[by]...developing a critically affirmative

language that works dialectically, engaging the experiences that students bring to the classroom."[99] Most affirmative, perhaps is that the process provokes "... recognition of the world, not as a `given' world, but as world dynamically `in the making.'"[100]

There are various voices in each educational interaction: the teacher's voice which characterisitcally is the voice of the hegemony; the "school voice" which refers to the learned expectations of all learners; the students' voices which are shaped by their prior experience and particular cultural and social history. The "teacher voice" can be a tool of oppression. However, a teacher who is a transformative intellectual can change the nature of discourse, can confirm the students' experience and roots, and can thus turn learning into an experience of empowerment. Together students and teacher live out the emancipatory possibilities of education.[101]

This search for and recognition of the unmediated voice is the cornerstone of empancipatory education exemplified in Women's Studies, Black Studies, Gay Studies, Peace Studies. All of these areas of inquiry and pedagogy are predicated on the need to question current epistemology on the basis of whose interests it serves and whose standards are being met. These fields (they are the fields of great interest at The New School) attempt to redefine the nature of knowledge through arriving at information and conclusions based on the subjective epxerience of people as well as on externally and empirically verifiable "facts." They are based on the primacy of the subject's self-definition as opposed to the

hegemony in which primacy is always accorded to the definitions generated by the conservative self-interest of a ruling class. The search for and confirmation of authentic voice is of central importance at The New School where the student is recognized as the ultimate authority on his/her own life.

Critical theory is useful in situating the way in which education traditionally reproduces the inequities within the society. It helps contextualize students' preparation, many of their values, and their highly variable sense of social participation and power. While critical theory does not anticipate possibilities of change through individual personal growth, critical theorists do address the crucial issue of <u>student resistance</u> by developing a theory of resistance which questions "...the processes by which the school system reflects and sustains the logic of capital as well as dominant social practices and structures that are found in a class, race, and gender divided society." Student resistance may arise from various causes such as the monitoring of passion and desire, the creation of "dead time," and the reduction of interpersonal relationships "to the imperatives of market ideology." Even the very bodies of the students become the site of authoritarian definition and control. One way in which learners express their resistance is through choosing ignorance: refusing "to acknowledge that ...[their]...subjectivities have been constructed out of information and social practices that surround" them.[102] This theory of resistance rejects currently popular explanations of

oppositional behaviour by arguing that it has little to do with deviance and learned helplessness and really arises from "moral and political indignation." It shifts the theoretical discussion to a "concept of resistance" which sees resistance as an active dialectical response to domination, which in itself is multi-dimensional.

One way in which such resistance may be transformed into a transcendant ideology of empowerment is through the "language of possibility." This language or pedagogy of possibility rests on a vision of collective human freedom:

> Without a vision for the future, a pedagogy of empowerment is reduced to a method for participation which takes democracy as an end and not as a means!
> ...An education that empowers for possibility must raise social questions of how we can work for the reconstruction of social imagination in the service of human freedom...the project of possibility requires an education rooted in a view of human freedom as the understanding of necessity and the transformation of society.[103]

The education towards possibility requires that teachers educate students to,

> ...take risks, to struggle with ongoing relations of power, to critically appropriate forms of knowledge that exist outside of their immediate experience, and to envisage versions of a world which is 'not yet'-in order to be able to alter the grounds upon which life is lived.[104]

This means that the students' voices must be legitimated and the "cultural logic" of their subjectivity recognized.[105] Simon identifies contradiction in a pedagogy geared towards the empowerment of students which must "teach" them to use their voice while at the same time raising serious questions regarding the existing social forms. "How can we both legitimate the expression

of a student voice and challenge at the same time those aspects of that voice which negate our educational/ political vision?" Simon resolves this dilemma by claiming that each person does not have **one** voice but a multiplicity of voices, and that the educator must encourage the kind of critical discussion which forces clarification and consequent radicalization.[106]

Aronowitz and Giroux identify various weaknesses in resistance theory which are certainly corroborated by our experience at The New School. They claim that many students see through the postures of the dominant school ideology but decide not to express themselves through rebellious behaviour; indeed, sometimes students may be totally indifferent to the hypocrisy of schools. They also state that insufficient attention is paid by resistance theorists to "...the issue of how domination reaches into the structure of personality itself."

> Radical educators have shown a lamentable tendency to ignore the question of needs and desires in favor of issues that center around ideology and consciousness. A critical psychology is needed that points to the way in which 'un-freedom' reproduces itself in the psyche of human beings...without a theory of radical needs and critical psychology, educators have no way of understanding the grip and force of alienating social structures as they manifest themselves in the lived but often non-discursive aspects of everyday life.[107]

Some of Maslow's and Rogers'work on motivation and aspiration is germane to the development of a radical psychology and <u>praxis</u> which addresse the personal feelings of the rebellious as well as the indifferent. The techniques of values clarification developed by Kirschenbaum <u>et al</u> can also be used to bring emotions to the

surface and introduce them to the discourse of critical pedagogy. While we at The New School see the need for a more formalized psychology which takes into account the socio/economic/political context of the student and the group,we have not to date formulated an all-embracive theoretical base.

At The New School we experience frequent resistance on the part of students to completing work they themselves have contracted to do, to considering insights suggested to them in the Bands, or to ways in which the ideology of the school has become expressed through custom and practice. In addressing resistance, we must examine possible psychological and personal reasons for behaviour. We first try to find the roots of the resistance and to understand if they are individual or systemic. In either case, we attempt to address them by helping the student(s) arrive at a critical analysis of the ground for their resistance. Sometimes the resistance points to the need for basic changes within the school which are discussed at community meetings and often put into operation in ways arrived at by consensus or a vote. The student voice, with all that it implies regarding ethnicity, gender, race and class, is primary in these deliberations. Discussion is always based on a notion of possibility, and all solutions are seen as "in process" to be monitored with an eye to change. The contradiction referred to by Simon is one staff and students face continually. Our way of resolving it is ultimately to leave the behavioural choices to the people most affected by them, even if we are in basic ideological disagreement. The problem with education for

empowerment, from the point of view of an occasional dissident, is that as issues are worked out, frequently it is not possible to satisfy everyone. It is often very difficult for people to relinquish their "objective" visions of a situation or a person's choices and behaviour in view of what they might regard as an individual's wrong-headed desire "not to know" and insistence on continuing on a course of action which is generally regarded as disempowering. The ultimate sign of trust which a community can give at this particular juncture is the trust Rogers mentions for each person's ability to accept "what they do not wish to know" only when they are ready to. While one can and should embark on a critical discussion and analysis with students, ultimately one must not only accept but confirm the person's right to a choice which may even be contrary to the views of the rest of the community. This often can bring into focus the perennial dilemma of democratic life: where do individual rights end and collective rights begin? While there may not be a simple answer to this question out there in the cosmos,the process of addressing it regularly raises the consciousness of <u>all</u> members of the community.

The teacher is the essential link in providing an empancipatory education to learners. The critical theorists emphasize that critical teachers must be "transformative intellectuals" who are not only interested in individual student success,but are concerned in their teaching with linking empowerment---the ability to think and act critically-to a concept of social transformation.[108] Teachers must also be willing to be

"bearers of dangerous memory," keeping alive the memory of human suffering by recounting the history of the marginal,the vanquished,and the oppressed and by actively opposing the hegemonic practice of "not naming" those things which challenge the status quo and suggest the elimination of the sources of human suffering by the realization of alternative possibilities for society.[109] For Freire the function of a transformative intellectual is to "unveil" the reality hidden by the dominant ideology and to "dream about the reinvention of society."[110] Freire believes it is only through a practice of idealism that teachers can keep motivated themselves:

> Being engaged in a permanent process of illuminating reality with students, fighting against the opacity and obscuring of reality, has something to do with avoiding a fall into cynicism. This is a risk which we have as educators, to the extent we work, work, work!, and often see no results. Many times, we can lose hope. In such moments, there is no solution and we may become mentally bureaucratized, lose creativity, fall into excuses, become mechanistic. This is the bureaucratization of the mind, a kind of fatalism.[111]

All the critical theorists agree on principle that radical pedagogy must be informed by a "passionate faith in the necessity to create a better world" it needs a vision of possibility, a kind of "concrete utopianism" which is a result of "creative risk-taking, of engaging life so as to enrich it."[112]

I. <u>"Emancipation Studies" and the Pedagogy of Critical Humanism.</u>

Since the beginning Women's Studies has been a presence in The New School. Each year at least one teacher has worked from a feminist persepctive. Many of the objectives of Women's Studies

are consistent with those of Critical Pedagogy: involving women in the women's movement through education; serving as a focal point for developing a body of knowledge about women; acting as an institutional base for the struggle against sexism, and providing a center of resources which could be tapped by the women's movement for the community.[113] Epistemologically, Women's Studies must compensate for the absence of women from curriculum by building a body of research on women; it must ensure the understanding of patriarchy in its historical perspective and of the effects of socialization and sex role stereotyping on women through a cross-cultural perspective; it must promote an understanding of women in history, of female sexuality, of the function of education as a codifier of sex-segregation, of the function of the family vis-a-vis women in all cultures, of the relation of women to paid and unpaid work, and finally of the relationship between social movements and women.[114] Added to the above list is the expectation that there be an analysis of scholarship by and about women in both the traditional disciplines and in interdisciplinary forms. The structures and conditions of women's oppression must be studied as well as contrasting models for self determination. Above all, it is considered essential to examine the relationships between the personal subordination of women and the broader social, political and economic structures. On a more affective basis, Women's Studies must also push women towards academic excellence.[115] Women's Studies addresses the personal and systemic dimensions of women's experience in both its formal and informal content by starting with

the self as subject.[116] Life-experience is considered an appropriate subject for analysis. Women's Studies concerns itself with process as well as product, is multicultural and explores interlocking systems of oppression based on sex, race and class.[117]

Inherent in the creation of this new field of study is the struggle to create an epistemological shift in human knowledge by rephrasing and critiquing the standard ways of developing questions, answers and paradigms. This developing epistemology rejects the dichotomous notion of cognitive/ affective learning in favour of a theory of continuum from the cognitive to the affective and unconscious levels of learning. Feminist epistemology also recognizes that there are many ways of learning such as intuition,spiritual understanding,creativity,and socio/political contextualization. Women's Studies cannot avoid touching on the "personal" dimensions of the lives of both the teacher and the student: "The premise that men dominate women, in however partial or subtle or brutal a way, lends a certain urgency to feminist investigations."[118] This urgency is experienced on the level of one's personal life: "What does this mean for me?" "How will it affect my relationship with my lover, my brother, my father, my friends?" It is also epxerienced in one's public political sphere: "How can I escape this domination?" "Will it affect my future success or my ability to attain my own goals?"

Because Women's Studies has not only developed **from** the women's movement but grown inextricably **with** it, the emphasis on praxis and its role in transformational social and intellectual

change has charged it with a mission far beyond traditional intellectual preoccupations. Because of the charged nature of its subject matter, Women's Studies has always had to address the affective and to confirm the personal experiences and insights of women. Since it is a new field of study, teacher and learner are thrust into a fairly egalitarian situation,when frequently the learner has had many "female" experiences to which the teacher may not have been personally exposed.

These elements in the theory and praxis of Women's Studies make it an excellent locus for developing a pedagogy of Critical Humanism. At The New School,the issue of gender is widely addressed from a feminist point of view in Bands, Learning Groups and in the community itself.

For some years, men at The New School have demanded men's groups to discuss how they feel, analyse and deal with the masculinist ideology which has shaped their lives. Over the years complementary ideology and pedagogy have developed in Women's Studies and Men's Groups. There has also been a continual interest in sexuality expressed by students of both sexes. Learning Groups in Human Sexuality and Bands have also combined many pedagogical techniques of Humanistic Education,Feminist Education,and Critical Pedagogy to provide a multi-dimensional approach to the students' primary concerns.

Over the years there have been numerous learning groups on Black Studies, racism, prejudice, political power, and peace within The New School. The visceral feelings students have about these

issues are explored along with an analysis of the socio-political contexts of these subjects within the lives of the students, and in the wider human context.. Because of the many ways gender informs values in our complex lives, gender studies in particular lend themselves to the combination of Humanistic Education and Critical Pedagogy, consolidating within the New School's pedagogy the ideology of Critical Humanism.

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CHAPTER THREE

"CLIENTELE," IDEOLOGY AND PRAXIS AT THE NEW SCHOOL

A. "Clientèle"

> It is because money cannot buy the human gestures which confer respect, nor rights guarantee them as entitlements, that any decent society requires a public discourse about the needs of the human person. It is because fraternity, love, belonging, dignity and respect cannot be specified as rights that we ought to specify them as needs and seek, with the blunt institutional procedures at our disposal, to make their satisfaction a routine human practice.[1]

Many New School students have a strong sense of entitlement to something they call "my education" as in "I need my education to get ahead." "Getting ahead" is usually quite a modest ambition: being just ahead of the minimum wage law and having future access to "state of the art" consumer goods. During their CEGEP years, most students are willing to work long hours at part-time jobs in order to have those talismanic objects which they think will confer meaning to their lives and status to themselves. We have observed that many of our students are increasingly committed to low-paying dead-end "mall jobs" than they are to acquiring the skills to realize long-term career or economic success, much less to experience interesting work, personal growth and social status. Learning college-level skills can be difficult, requiring the ability to concentrate for lengthy periods of time and to manage ones time effectively. These capacities are rarely fully developed by adolescents whose time has been planned for them and whose concentration span has been conditioned to the 8-12

minutes between TV commercials. Education is recognized simply as a means of getting "somewhere" beyond the work available to young part-time workers, the most vulnerable group in the labour force.

School is frequently perceived as a conduit to more satisfying commodities. While education is seen as entitlement, so is consumerism, a notion continually supported by the media to which young people are addicted. It is my impression that the desire to have increased access to "things", coupled with a reluctance to defer gratification in order to ensure future success and achievement, are partially caused by the emotional vacuums and states of alienation in which many young people live.

Their situation becomes clearer when the Maslowian hierarchy of needs is applied to it. The achievement of self-actualization is based on the satisfaction:of physiological needs [food, water,sleep, physical comfort];of safety needs [stability, order, freedom from violence,disease,disorder];of needs for "belongingness and love"[friendship,giving and receiving affection];and of self-esteem needs [recognition,respect from others,self-respect]...all of which needs must be satisfied in order to strive for self-actualization.[2] Maslow developed these theories primarily in the post-World War II period when there was great public nostalgia in North America for a fantasized version of the family life which had been disrupted by the depression and the war. Influenced by this prevailing sentmentality,Maslow believed in the possibility of a clear,orderly and sequential development of human potential. It is true that later on Maslow despaired that society had fallen into

a "chaos of relativism" and "valuelessness."[3]

The two decades since Maslow's death have brought even greater social change. Currently,one out of every three children in the USA is the child of a divorce,and it is predicted that by the year 2000, one out of every two children in the USA will be in this position. While the statistics are not available for Canada,they usually follow trends similar to the USA. This means that by the year 2000, 50% of the population will have undergone the trauma of family bifurcation;this should clearly have a strong effect on people's expectations of human institutions and relationships. A recent fifteen year study of the effect of divorce on families indicates that adolescence is a period of particularly grave risk for children in divorced families---the single most important cause they themselves identify of enduring pain and anomie in their lives. They have been found to be left with an enduring feeling of both physical and emotional adandonment,and to continue feeling the effects of family breakdown ten to fifteen years after a separation or divorce, especially if they have witnessed family violence. On the longer run, these children appear to experience real anxiety about their ability to create families themselves; this of course would affect their attitude to possible positive results produced by the deferment of immediate gratification. In the United States, children from divorced families account for an inordinately high proportion of children in mental-health treatment,in special education,referred by teachers to school psychologists,and an estimated 60% of child patients in clinical treatment and 80%-100%

of adolescents in in-patient mental hospital settings.[4] Parents frequently do not get their lives on track after divorce and suffer a diminished capacity to provide parental guidance,and those child-rearing functions necessary to ensure the psychological health of their families. In many cases it is the child who is expected to provide psychological support for a distressed parent. As well, children who remain with their mothers often experience a serious drop in the family's standard of living accompanied by regular observation of a lasting discrepancy between their parents' standards of living.[5] By no means do most children of divorce usually benefit from resources exceeding the minimum child support awarded by courts. In Canada, 75% of child support monies awarded to mothers and children by courts is not paid by fathers. Frequently children become pawns in power games between parents years after they've stopped talking to each other, or even formed relationships with new mates.

Increasing numbers of our students are from single-parent families and often have very tenuous ties with one or both of their parents. Some of them have no contact with their biological parents and call themselves "system kids," having been raised through the warehousing of children in foster or group homes. Even in cases of intact middle class families,frequently young people are expected to provide for their personal needs except for room and board at home. This means they must pay school fees and expenses,travel expenses,lunches,clothing and all recreational expenses for themselves. In short,they are not eligible for financial aid and

must find jobs. Many families have lived unrooted lives far from the support of relatives, and in many cases family stability has been permanently disrupted not only by divorce, separation or death, but by drug or alcohol abuse or mental illness among parents. Often young people are especially undermined by uncomfortable and ill-defined situations in blended families, disastrous serial marriages of one or both parents, and they are sometimes subject to various family-related and more public forms of sexual abuse. Many students also work to support themselves away from families or the remains of families who have the means to support them at home. Frequently their physical or psychological survival is dependent on their being removed from pathological family situations. It is very difficult to persuade people in such situations to consider the long-range possibility of the acquisition of knowledge improving their lives. This is especially difficult with students who have histories of poor academic performance, because frequently as children they simply could not concentrate on school work. Every aspect of their lives was mediated by problems at home.

Like all young people, our students hope that somehow "it will all work out in their lives." They frequently take a passive spectator role in their own lives and seem to feel powerless to effect change. Many of them love futuristic fantasy and science fiction, and yet the future of modernity seems to hold within it the promise of further alienation. It is almost impossible in this situation to set down strong roots of belongingness, and we are

often alarmed by some students' skills at connecting with strangers matched by their panic at the possibility of closeness, of continuity and community.

For many young people,the pervasive presence of drugs provides an illusion of belonging,of solidarity,of meaning,and of freedom. Drugs promise an ersatz but instantly achieveable sense of self-actualization and affiliation. Relationships with dealers and other users are fraught with meanings and loyalties. While most of our students are not consumers of "heavy drugs," some of them are sufficiently regular users of marajuana and hashish for this habit to interfere with their ability to do college-level cognitive work. It is also clear that there is no young person in our urban landscape who is not fully acquainted with the language of drugs and more capable of accessing them than his/her teachers. By direct contact or by peer contacts to whom they are usually very loyal, increasing numbers of young people are implicated in the general violence and criminalization of our society.

Students of college age are undergoing enormous physiological, emotional and social changes in their lives. Their bodies are still undergoing internal changes which may result in radical change of appearance. Very often,leaving high school means parting from some good friends,or at least from a context in which they occupy a unique place. Sometimes coming to college is the first time they have been consistently absent from their neighbourhood on a day-to-day basis. All these factors can destabilize their sense of well-being and self-esteem. Thrown into the crucible of a large

urban college,they often have difficulties maintaining a strong sense of identity. If they do not have a stable base of security in their lives, their need for self-esteem makes them vulnerable to the illusion of self-esteem provided by drugs,alcohol and casual sex. They are also vulnerable to an adolescent culture which markets "image" and "life style" rather than any substantive sense of accomplishment or identity. "Image" is attainable through the possession of magical objects manufactured with the intention of creating only a temporary sense of well-being. Their precarious self-esteem is in constant danger of sudden invalidation by cleverly orchestrated changes of style which force them to recapture the ephemeral sense of well-being through buying their way into the next market-researched image. Because of their lack of long-term goals, many young people from 15-24 years of age possess a large cumulative and disposable cash income attractive to manufacturers who undertake programmes of lucrative image-vending designed to maintain a constant distance between the young people's low self-esteem and idealised new versions of themselves which will keep them buying, keep them working at exploitative dead-end jobs, and keep them deferring serious education. They become increasingly deskilled for the kind of concentration required for academic work.

Frequently education is meaningful to our students only as a means of getting into a better income bracket in order to buy more. They have been appropriated by the notion of "self-esteem through possessions." The "farther reaches of human nature" possited by

Maslow become transposed into the substitution of consumerism for human solidarity. Maslow's notion of self-actualization is reachable through a slow and organic process based on individual safety and belongingness. Without extensive discussion of the emotions hidden within our students,self-actualization may very quickly become transposed into a glitzy mirage of illusory safety and well-being,not unlike the instant nirvana promised by drug experiences or orgasm.

> Being human is an accomplishment like playing an instrument. It takes practice. The keys must be mastered. The old scores must be committed to memory. It is a skill we can forget. A little noise can make us forget the notes. The best of us is historical; the best of us is fragile. Being human is a second nature which history taught us, and which terror and deprivation can batter us into forgetting.[6]

While many of our students are not children of divorce, violated sexually,physically abused,or continually involved in alcohol,drugs or casual sex,most of them nonetheless have difficulty in understanding the value of education-in-itself. All schools have the mission [whether they recognize it or not!] of piercing the prevalent notion of education-as-entitlement-to-esteem-through-possessions to the celebration of knowledge.

While it may be desirable to undertake with the students a project of critical pedagogy focused on their values and the interests they serve, it takes much more than intellectual argumentation to convince young people to give up comforting fantasies created to compensate for the absence in their lives of the real human entitlements: comfort, safety, community, respect, love, self-esteem and the ability to form independent judgements

based on an unmediated understanding of their own personal interests and needs. Such change may only devolve from re-experiencing in full wakefulness the lacks they are trying to fill. Critical Humanism brings critical pedagogy to bear on their lives combined with a pedagogy of the emotions, which examines their innermost values.

B. The Agenda of the State

The ideology of The New School is developed within a *context* where our particular objectives are not taken into account when we are allocated resources. The same formulae for staffing and budgeting are applied to us as are applied to all other departments and disciplines, many of which have totally different needs. Recently the Conseil des Collèges published a report on the failure and/or drop-out rate in the CEGEPs, reporting that only 59% of all students entering CEGEP complete their diplomas.[7] Various reasons are advanced for this low success rate, the first of which characterizes the students' values in this way:

> ...l'élève d'aujourdhui doit se situer dans une société qui à aussi connu un éclatement des valeurs autrefois considerées comme fondamentales. Les valeurs spirituelles, dans le sense large du terme, ne sont plus entourées de la même auréole de prestige qu'autrefois et cela se reflète dans des attitudes face aux études. Si le jeune qui fréquente le réseau collégial aujourd'hui est citoyen d'une société fortement axée sur la consommation et sur l'utilitarisme, il adhère aussi à des valeurs qui lui sont personelles...
>
> Par ailleurs, les besoins et les attentes de 'l'élève d'aujourd'hui sont conditionnés par une situation économique en constant évolution. Le diplôme auquel il aspire ne sera plus, comme autrefois,un passeport lui offrant de larges garanties d'obtenir, des la fin des ses études, un emploi à plein temps stable, intéressant et bien

remunéré.

Dans ce contexte, il ne faut pas se surprendre que pour l'élève, au seuil de la vie adulte, les études ne constituent pas toujours la seule ni même la principale préoccupation. Sa vie se compose d'une alternance d'études,de loisir,de travail remunéré et d'autres occupations qui contribuent,chacune à leur manière,à combler ses différents besoins d'individu,mais aussi de consommateur.[8]

This profile rests on a tacit acceptance of the complicity of the state and the business "community" in which consumerism has become a nationally defined "need." There is no effort to analyse what "needs" are defined by the students and whose interests are served by them.For this reason,it is unlikely that the Quebec educational establishment will be the site of a **systemic** effort to provide for the students an argument for the values inherent in simply knowing more about the world,its past,how it functions,and learning to pose critical questions regarding the **status quo**. It is precisely because the values are dictated by the combined manipulations of government and industry in a "free-market" economy that consumerism is emphasized concomitantly with "training for jobs" at the college level. The utmost cynicism is to be found in the **caveat** that in any case no one is guaranteed a full-time,stable and interesting job upon graduation.

The report also identifies seven central factors determiningg students' failure and/or dropping out in school: their past school experience;the shock of passage from secondary school to CEGEP;the fragmented organization of studies at the CEGEP level;the motivation and academic aspirations of the students; the economic situation of the students and their employment;the teachers and the

milieu of the colleges.[9] While these reasons for student drop-out and failure are all recognizable, it is nonetheless suprising that the report makes no mention of the general social disorganization in which many young people live. Drugs are not mentioned at all. The report does, however, mention the fact that increasing numbers of students work between 20-35 hours per week, which greatly affects their ability to perform well within the college system. They do not investigate **why** the young are working so much and how many of them are working for basic necessities of survival, and how many for the disposable income they need to feel self-esteem. It is my own suspicion that a substantial number of students,who are working more hours than they need to survive or even have some disposable income,are simply hedging their bets. As Canadians they feel entitled to a good standard of living and lives as charmed as those beamed to them on sit-coms. In the long run, they want the insurance policy of "their education" [which even the government claims bears no promise of financial reward]. Since they are unable to defer gratification sufficiently to try to "make it" in any inherently substantive way, they must labour to acquire ephemeral instant reinforcers of a desirable "image" and "lifestyle."

Students entering The New School are often imbued with the ideology of individualism. Frequently they are surprised that they are expected to be accountable to themselves and others in the community:

> I think The New School has made me more openminded...that those are values and they're within me and those have been recognized and they surfaced here. I remember the first time I was here the first thing I thought of was, "My God, I'm in business for myself!" That's what the feeling was.

> time I was here the first thing I thought of was, "My God, I'm in business for myself!" That's what the feeling was. Like coming from the working world, I always felt that I was in business for someone else and it was true. I felt so good thinking that I was coming to school. It was,"Yeah, I'm in business for myself."...It's like here you have to make more effort...to spend yourself, just to spend your own talents and your own energy. It's a great feeling.[10]

The school communicates to them the expectation that self-disclosure in a safe and accepting environment is an important means of arriving at self-knowledge, personal growth and authentic relationships with other people. Students soon hear that there is a dialectical relationship between personal growth, the growth of others and the creation of community.

> It's really giving you the occasion probably for the first time in your life to consider your identity in the real world, in the world away from your family and the New School requires that you consider who you are honestly. You can't do less because people in your Band get to know you so well that...you'd have to be honest. You didn't have a choice but to admit to certain things and so it's difficult, it's really difficult to explain, but I think that it has a lot to do with providing a safe environment in which to look at aspects of yourself. Then you form relationships as a way of testing out those aspects and I guess what I'm saying is that perhaps the relationships are as lasting as they are because of that foundation of honesty, of candidness, of being exposed.[11]

Finally,students are exposed to the fact that they can make a difference wherever they are,that humans have a responsibility to the living and those still to live, and that our stewardship of the present is important. We hope that through our facilitating their development of the skills necessary for living authentic lives determined by their own values and beliefs in peaceful community with others,we help students to create,find and maintain meaning in their lives and make commensurate contributions to the society.

> It's expected and anticipated that you will look beyond yourself and look to other people, take responsibility for the growth of others as well as your own growth, as it's expected others will do that for you. You can't leave without taking it with you and I think it's certainly something that affects every part of your life in a very fundamental way as you go on, be it work, be it daily relationships or encounters, be it school. I think it really is a tool and a training that stays with you.[12]

> I really think I'm taking a strong awareness of people and the earth [from the school]. I've developed a compassion for the people and the earth as a whole and I've learned a lot about...[those subjects] here, and I always plan to have those strong feelings and will always try to do what I can for peace and solidarity...[13]

We work with people at a significant time of their lives. Finishing high school is always a time of reflection and choice for young people. Will they continue in school? What do they wish to become? Do they want to work? To what extent can they risk making choices which would alienate or disappoint their parents? Should they move away from home...travel...live with a mate? Indeed, it would be amazing if no change were to happen between the ages of 17-22,the average age range of our students. It is important to intervene at this juncture with ideas and experiences which will broaden their world beyond the narrow confines of consumerism.

Most of our applicants apply in disenchantment with the regular high school or CEGEP system. They are interested in attending The New School, they say, because they "do not want to be treated as a number," or they feel "lost" and disconfirmed in the regular academy. One transfer student said about his experience at The New School:

> I got a certain amount of confidence because I was validated as a person whereas I hadn't been in other structures. New School helped me to find the balance, to realize that no, I'm not the one with all the answers, but at the same time there's certainly value in what I have to say and I can trust my perceptions about things.[14]

Clearly, to ensure the exploration and feedback necessary to active learning,students must be given the opportunity to speak, argue, listen,discuss whatever interests them. They must also be encouraged to reflect on the reactions they elicit,to respond, and sometimes to effect changes beneficial to them. While the Bands are the essential locus for such concerns,in practice we do not differentiate between "academic" subjects and personal growth. In both cases all discussion and discourse emerges from the students' articulated affective needs. Belonging to The New School community entitles them to pursuing personal and academic development as well as political consciousness-raising.

Many of our graduates have identified their The New School education as the beginning of a new era in their lives:

> It marked a watershed in my life. It gave me an awful lot of confidence, it let me learn a lot about myself...I think of the New School as being one of the highlights of my life up to now, and I believe the skills I learned there and the types of things I spent my time doing still figure very much in my life now ten years later.[15]

> I consider my adulthood to have started when I was at The New School, and some of the relationships that are most significant to me now began when my adulthood began at The New School.[16]

B. Ideology and Praxis

When we talk about needs, we mean something more than just the basic necessities of human survival. We also use

> the word to describe what a person needs in order to live to their full potential. What we need in order to survive, and what we need in order to flourish are two different things.[17]

In considering our ideology and **praxis**, we must bear in mind that the school is dependent on Dawson College, and ultimately the state, for every facet of its existence. The school cannot decide not to confer credits,to cease existing, to limit or excede a certain number of students and faculty resources. We struggle for resources against other programmes, many of which have the support of professional credentializing associations. The New School has been subjected to many difficulties in realizing our objectives because of cut-backs and losses of resources. Many gifted teachers who were instrumental in formulating the school's philosophy were affected by cut-backs and were arbitrarily replaced on the basis of seniority, sometimes by people who had little sympathy with our philosophy and who,in a time of tremendous professional insecurity,could be reluctant to take on new methodologies. On the other hand, because of the critiiques of faculty members who have poured through the school,we have also undergone revisions and elaborations which have been very useful. It would therefore be incorrect to infer that the ideology of The New School has solely been cobbled out of the writers,ideas and practices described in the preceding chapter.Rather,its ideology has developed dialectically through the presence of numerous students and situations which precipitated both discussion among and action by teachers whose contributions came from diverse belief systems:

Islam,High Church Anglicanism,Protestantism,Roman Catholicism, Reform and Orthodox Judaism,atheism,agnosticism,personally conceived mysticism and Rosicrucianism. There have been socialists,Trotskyites,laissez-faire capitalists,communists, anarchists,militant unionists and anti-unionists,apolitical people and individualists with a clear contempt for politics or the public sphere. There have been pacificsts and believers in nuclear deterrence; there have been both male supremacists and feminists; there have been neo-Freudians and Behaviourists, believers in social determinism and believers in absolute free will;and there has been a wide spread of class and ethnic origin among the faculty. On the whole,the faculty has maintained a high level of professionalism in trying to work in concert and contributing to the development of basic structures rooted in the origins of the school.

In practice The New School ideology falls somewhere between the individualism of Maslow and Rogers and the collectivism of the critical theorists. Our relationship with the students starts when they are interviewed for acceptance into the school. Their standing must be acceptable to the college. However,we are interested in particular qualities:an understanding of our objectives,a desire to grow,a willingness to try new experiences, to risk caring for others,and to contribute to a community. We do not accept people who appear to be seriously mentally ill, totally unmotivated,or addicted to drugs or alcohol. Frequently such people are attracted to us in the mistaken belief that we are a "Free School" where they

will receive credentials without being forced to extend themselves beyond their current situations. At best such students derive only a limited benefit from attending the school; they also tend to drain attention from those learners who can enhance their lives by attending The New School.

Because we believe self-actualization to be the result of a dialectical relationship between the inner person [complete with an individual psychological and social history] and the rigourous exigencies of the a particular social,economic and political context,we attempt to create an environment in which the students feel sufficiently safe to articulate their own beliefs,needs and feelings and receive thoughtful feedback from each other and the facilitators. We always insist that the individual is the ultimate authority on his/her own life: even to the point of making choices which we might perceive as self-denying or disempowering. The only exception to this rule of thumb is when students endanger themselves or others before the law,endanger the well being of the school,or are in life-threatening situations. In such cases,we intervene and often seek help beyond the school for them.

Like Rogers, we believe that people can only accept changes in their lives when they themselves are ready for them. We encourage students to peel away all the impositions of "other voices," of other people's expectations of and imperatives for them and to reach within themselves and articulate their real feelings and desires. Many students have been so damaged by their experiences that they are only marginally receptive to risking the

kind of "trustingness" and reaching to other people for the perceptions and feedback necessary to informed self-confrontation,a necessary process towards personal growth and empowerment. Sometimes teachers at The New School must be not only bearers of painful social memories,but catalysts for the consideration of painful personal memories which impede personal growth. Often we must address fundamental questions with the students, such as: whose interest did a particular situation serve? How did they feel about a situation when it happened and how do they feel now? Was it what they wanted for themselves? What choices did they have then? Would they have other choices now? What concrete changes <u>can</u> they make and,more importantly,**do they wish** to make?

> Linda was explaining in Women's Studies class why she could not keep up with her homework. Some years before her parents had divorced. Her father, a man of some means, was providing only minimum support to her mother, Linda and her sister with the result that all three women had to work hard to make ends meet. Her mother had a low paying job as a clerk and Linda and her sister worked as cashiers on Thursday and Friday nights and all day Saturday. Although the group sympathized with her plight, it was pointed out that she had other free nights and Sundays to do her homework. It was not so simple: the girls had to cook for their father on Sunday through Wednesday nights. He had told them that he couldn't eat anything they hadn't prepared for him for dinner. Although he had not threatened his daughters, they were under the impression that if they did not "feed" him, he would stop giving them any financial support at all. What about the nights they couldn't to cook for them, some one asked. What did he eat then? Linda didn't know; she supposed he didn't eat. "He must be very emaciated," I observed, "going without dinner four days a week." "Not at all," Linda replied. "He's very over-weight. He must weigh about 300 pounds." Then she paused and looked stricken; she understood. Her father was getting fed somewhere! Linda is a very intelligent young woman. Clearly the problem was not that she couldn't figure out her father's eating habits, but that the anger,fear and guilt associated with her feelings about him blinded her to his manipulation. After several further discussions on the subject in the group and between Linda and her sister, the

> two young women decided to confront their father and tell him that they could not afford both to support themselves and to feed him. Their world did not collapse; in fact, their father undertook to feed himself and eventually decided to give his daughters better financial support for their education.

There are many ways of approaching this situation: through a feminist analysis of divorce and how it penalizes women and children;through analyzing the systemic factors which make the mother unskilled and poor while Linda's father is able to command a large salary;through examining the factors of gender socialization which make it difficult for Linda and her sister to resist assuming the female role of "nurturer." There are also numerous psychological dimensions to the situation: what is going on with the obese father that he feels he has to "command" Linda's attention in such a role reversal? What needs of hers are served by this scenario? Can Linda extricate herself from her parents' continuing conflicts where she has been consistently used as a pawn? Is it permissable to "say no" to a parent? What would be the most desirable relationship she could have with her father? How would this affect her mother? In short, given an analysis of all the factors listed above, what can Linda do to improve her situation at school and her feelings within her life situation? Over the term, all these and more issues were addressed in relation to Linda's situation with very positive and empowering results.

However, not all situations which are raised have such positive endings. The process of addressing issues is a familiar one: in dealing with presenting problems (falling behind with ones homework, in this case),students are asked to analyse the reasons

for their recalcitrance. We do not proceed on the notion that people are "lazy;" we explore the situation together,trying to understand the motivation for self-destructive behaviours. We then explore possible reasons and remediation for the situation. The process frequently involves great sadness,crying,and often jubilation as well. My own memory of Linda's look of amazement and delight when she "discovered" that her father was eating behind her back has remained inspirational to me in the intervening years. Other students participating in the discussion were able to apply it to their own lives,making of it a catalyst for future revelation.

Discussion of people's lives can lead to great insight and sometimes to action. However, there are times when the issues raised by students fall far beyond the remedial abilities of the school or a particular group. This is especially true in cases of people whose lives have been beleaguered with poverty,familial abandonment, powerlessness and actual physical and/or sexual abuse. People with such issues predominant in their lives are too focused on the lower levels of the Maslovian hierarchy of needs to exert immediate energy towards self-actualization. Although immediate remediation is rarely possible for people with very far-reaching problems, the discussion of them within the school is often very empowering for various reasons: often other people have had similar experiences and can share ways in which they have addressed them. The fact that others have had similar experiences is often empowering in that it removes from an individual a sense of

personal culpability or shame. The revelation that certain situations are related to systemic oppression (poverty, family violence, and even abandonment) is often very liberating for people. This revelation might not resolve a particular presenting problem,but it might help direct an individual to a group,a helping agency or even towards an explanation which renders the problem more manageable.

> Peter has been looking out the window all afternoon, ignoring the discussion swirling around him in the room. Eventually the facilitator says to him: "Peter, you don't seem to be with us today. Is some thing wrong?"
> Peter is silent for a moment and then says:"There is exactly five dollars between me and the street." It emerges that he has no more money, he is being evicted from his apartment and that he is quite paralysed. He does not know what to do. No, he has no family to turn to for help. His father is long gone, and his mother herself is sick and lives on a small pension. He does not like to "burden" the group with his problems, he says. On further discussion, however, it turns out that he has always been a "poor kid" living on the edge of a middle class neighbourhood and going to a middle class school. He was the only kid without a bicycle in his whole class. He spent days making up stories about why he did not have a bicycle. What emerges is Peter's terrible shame at a poverty which is not his fault. There is discussion of poverty, of why people are ashamed of it and whether they should be. The group examines the anger some members express at parents who could or would not provide for them and the guilt provoked by this anger. Some attention is paid to the options particular parents may have in our society. Other students ask Peter if he would like a job and what he can do. Several people know of jobs and offer to accompany Peter to interviews. It is stressed that it is not for individuals to feel ashamed of their poverty, but that poverty exists to the shame of society. It is also underlined that if people do not know of your needs they cannot help you. Looking out the window is an ineffectual way of asking for help. In such a situation of complex systemic oppression, it is important to develop with the group a conceptual vocabulary which addresses not only the socio-economic factors in Peter's situation, but also the feeling such situations invoke. It is only then that one can address what action Peter might like to take on a personal and/or collective basis. It is particularily important that the <u>group</u> develop its own tools of analysis

> and that the facilitator resist the interpolation of already established descriptives which may not be recognizable to the students.

At the end of that term, Peter decided to get a full time job and attend college at night. While it meant leaving the New School (which is a full time day programme),it also meant that he was finally ready to take charge of his own life.

While it is important for people to become aware of others' introjections of values into their lives,there are many times when these values are culture-based;repudiating them would mean that the individual leave a primary cultural group. While this might in some cases be a viable choice,it is a delicate situation with very serious ramifications. At the New School,we discuss ethnicity and culture and facilitate the consideration of how individuals <u>feel</u> about cultural "imperatives" within their lives and the cost of denying them. Often our students experience a double dissonance: they are children of immigrants living within a private culture different from the public one; they also give voice to values which they themselves cannot always bring into line with the reality. It is important to acknowledge that cultural values from the "old country" have worked somewhere sometime and should not be diminished because they comprise an honest heritage. The cost of dropping values and customs must be considered. This kind of discussion is important for the self-acceptance necessary for personal growth and empowerment. It is also instructive to appreciate the reasons behind behaviours which may look strange from a distance.

With this combination of Humanistic and Critical pedagogies, students strive to establish meaning in their lives. They become skilled at accessing feelings which are often disconfirmed by those whom they love and depend upon the most. They learn to articulate their needs,identify their strengths and resources, and define objectives for themselves,based on their strengths and the resources within their environment.[18]

Values clarification techniques can be helpful in giving focus to student choices and student interaction by illuminating past choices and pointing the way for immediate action. While it cannot always deliver a long term project of meaning, Values Clarification is most valuable in facilitating group organization on both formal and informal levels, taking into account individual feelings of group members as well as the tasks set before a group:

> In the early days of the school, there was a Community Council to which each Band had to elect a member. In this particular Band, the facilitator's report that the Bands had been asked to choose representatives was met by a silence until Eric spoke up. "I'll represent the Band," he said. The facilitator asked if this was agreeable to everyone. "Well I don't think..." began Lurlene after a pause and then was silent. "Do you have an objection," the facilitator asked Lurlene. "Would you like to run, yourself? " she added. "It isn't that," Lurlene was hesitant. "It's just that I don't think someone like Eric could represent someone like me." "Why not?" asked Eric, somewhat defensively. "Well,you're always talking about your car and your holidays in Europe or the Caribbean or Florida. My mother immigrated here from Grenada because we were so poor there. We can't afford to go back there for holidays. She's got no husband and five kids and she works as a nurse's aid in a hospital. All us kids have had to work for our clothes and spending money since we were twelve. I just don't think you know what it's like, that's all." "Yeah," contributed Aldo, "your old man's the kind of guy my old man shovels his driveway in the winter." "You know what I think," rejoined Eric, "I think you're all prejudiced against me. It's not my fault my father's rich. I still think I can understand your lives. You're just

jealous of me." It was clear that Eric was sincerely insulted and confused. It was not obvious that he had ever before objectively considered his situation of privilege. There was enormous tension in the room, and the task of choosing a representative had to be completed that day. Moreover, most members of the group were very silent because they did not "want to take sides." The facilitator suggested that there were many criteria on which one chose representatives in a democracy. The one in this Band seemed to be that of equality. People did not believe they could be represented by those more privileged than they were. But how many people really believed in absolute equality? She took a piece of chalk and drew a line down the center of the floor. This line was to represent the notion of absolute equality of all people. Members of the Band were to place themselves where they felt in terms of equality and explain their position to others. The facilitator took the first turn by placing herself close to the line but a bit to the right of it, explaining that she would not feel comfortable being politically represented by retarded adults. Other people explained their positions; no one was fully on the "absolute equality" line. After all the members had explained their positions, they were asked to sit down and reflect, and then to take a position after having considered all the discussion which had transpired. Most people showed some modification of their positions. They had listened and reflected. It was clear that no one had the corner on political purity. This exercise taught the group many things: that class differences not only exist but are important to everyone; that if a group allows a power vacuum to develop, someone will usually undertake to fill that vacuum, and the "somebody" might not be the best choic for the group; people should speak up when they disagree; that it is important to reflect and insist on criteria for representation. The feelings behind people's positions on equality were aired and ultimately the group came up not only with criteria, but with a different representative and a model of accountability for this representative. Naturally the situation between Eric and Lurlene had to be somewhat resolved. This does not mean that they had to become friends, but that they could recognize that their differences did not necessarily bar them from appreciating each others' positive qualities. There was a discussion of how people often globalize their disagreements on single topics to a total rejection of a person,rather than simply disagreeing with **one** aspect of the person. Finally the group did an exercise called the "positive spotlight" where each member had a moment in the "spotlight" where other members of the group could give only positive feedback of the qualities they appreciated in this individual. This was effective because not only did it rebuild Eric's and Lurlene's self-esteem, but it reinforced the self-esteem of all individuals in the group

> and built the group itself through a shared an multi-dimensional activity.

This particular exercise was extremely useful because it grew out of a group issue and helped the group achieve a sense of cohesion,meaning,and a way of mediating various perceptions and needs.

The concept of "voice" articulated by the critical theorists is especially useful for self-actualization and empowerment of young people. While they have been silenced in many ways related to class, gender,race and ethnicity,they have also been silenced because they are young and not taken seriously in our society. The participatory nature of the school ensures that students find their voices. By graduation students have spent at least 300 hours in Bands listening,reflecting,responding,being responded to,and being encouraged to find and use their own unmediated voices.

> One year many students wanted to learn public speaking. They were all males and all the children of immigrants. When the teacher asked them why they wanted to fervently to learn public speaking, their answers were: "My dad is a barber and no one listens to him in this society." "My father's a taxi driver and no one cares what he thinks." "I want people to listen to me, I want some respect in this society."

While it was essential to discuss the social-political-economic factors in their fathers' disempowerment, it was also important to address the young men's will to power. Where did this will come from and how did it feel? What does it feel like to feel powerless and what would make them feel powerful? In what situations did they feel powerless? Were there situations where they felt powerful? Was power the ability to rule others? Did they

have any idea of why only males had expressed an interest in this group? Was power simply to be found in voice? What is meant by respect? It became clear in the discussion that while these young men did acknowledge that their fathers had immigrated and contributed their labours to the survival of their sons, these sons wanted more than survival: they wanted to flourish. Self-actualization meant having voices which commanded respect; there was no guarantee, however, that these voices would be raised with either civic courage or with Utopian intent. It is our intention as educators that through exposure to the issues of voice and liberation,students become conscious of the scope of such issues in their lives. This consciousness not only informs their choices but their behaviour. By discovering and raising their voices at The New School,they experience response and learn that their voices can and should be heard.

New School students are at the age when society is pressing the young to declare themselves: what are they going to be? These questions often fill them with panic. Frequently they voice clichèd ambitions to mollify anxious adults in their lives. By our emphasis on meaning and the meaningfulness of their own feelings,beliefs,choices and actions,we attempt to facilitate the students' consideration of their own uniqueness of contribution, their function as members of society,and their own beliefs, values,joys and interests as they slowly begin to formulate the terms on which they will decide their present and future being.

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1. Michael Ignatieff, The Needs of Strangers. New York: Penguin Books,1984. p.13. Hereafter cited as Ignatieff.

2. Abraham Maslow,Toward a Psychology of Being. New York:Van Nostrand, 1962.

3. Abraham H. Maslow,Religious Values and Peak Experiences.Ohio State University Press,1964. p.75

4. Judith S. Wallerstein, "Children After Divorce: Wounds That Don't Heal," The New York Times Magazine, January 22, 1989, Section 6, pp.41-42. Hereafter cited as Wallerstein.This article was adapted from: Judith S. Wallerstein, Second Chances: Men, Women and Children A Decade After Divorce. New York: Ticknor and Fields, 1989.

5. Wallerstein,p.20.

6. Ignatieff, pp.141-142.

7. Conseil des Collèges, La réussite, les échecs et les abandons au collégial:l'état et les besoins de l'enseignement collégial Rapport 1987-1988. Québec: Gouvernement de Québec, 1988.

8. Ibid, p.10.

9. Ibid, p.21.

10. Peter Morneau,Interview,1985.

11. Jo-Anne Wolfe,Interview,1984.

12. Susan Hanna,Interview,1984.

13. Deborah Stone,Interview,1984.

14. Kenny Finkelstein,Interview,1984.

15. Murray Lamb,Interview,1984.

16. Jo-Anne Wolfe,Interview,1984.

17. Michael Ignatieff. The Needs of Strangers. New York: Penguin Books, 1984, p.10.

18. The process described here is very similar to that quoted above from Clark Moustakas, Teaching as Learning. New York: Ballantine Books, 1972, p.73.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE BANDS

If you could picture about fifteen people coming into a room and sitting down and talking to one another. Getting to know one another very slowly, it's not something that happens automatically. And you find out general things about people, you find out where they're coming from, what their past is and what they're doing with themselves now. And slowly you get to understand different things about people's personalities and you create friendships. You don't always create friendships. Sometimes you realize that you don't necessarily get along with certain people. But that's OK too because you start to work at that. Because you develop a certain trust, you can sense when somebody's having a problem, when somebody's not feeling too good and you confront them and you ask and you realize that the problems people have are very similar to the ones you have and that there aren't that many different feelings. That most people feel quite the same things but maybe in different circumstances in their lives... So I come as an individual and... the differences in my perception are accepted at the same time.[1]

A Band is a group of New School students who meet twice a week for a few hours, who sit down to get to know each other as people and aren't afraid to be themselves with each other and are presented with the opportunity to be free and to be relaxed and to say "This is me" and have other people accept that for what it is and not try to change and judge them. It's a place to talk and to discuss whatever you feel needs discussing.[2]

A Band is my favourite group. It's just a place where I can be with people whom I haven't especially known before and I get to learn about them and what they've gone through and even if they dress differently and they look differently and they may act differently, somehow there's always a common ground and you're always able to have a lot of understanding for that person...I've just learned how not to be so judgemental, to have an open mind and to be just a lot more accepting.[3]

A. What Are Bands?

Bands are generally considered the back-bone of The New School, the place where the most intense personal growth can be facilitated. Although there have been numerous modalities of Bands, numerous ways of forming them, and several prises de conscience on the nature and function of the Bands throughout the history of the school, they have nonetheless been the locus of some of the most meaningful insights,communication and growth at The New School.

Since 1975, the purpose of the Bands has remained fairly constant, although there have been many experiments with their structure and content. They are compulsory primary affiliative groups of twelve to sixteen people, usually formed for the duration of a term and for one credit per student. Their curriculum addresses those issues and concerns most crucial to each Band's membership. In most cases, each Band has a facilitator who is a faculty member or a particular resource person brought into the school to facilitate a Band. Students choose their Bands by a process of "Band Shopping" where they interview all the facilitators and choose their Bands on the basis of facilitators and of students they see gravitating toward a particular Band. The facilitator usually is central at the beginning of a Band for setting the tone of the group and should become decreasingly important as other members of the Band develop the skills and confidence necessary to become facilitators themselves. While some Band members may have shared other Bands or groups within the school or know one another from other experiences outside of the

school,Bands usually begin their process with a group of individuals,all slightly wary of one another. By the end of the term,the Band should have sculpted itself into a unique group with its own norms and expectations in which each member is essential.

There are basic skills we want to emphasize in the Bands: expressing ones feelings honestly and taking the risk of being genuine with other people,even if it means asserting ones dissidence from a majority;learning to listen carefully to others,being sensitive to the feelings underlying what other people are saying and responsive to others in a consequent and honest manner;remembering what has happened and developing the skill of connecting "information" such as people's feelings, stories, and experiences throughout the term in order to get a clear picture of the other members to mirror back to people how their patterns of behaviour appear; being open to understanding the limitless cultural, ethnic, and social variety of values within our society without passing judgement on them; learning to solicit and accept constructive criticism as well as affection, compliments, and support; learning how to celebrate other people's good news and to express compassion for their bad news; learning how to confront and deal with disagreement; learning how to question the <u>status quo</u> in a non-confrontational but firm way, when necessary; learning how to consider the group's needs as well as ones own and to make ethical and just judgements; learning how to improvise, how to "make do," how to organize events for the group; and learning how to be reliable, punctual, fully present and how to maintain the

confidentiality of the group.

This is a demanding set of skills, many of which most adults in our society have not acquired. It is our conviction that those people who do manage to acquire these skills will fare well in the most important parts of their life: their relationships with other people and the benefits positive relationships bring to people's life in both the public and private spheres. The feedback of many students and teachers has indicated that the skills learned in Bands are central to people's experience in the school and are usually considered portable when they leave.

B. Band Processes

1. Band Shopping:

In the first years of the New School,teachers would write both academic and Band profiles,describing themselves to the students who would each get copies.The profiles communicated to the students what kind of people the teachers were,what our interests were,and what our lives were like. In later years, due to various external pressures,it became expedient for teachers to compose single multi-purpose profiles. These are distributed to the students who interview us through a process of "Band Shopping" where they circulate through the Bands Spaces assigned to specific facilitators. These spaces [which are also classrooms] have space for approximately 15 people. They are carpeted,have easy chairs and cushions in them; they look somewhat like small student lounges

except that the Band which occupies a space is likely to decorate it. The students tend to spend time during the shopping with those facilitators who interest them most,also monitoring which students may be gravitating towards the same place.The interviews usually involve an ever-changing group of young people who want to discuss what they would like to see in a Band and hear the facilitator's views as well. After approximately two days of Band shopping,there is a finalizing process where people go to the Band of their first choice. If a Band is over-subscribed,it must reduce its size. Sometimes students with strong second choices volunteer to negotiate into their second choice Bands to ease the pressure. If the Band is still too large,usually an arbitrary means of reducing its size (like drawing lots) is used. Eventually the students redistribute themselves into the Bands which still have places. The doors close and negotiating and contracting begin.

2. Band Negotiating and Contracting:

Band contracting is a serious business.It is important to establish people's reasons for having chosen that Band. This gives an immediate indication of the climate of the group. It is often wise to find out if people know one another from other contexts so that incipient conflicts may be addressed by the group. Bands usually establish their behavioural norms from the outset regarding punctuality,attendance,eating in Band,listening and talking,smoking breaks,and attendance at Band events such as suppers and outings.

Often they will set up the evaluation process for the Band grades at the end. They might establish what issues are the most pressing to discuss and include them in a written contract, signed by everyone and xeroxed so that each member has a copy of the contract for further reference.

Various exercises are useful in focusing the Band on its objectives. The following is a list of concerns I elicited from a Band when I asked the members each to list on paper the five central issues in their lives at the moment. The lists then underwent a refining exercise: members were asked to put a "P" beside anything too personal to bring up with the group; they were asked to write the name of someone else with whom they might be comfortable discussing their "P's" as a reminder to themselves to reflect on important issues; they were asked to write a "B" beside anything that could be discussed in Band; they were then asked to underline their most pressing issues and put an "S" beside those they felt like sharing that day. The original inventory of individual concerns was very long. A tour of the room elicited these "B" and "S" concerns: attitudes/sexual relationships; self-assertion; family and independence; phobias and fears; future education and/or job; friendship; boyfriend/girlfriend; expressing feelings; creativity; time management; health; personality change; school; success; action/challenge; spirituality; money; indecision; work habits; isolation; authenticity; social class. We discussed themes which might run through the list and developed a shorter list of those issues most frequently cited: family and social

class; friends/isolation;self-assertion/expression of feelings; sexuality; future success; and then equally---independence, time management/work habits, creativity, spirituality, phobias and fears. This list also looked unmanageable and so we finally agreed on this prioritized list of concerns: family, self assertion, friends/isolation, sexuality, future/success. The Band contract looked like this:

BAND CONTRACT

1. Punctuality expected
   If late or absent, phoning in is compulsory.
2. Attendance compulsory
3. Confidentiality expected.
4. Cigarette limit---one at a time.[For the past year there has been no smoking in Bands].
5. Five-minute break per Band.
6. Self-study will be done by spotlighting people for them to receive feedback and then responding.
7. Tidiness (Clean your mess after Band meetings).
8. Focus on what's going on: ie eye contact, no reading, writing or drawing during Band.
9. Active participation.
10. On-Going evaluation of our processes.
11. Issues for self-study in Band:
    a. family-social class
    b. Self assertion-feelings-personality change
    c. friends-isolation.
    d. sexuality
    e. future/success

12. The Band is for one credit for each member.

Signatures and telephone numbers:

3. Band Content: Whatever Happens in Bands?

Once the contract is signed, the Band is committed to fulfilling it. There is always a mid-term evaluation of the process for all groups within the school at which time contracts can be renegotiated. At any time,however,any member can ask for an on-going evaluation of the group's progress. Sometimes groups get out of focus and need the contract to bring them back on track. Other times they find their new focus more important and renegotiate the contract.

It is also useful to make an "Inventory of Concerns" later in the term to see if concerns have changed or if new ones have arisen. A Band came up with this enormous list on its seventh week: choosing the right programme in university; improving my music skills; increase job participation; future as an actress; time management; survival of the school; hate and war; the nature of my participation in the school; nature of the individual...what makes an individual; concern to get to university; fear of being a dummy; getting my father off my back about school; fear I won't be able to finish CEGEP; summer job; trying to get through CEGEP; going to university; writing skills; finding true love and happiness; find a good situation in life; last semester, leaving the school; relationships and reasons for them; work I do now and

how it relates to my life's work; family; the fears that incapacitate me; university; what is my future in writing; relationships; family; career/future; becoming an accomplished musician; knowing myself better; summer job and getting through red tape for it; women's rights, helping friend and sister through problems like divorce and battered women...helping them to see themselves as people. This list was typed out and given to each member to reflect upon over the weekend. The next week we reduced it to four prioritized themes: the future, the family, fears, relationships. We then divided our remaining time accordingly to discuss these topics in the students' lives.

Some Bands also ask students to write personal contracts with their own objectives in them, share them with the Band, and perhaps contract to do some self-study around an issue which is not shared by others in the Band, but to come back to the Band from time to time to discuss this issue.

The Bands have various exercises and ways of getting to know one another, which I will discuss below. It is important, however, to emphasize that ultimately the Bands are focused on the here and now. For this reason, the best laid plans or agendae can be overturned by a crisis in someone's life. It is important to be judicious in meeting the needs of that individual, while maintaining a focus on the needs of the group.

There are various exercises which are useful in helping Band members understand one another; I will describe some of the more popular exercises:

a. **Name Sharing** is useful for any group. Members are asked to think of some important aspect of themselves or their lives the group should know. They each introduce themselves as, for example: "My name is Anne Smith and I'm nervous about starting my first Band." A second person may say: "My name is Paul Jones and I'm crazy over playing my guitar in a group." The Band will then review the names in reverse order: "Paul's crazy about his guitar and Anne's nervous about her first Band." With each introduction, another name and concern is added on. By the time each person has introduced him/herself, people know a bit about one another and have had all sorts of low risk interaction, to the point of sharing non-verbally the boredom of repetition or the amusement at some people's introduction.

b. **The Personal Profile**. Some Bands ask members to prepare profiles either in writing or orally to present to the Band regarding themselves, their lives and aspirations. Usually after each profile is presented, there is time for members to ask clarifying questions and to give feed-back. While this exercise often reveals important facets of the members' lives, it is very lengthy and can absorb a large amount of the Band's time.

Here is an excerpt from a student profile:

> ... I'm glad I'm here to do this profile. One of the only reasons to leave high school was to get to The New School, and considering it was the only school to which I had applied, I'm glad I'm here...My interest and what talents I think I have lie in the creative arts. I have written poetry and plays on my own, and would like to do the same here along with Women's Studies, Children's Literature, Psychology, the Occult and the Surreal.
>
> ...I find I am open about myself. I am more emotional than rational. I like to be and work alone as a rule. Lately I

have been more of a slow learner. I hope it's just a phase. I am spur of the moment person. I love new surroundings and clothes. Occasionally I need a push, otherwise I tend to get lazy. I hear people getting angry at me without telling me why...Meeting new people now, in the way of really learning about them scares me because during the past year I've been sheltered,staying in my own community and talking to the same people. I feel as if I've forgotten how to relate. The Band is important to me because even though I may feel frightened, I'll be among people learning over again how to relate, which I find as an absolute essential in life. This particular Band, I feel, holds most of my interests ,and I feel good about the people. I hope the best will be brought out in me and others and that the others will feel good about me as well.

In many ways this profile is typical in that it leaves out many of this young woman's most pressing concerns. After she presented it, people asked about her family. Her parents were divorced, she explained. She adored her father but lived with her mother with whom she continually fought,but whom she felt she had to protect from depression. Throughout the discussion it became clear that her desire "to relate" and her difficulty with her peers were tied to the difficulties she experienced,torn between her parents and also by her own ambivalence to them. Band members learn not only to listen to what is said, but to what is left out.

c. **The Paper Bag Exercise:** here members are asked each to bring in a bag with at least three items which are significant indicators of who they are, and share them with the Band. This can be shorter than the profiles and is favoured by some groups.

There are numerous other self-identifying exercises which are useful; however often Bands can slow down or develop all sorts of avoiding behaviours when there are important issues or conflicts to confront. In such cases it is often helpful to suggest exercises

which will unite people in the group, or which will bring out areas of discord with a view to reconciling members:

d. **Garbage and Flowers or Clearing the Air:** This is often a good exercise for beginning a Band session. A tour is made of the members, each of whom must share a prevailing feeling about and toward the Band, or about his/her life in general. It can be very positive (flowers) or negative (garbage). This gives a quick and accurate sense of the mood of the Band, and it often brings important issues in members' lives to the forefront. It also may provide an opportunity for people to articulate and settle conflicts.

e. **The "I Wonder" Exercise:** In this exercise different members are "Spotlighted" and people are asked to suggest aspects of the individual they would like to know better. This gives all members individual feedback on how they are perceived and if they have disclosed as much of themselves as they think. Of course, it is a principle that anyone can "Pass" on such exercises and is not obliged to answer all the "I wonders." It is also possible to use this exercise for members to express "I wonders" about themselves, thus helping to get the Band agenda on track. Here are some of the latter type of "I wonder's" from a Band:

> "I wonder to what extent as a Band facilitator it is appropriate for me to disclose my personal feelings about members to them."
>
> "I wonder about myself and whether I'm going to stay at The New School next year or not."
>
> "I wonder if I'm really as objective as I'd like to be."
>
> "I wonder if I will be able, as an individual, to meet

the seemingly infinite demands that my family is making on me at this time as far as leaving Canada and going to another part of the world with them."

"I wonder what Gary is thinking now."

Clearly there is enough material in these few quotations to absorb Band attention for elaboration and response.

f. **A Band Sociogram:** This can be done in several ways. Usually a large piece of paper or cardboard is put on the wall and members write on it to indicate their relationships to one another. Here they may put their names where they please and then draw lines to each other,writing on the lines what they consider their connections to be to one another.

Members may want to ascertain how members guage their "belongingness" within the Band. In this exercise the "heart of the Band" is drawn in the middle of the paper. Each person is asked to indicate where s/he stands in relation to the Heart of the Band and why. In both cases, the Band usually has a very colourful and full diagram which shows the complexity of people's inter-connections and connections to the group. There is usually much positive information on this drawing,which encourages the group and consolidates people's commitment to it;

g. **Closeness Exercise:** Here a person is asked to sit with his/her eyes closed in the middle of the floor and people arrange themselves on the floor in relation to how close they feel to the person. They then explain the reasons for where they have located themselves. This is often valuable in knitting a group together,but should only be used diagnostically when there is either little

closeness in the group or as a reinforcement when a group has sculpted itself into a recognizable entity;

h. **Positive Spolight:** This is useful when there has been a great deal of negativity in a group. Each member is "spotlighted" while other members each express some positive opinion or feeling they have about the person. This often gives people an opportunity to acknowledge something helpful the person has done for them, sometimes inadvertently, and it always is useful in encouraging and knitting a group;

i. **Gift Spotlight:** This exercise is useful when someone has shared a really important and sad experience with the group and expressed his/her sadness. The person is spotlighted and everyone is asked to "give the person" something verbally, perhaps only to express what they wish they could give the person, to counteract or help the person cope with his/her feelings of sadness. It is often very useful as an exercise of closure for a Band which has dealt with very upsetting matters.

There are innumerable possible exercises, and they must always emerge from the articulated needs of the Band. Sometimes the need is for physical activity,relaxation or contact. Sometimes an exercise emerges from a discussion. Sometimes a student is able to contribute an exercise. Often matters are simply dealt with by discussion and interchange. It is of prime importance, however, always to evaluate the efficacy of an exercise after it has been used, giving the Band a chance to judge its own processes.

Though Band outings are not exercises in the same sense

as those described above, they are often very useful in knitting the Band together. Members also learn other aspects of one another when they are removed from the school context. Often individual Band members invite the group to a pot-luck at their homes, giving everyone the chance to share with a more "private" part of the person. Other outings may be sports, bowling, theater, concerts, films, clubs, museums, restaurants, lectures, hikes and walks, or someone's country house.

People often wonder how real crises are handled in the Bands. It is very important for the facilitators to know their own limits and to refer members in serious crisis to professionals within or out of the college. The New School maintains a list of experts and institutions for such referrals. On the other hand, often the group itself has the requisite common sense and expertise bring to bear on an issue. It is part of the school's philosophy to demystify helping relationships and to facilitate for each member of the community the possibility of both offering and receiving help from others who have had similar experiences or who have particular insights or resources for them.

> George had already shocked some Band members by sharing with them that although he was a very avid athlete, he was also a homosexual. There had been discussions about homosexuality, people's attitudes to it, and speculation on the reason for people's making that choice. One day George was very upset and told the Band that some years before he had had a cancerous growth removed from his leg. The doctors now believed he had a tumour in his testicle. If there were a tumour, they might have to remove one testicle. Everyone in the Band was concerned, even those who had the greatest reservations about his homosexuality. The students organized themselves to accompany George to the hospital for his tests and other appointments. In the end it turned out that he had a cyst which required no

> operation. The celebration in the Band was extremely moving;members had been tremendously impressed by George's quiet courage during this month-long ordeal. At the end of term, the most "macho" and homophobic male in the Band told George that his courage was the true courage (as opposed to bullying) to which all men should aspire.

When the students help and support one another, an atmosphere of real trust forms, and they never forget the experience. A true bonding takes place and moves the Band into dimensions of trust and sharing which are extrememly touching in themselves, and which create for the members models of exemplary behaviour for future reference.

Another concern is closure. Often students who have problems to discuss will wait until the time to end the Band is only a few moments away. It is important to judge if the matter can wait until the next Band; if the student feels it to be pressing,the facilitator may suggest extending the Band or,if that is not possible due to people's other commitments,that some people volunteer to stay behind and work through the difficulty with the person. If the person feels an in-depth discussion can wait,the Band frequently will contract with that person to be prepared to open the next meeting with discussion of this particular issue. In the normal course of events, however,it is important to start gearing down about 10-15 minutes before closure, ensuring that people have said what they wanted to that day and evaluating the process and perhaps suggesting an agenda for the next meeting. It is essential,however,that closure is clear and that nothing that

has been said or decided cannot be reviewed in the future.

4. **Evaluation:**

Eventually Bands must evaluate the students and facilitators. There are many modes of doing this. Sometimes Bands suggest an "Average Grade,"against which each student's performance is judged,which covers certain of the behavioural objectives listed in the contract.In other cases, the Bands simply evaluate each member on the basis of his/her self-evaluation, the feedback of the group, and the objectives the particular student started out with. Students usually suggest their own marks which are raised or lowered by the Band as a whole. In most cases there is little argument with the marks; students most frequently under-rate their performance and have to be reminded of their triumphs and successes within the group. Usually members have developed the capacity to remember each person's participation and present back to the person a well considered over-view of it. The **process** of evaluation is always considered more important than the grade. It is a real stock-taking for people to see if they have been true to themselves and to the commitments they have made within a group.

Since the Band facilitator is not the sole arbiter of evaluation and grading, s/he is fairly likely to get an honest evaluation from the students. While new faculty members are often nervous about the students' feedback,almost all of them appreciate it enormously. The students often pinpoint areas needing

improvement with the kind of accepting affection which promotes change, even when they are very critical. Here are two excerpts from student evaluations of me:

> I think you are a very strong responsible person. You keep your own sadness to yourself and are always ready to meet people's legitimate needs. I find your judgements sometimes too quick and final, but so often accurate that they are usually not too resented. You are extremely perceptive and your methods are extremely valuable to many people...whether they recognize the value or not.

and

> Greta, you have really been an important force in my life. I admire your quick mind and your intelligence. You take people seriously and I appreciate that. I feel that I can talk about myself to you and that you will care. I only wish that I would talk to you more. I guess I fear entering your office when I see you in there. It's a big step entering the den of sanctity.

The need for the students to give to the facilitators and for the facilitators to accept what they are given with open hearts is an essential factor in building trust for a positive learning situation.

C. <u>What Do People Get Out of Band?</u>

> Many of the things we need most deeply in life-love chief among them-do not necessarily bring us happiness. If we need them, it is to go to the depth of our being, to learn as much of ourselves as we can stand, to be reconciled to what we find in ourselves and in those around us.[4]

There are as many benefits from Band as there are people reporting on them. Often the benefits perceived on a short term are very different from those perceived on the long term. However, there are themes which arise frequently in students' accounts of

the benefits they realized through the Band experience.

One of the prime factors which makes Bands effectual is that all expression of emotion, values or ideas is accepted and that there is tacit support for the person. This can encourage people to risk expressing their authentic values and tastes and to experience the instructive feedback within the group without fearing rejection:

> Band is really the sort of synthesis point that ...brings all the different things that have come up in all your parts of your life and interrelates them and you come out of it as a whole person...It's freedom to speak, freedom to confront people, freedom to cry, freedom to laugh, freedom to discuss any issue and have the fact that you're feeling something, the fact that you're feeling it is valid enough reason for the whole group of people to discuss it with you. And the obvious, the manifest caring involved. And the wonderful feeling of support and solidarity and people that are often in the same position or have similar positions to your own.[5]

Another important aspect of the Bands is that they break down people's prejudices about one another. Students learn how faulty their perceptions might be and how much communality there is in the human experience:

> The feeling of closeness, of having to take seriously people one wouldn't necessarily associate with on one's own. We were, some of us, thrown together in the Bands. You know, people who wouldn't socialize together or were from very different backgrounds and I learned to take their concerns more seriously. Normally I would just write them off. I would just type people, they're that type or this type or whatever and I think that's not the type I'm interested in and that would be that. And I found that there were things of value and worth in all sorts, all types. Yes, the Bands were very important.[6]

It is often within Bands that people's cultural differences become the clearest. When an issue emerges which highlights cultural differences and mutual misunderstandings, the Bands are presented with an excellent opportunity to explore members' differences and also their communality:

> Althea was the most beloved person in the Band .She was an exceptionally beautiful and charming young Trinidadian woman with a delightful sense of humour. Indeed, during Band negotiations,it became clear that many people had entered the Band to be with her. She came to Band one day in a terrible state. It turned out that a cousin with whom she had been brought up,had been shot dead the day before in San Fernando, when he was bringing cash from the bank to his employer. She began to cry; she had reserved a ticket home for the next morning, and would be gone for three weeks so that she could attend the funeral and be of comfort to the family. The Band received this information in a stupified silence. The facilitator expressed her condolences and asked if there were anything the Band or the school could do to help. There was nothing. More silence. The young woman, who was the only black person in the Band, looked around the room, burst into tears and ran out. She was followed by another member. The facilitator asked the Band if they had any idea why Althea had left. After another prolonged silence, a member said: "I guess we weren't very supportive of her." The facilitator agreed, and wondered aloud why this was, since everyone seemed so fond of her.
> What emerged was that no one knew **what you say when someone dies**. They had been embarrassed. At this point, Althea returned. She wondered why no one had spoken to her. The embarrassment was explained to her and she was quite shocked. She was a member of The Church of God where everyone knew exactly how to behave at a death.The rest of the period was devoted to discussing people's attitudes to death. It turned out that everyone in the Band had experienced the death of someone or a pet they had loved. In most cases the loss had been ignored in conversation. How did that feel? It felt terrible and lonely. This was followed by discussion on what people would have **liked** to hear, which culminated in a round-the-room exercise of :"When ..... died, I wish ..... had said..... to me." Finally everyone expressed feelings to Althea who, understanding the reasons for people's silence, was able to accept their condolences.

In this situation the students reviewed their own feelings about death and about how the bereaved should be treated. They also were able to redress their original silence with Althea. Finally behaviour-at-death was demystified,and they left the meeting confident that in the future they would know what to do. It is a sobering comment on the socialization of children in our society that these skills must be learned in school.

The Band experience is also central to building the self-esteem necessary for personal growth and self-actualization. The hours spent in interchange are very confirming because people see that others share their experiences, and they also see that their perceptions can be of help to others. The experience of speaking up and confronting others improves people's confidence in their communication skills. Numerous people have reported that the Bands were instrumental in helping them with highly diverse future work. It is abundantly clear that those students who went into the helping professions were deeply influenced by their experience at the New School:

> I'm sure that my experience as a student in Band was probably the first occasion of paying attention to group dynamics or becoming aware of myself in a group, my effect on a group, my presence in a group...I think that I was at that time developing skills which I've later had to use as a social worker, being able to read people and evoke repsonses, gather information, pay attention to what is not said as well as what is said, help people to communicate with each other.[7]

Another graduate worked in a Mission for indigent men in

Toronto. She describes her experience in this way:

> I found it interesting ,especially at the mission because it's run unbelieveably like a real bureaucracy with management having no association with the men...it's run at that kind of level, hierarchical and I found myself in Board rooms and meetings with department heads and supervisors and I found my ability...was ...refined at The New School to just see the truth in what someone's saying and to be able to pinpoint it and look at them straight in the face and say, "what are you talking about?" I think I learned that at the New School, ...not to take what everyone says literally amd to look behind what they're saying and I really appreciated that tool.[8]

Because The New School itself is based on the possibility of achieving a truly just society where people do care for and about one another,it is not coincidental that graduates take from the Band experience...and the entire school experience....the notion that they have the necessary skills to recreate aspects of the school in other circumstances:

> I learned ...the way I want life to go, the way I want life to be like and I want to be able to share with people and get close to other people and accept other people and I want to form close relationships with as many people as I can. After all, you know I am sharing this life with them. The thing that I realized was that it's not so much the New School is the only place that is this way, it's not just a feeling, but to me it's the way life should be. That everybody should be that way. People should care about, watch and listen to each other. It's seeing what I wanted in a place and knowing that I want to continue to do this with other people... taking what I believe life should be with me and having my own type of New School, my own type of Band throughout my life.[9]

It would seem that many of the values and techniques learned through Band can be helpful to people in future times of joy, of crisis, of public pariticpation and the future work place. Bands prepare people to cope honestly and creatively with the many

surprises life serves up to them.

D. Are Bands Portable?

Having imported Bands to other contexts and seen other people use Band techniques elsewhere,I have concluded that they can be made portable under certain cicumstances:the members and the facilitator must be convinced of the value of the group,must **want** to participate and be committed to their contract; there must be no forseeably dangerous long-term consequences to the members for participating in the group; the objectives of the members and of the group as a whole must be clearly defined; and Band-like groups are not indicated for mentally ill people.

Several colleagues and myself have taken the opportunity to create Band-like groups in other environments. While the modalities are too many to describe here, it may be worthwhile to point out the optimum situations for Band-like groups. They are useful in making a large environment manageable. For example they have been successfully used complementarily to large university lecture courses, epsecially those dealing with affectively charged material.

While there have been other "alternative programmes" in the CEGEPs,[The "Multi" at CEGEP de Vieux Montréal and L'Alternative du Collège de Sherbrooke],neither of these excellent and short-lived programmes was particularly focussed on group skills. In the

CEGEP context there could be a real value in dividing the large student body in pre-university programmes into affiliative groups which would meet regularily in order to address the alienation experienced by so many students. While students in career programmes often experience a sense of affiliation with their immediate class or work-groups,they could also profit by more focussed periods of work on inter-personal relations and on their own personal growth. Sectors, departments, and teachers could design numerous Band-like groupings to address the students on a more personal level and to utilize the capacity of student groups to support and help their members.

It would seem to me that home rooms in high school could become Bands. Perhaps if students felt more powerful,more implicated in one another's lives,this would break down the cliquishness of adolescents and also motivate them to come to school,if only to find out what happened next in someone's life. It is precisely in adolescence where young people's self-esteem is most vulnerable to undermining by external events in their lives as well as their changing bodies, value systems, and their need for seemingly endless peer company. Through being taken seriously and by having their perceptions addressed and confirmed,they would take themselves more seriously. By intentionally forming a small community,they would break down isolation and anomie and also learn how collectively to live those values so important for global survival. A Band of adolescents in high school would be an

excellent antidote to the individualistic and violent information communicated to them through their media.

Some critics might interject that Bands cut into important "academic" time. It is our experience that time devoted to Bands increases students' motivation to learn,to acquire academic and social skills, and to develop their sense of responsibility to themselves and others. Because of the rigourous demands of Bands, students increase their concentration span. Rather than wasting time,Bands provide an experience whose quality can positively affect student attitudes to learning.

Another site where I had the occasion to develop primary affiliative groups was in a large national conference in Toronto. The planners were aware that one of the values of conferences is that they help people to network with others of like interests. Since the 400 participants would be staying in various hotels and university dormitories,it was unlikely they would have much occasion to meet outside of the conference workshops and meetings. Therefore we formed arbitrarily chosen primary affiliative groups which met each morning for an hour before other activities started;they were led by experienced facilitators. They were very successful,rating in the top three items of the participants' conference evaluations under the rubric of "best things about the conference."

Band-like groups could theoretically be useful in work situations where people must work closely at a high level of

stress. They are especially valuable in breaking down the isolation of people who work on a one-to-one basis in the helping professions and need both lateral support and personal renewal. Well handled,such groups may become an excellent antidote to the epidemic burn out that is generally seen in the helping professions.

Band-like structure could be introduced into any kind of workplace or the volunteer sector as a means of creating community, confirming people's experiences, perceptions and contributions, and making the workplace more productive for its own end as well as more stimulating for the workers. Bands cannot be confused with the kind of political organization necessary for changes in power relations. What they accomplish very well is to provide people with a forum where they may discuss their feelings,the sources of their feelings in their personal lives as well as in the public sphere of the workplace, and through mutual support and understanding, arrive at a **praxis** for change.

1. Lori Goodhand,Interview,1984.

2. Christine Nairn,Interview,1984.

3. Deborah Stone,Interview,1984.

4. Michael Ignatieff,The Needs of Strangers. New York: Penguin Books,1984. pp.15 & 18.

5. Jonathon Bowe,Interview,1984.

6. Judith Kalman,Interview,1984.

7. Jo-Anne Wolfe,Interview,1984.

8. Mary Delaney,Interview,1984.

9. Lori Goodhand,Interview,1984.

CHAPTER FIVE

*THE LEARNING GROUPS

I. Academic Methodology at The New School

A. Curriculum Viability

While the Bands form an essential armature for the **praxis** of our educational philosophy,the pedagogy developed for academic pursuits is also an essential,if sometimes problematic, element of the whole. These non-Band academic pursuits are called "learning groups." It is inaccurate to separate Bands and Learning Groups into discrete categories because in both cases we attempt to offer holistic education, addressing the students' multiple needs. Very often the contents of a Band meeting could be described as a combination of Psychology, Anthropology and Sociology, while frequently the Learning Groups become the sites for important self-revelations which lead directly to the students' personal growth.

Curriculum viability in the context of The New School means that at least three necessary conditions must be met. The first is that the pedagogical practices of Learning Groups must conform with these processes:choice by self-to-subject;negotiation; contracting; on-going evaluation; peer and self evaluation. The second is that

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* **Appendix B** contains descriptions of New School courses in the following disciplines:English,French,Humanities,Philosophy Religion,History,Anthropology,Sociology,Psychology,Ceramics, Art,Music,Theatre,Cinema.Available from the author.

a diversified curriculum must be developed each term in order to meet the widest range of interests and needs expressed by the students. As in the Bands, all subject matter of the learning groups devolves from the intersection of the students' articulated needs and the resources available to them.

Thirdly, we must "harmonize" with norms established by the state which supports The New School financially and which accords credits to our students.

Our pedagogy is based on the contention that the students' motivation to learn is of primary importance in their intellectual and emotional development. While it has been demonstrable for centuries that people can learn numerous facts and methods which do not really interest them, they can only do so under two forms of coercion: the first is a threat-based methodology where some sort of overt or subtle punishment or withholding of privilege lies in store for those who are not willing to undergo the rigours of learning; the second is where the matters learned are not in **themselves** of primary importance to the learner, but are essential as a means of attaining other desirable skills,status or money. I will call this form of motivation "secondary motivation." One thinks here of all the medical doctors who claim to have disliked certain required courses in medical school, but who worked hard in order to become doctors. These courses were necessary cognitive stepping stones to more desirable advanced knowledge, or their successful completion simply enabled medical students to pursue a larger goal for which they were motivated.

At The New School coercion is not ideologically acceptable; it must be said, however, that sometimes some students do work under some sort of subtle coercion: they may want to mollify a parent; they may think they need "their education" to "get somewhere;" they may be reacting towards the social control of a group after having committed themselves to a particular group contract and thus feel obliged to come through on their commitments. However, the worst punishment they are likely to suffer in a Learning Group is either the anger of their peers, if they do not respect the contract, or a failing grade. Some students at The New School may initially experience secondary motivation as they approach their studies there. They are willing to undergo a certain educational experience [CEGEP] in order to be able to move into a desired position or field. However, all of our students are obliged to attend information meetings before applying to the school,so they know that the school is different from other CEGEP programmes. Hence, even if they perceive CEGEP as a stepping stone to university [or to the kind of material entitlement discussed previously], they come to The New School fully aware that they will be addressed holistically and expected to contribute to the school in ways not required elsewhere. We assume that they start with a large fund of interest and good will towards our educational philosophy and practices, even if it is only in the spirit of the school's being the best of all available "evils."

While the Bands deal with their emotional,social, political, economic, spiritual and creative lives in an unmediated fashion,

Learning Groups are based on the students' self-articulated learning needs.They address the complexity of the students' lives with and through the media of disciplines or subjects mutually agreed upon. Many of the students' needs may also be defined as "skills needs." Numerous students have great difficulty with reading, with oral and written expression, with critical thinking, and with analyzing and arriving at syntheses of diverse ideas and facts. While these needs may be met elsewhere through particular programmes or course content directed towards skills acquisition,at The New School we begin with the students' feelings and attempt to draw from them their motivation to improve their skills. All too often, young people know that they have to improve "their writing" in order to progress with "their education" at university, but they have no real impetus within themselves to seek this form of expression. This is especially evident when they imagine the skill being applied to the writing of innumerable term papers on subjects which not only appear arbitrarily selected for them, but which they may find exquisitely boring. This is not to say that mainstream academic research is to be looked upon with disdain, but simply that the cultural gap between many students and the academy is so great that many academic practices present themselves to the students as bewildering tasks to be stoically and uncomprehendingly carried out in the interest of a distant credentialization. For this reason we encourage reading and writing in all learning groups and are avid followers of the college's "Writing Across the Curriculum" programme.

The underlying principle of academic work at The New School is that everything must be explicit: **Why** are we choosing to do what we are doing? **What** is the most appropriate area of interest we can find to meet the needs we have expressed? **What** are the most appropriate tasks for us, given our individual and group needs? With what would we like to emerge from this pursuit? For those students who have addressed these questions and found a subject or discipline appropriate to meeting their needs, there is yet a further question to pose in order to assess their skills/learning needs: What are the epistemological "givens" or methodological necessities imposed by this subject, why, and do I want to learn them? For example,a learner whose French is very poor,but who intends to remain in Québec as a comfortable participant in the society,must accept the fact that second language learning always involves some memorization and usually the use of dictionaries, reading and writing.

When considering the need for highly diverse curriculum choice, it is important to emphasize that The New School's resources are allocated on the basis of systemic criteria which are totally unrelated to the mission, ideology or pedagogy of the school itself. Since we are part of a college pre-university arts programme, our faculty is allocated in the same way as in the rest of our sector. In practice,this means that the numbers of students registered in any discipline generate the number of places,class hours and thus teaching personnel for the following year. It is virtually impossible to introduce new disciplines to the New School

for this reason; furthermore, because of serious faculty cut-backs during a short period when applications to the New School decreased (1984-86),which have later increased, we have had to drop some very central disciplines: Anthropology, Religion,Philosophy and French,the latter an unconscionable cut given the reality of Québec. The exigencies of the system make it impossible to maintain a sufficiently varied curriculum to satisfy the needs of students if we rely entirely on the resources allocated through the college's staffing projections. Currently our offerings and staffing are officially based on the following disciplines: English, Humanities, Psychology, Sociology, Art, Ceramics, Cinema, Theatre, and Music.In order to vary our curriculum, we interpret the disciplines we offer in the broadest way possible and supplement the learning groups offered by the faculty with groups given by volunteers from the community beyond The New School, by maximizing the resources within Dawson, by numerous graduates, by students who have shown particular success in various fields, by developing outreach projects,and---where possible---by attracting the services of interns in McGill University's Counselling or Adult Education programmes. While these are all excellent strategies for expanding the school's resources, their maintenance is extremely labour-intensive for the co-directors of the school. Each Learning Group so developed needs a faculty resource person to ensure that the pedagogy of the school is being respected and to offer materials, help and feedback when required. Interns must be

supervised by one of the co-directors, adding to an already full work-load. So far, the good will has existed not only to diversify the school's curriculum as much as possible, but also to inform professionals going into the educational field of our ideological and pedagogical alternative. It is **only** because of our continual solicitation of resources that we are able to keep the size of our groups manageable and appropriate for the fulfillment of our philosophical goals.

1.**Community Resources:** Since 1976, people from the greater community of Montreal have shown an interest in contributing their skills to the school in numerous ways: for several years we have been able to attract T'ai Chi, physical fitness or jazz ballet teachers to the school; there have been poetry writing workshops and creative writing groups which have published small journals; in 1977-78 a group of students who were devoted Christians wanted to further their knowledge of Christianity. We were able to obtain the participation of a Ph.D. candidate at McGill's faculty of Divinity to facilitate such a group; The Women's Centre of Montreal trained a group of New School women and their Women's Studies teacher as volunteers in numerous facets of their community services in 1980. Numerous musicians have contributed their skills in guitar,choir,percussion and musical composition. Sometimes the school has been able to connect with other groups and draw in resource people to coordinate work within the school and some external project. This was the case in 1978-79 when we were able to connect with a community-based programme on CBC. We have also

benefitted enormously from the work of performing art professionals in the city: clown workshops in 1979 and intermittent direction workshops by visiting directors in Montreal theatres,a very exciting class in contact improvisation in 1979 given by a local dancer; several plays have been directed by young professional actors over the years. There have been numerous volunteer art teachers, young artists and art education graduates who wanted to get teaching experience. From 1986-88 we had groups on the History of Ideas offered by a Dawson alumnus. In 1988, the mother of one of our students, a nursing administrator who works in a palliative care unit in a Montreal hospital, offered an excellent learning group on Death and Dying. We have even been able to have the services of an anarchist scholar and publisher to meet the needs of one of our students interested in anarchist thought.

2. **Resources within Dawson:** In this case we rely on the goodwill of our colleagues in other services. On two occasions we have been able to attract the participation of members of the Student Services. One counsellor co-facilitated a men's group and then led some groups on love and human relationships later on. Another member of that department gave excellent learning groups on community organization and facilitation for three consecutive years.

Since its beginning,staff and faculty at The New School have enjoyed the same power in the community but not,unfortunately, the same salaries. For this reason,when I refer to New School staff,I

am referring to all workers in the school. Administrative assistants refers only to clerical staff and teachers or faculty refer exclusively to the teaching staff.Since 1976 we have encouraged our administrative assistants to participate in the school,join Bands and learn how to facilitate them,and also to contribute any specialized knowledge they may have. Over the years they have facilitated Bands,directed plays,taught Photography,Folk Dancing,Women's Studies,Creative Writing,Term Paper Writing,Jazz Ballet,Science Fiction,and Office Practices. With the cutting of The New School's two clerical positions, however, another resource has been closed to us. The fact that clerical workers contributed in this way and participated in all staff meetings meant that they felt very committed to the school. Their contribution was immeasurable.

3. **Graduates:** Increasingly our graduates have been called upon to make contributions to the school's curriculum. As the rate of staff turn-over increases, we need to ensure enough experienced people to co-facilitate Bands with new faculty. On several occasions we have called upon graduates with great success. Graduates frequently have directed plays, taught drawing, painting,ceramics, music, photography and cinema. Graduates who are in advanced studies have returned to teach Anthropology,Religion,Philosophy,History,English and Psychology. Increasingly we are appealing to our graduates to return and give something back to the school. On the whole we find them quite receptive and excited to "be back."

4. **Student-Led Groups:** Students within the school who think they have the expertise to lead learning groups must find faculty members to sponser them and ensure that the quality of work is appropriate for the school. This is a grave responsibility and an excellent learning opportunity for students. In order to be eligible for such a task (which earns the student a credit), a student must have completed one term in the school with good marks and must have attained some sort of credibility. Over the years numerous groups have been facilitated by students, beginning with the TELIS group in the second year of the school, a group which helped facilitate Curriculum of Affect, as it was called at the time. Students have taught T'ai Chi and jazz ballet, directed plays, taught art and assisted the ceramics teacher, taught performance art, instrumental music, introductory photography/dark room,women's studies, poetry workshops, journalism through creating a regular school paper or magazine, and science fiction and fantasy. Their role modeling is always empowering to all the students, and on the whole the quality of their work is responsible.

5. **Outreach Projects:** Another curriculum possibility is to be found in encouraging students to do outreach work on projects they themselves devise, or which already exist.From the very beginning of the school,there was a strong commitment to outreach work in the community. For example,in 1974-75,Students participated in: working in a day-care centre,in a tutorial programme for the Shawbridge center and a French Animation Programme in an elementary

school. Some students interested in continuing a first term group on children's literature were able to organize an excellent weekly seminar with the Chief Librarian of the Westmount Children's Library on this subject. In this case, the organization of the group and the group's processes were undertaken by two student resource people, while the content was supplied by the librarian who had been given a clear indication of the students' needs. From 1974 onwards, there were many excellent outreach learning groups: a project in which a New School group worked on educational theory and also worked as animators in a programme at Royal Arthur School in Point St.Charles; two students worked at FACE elementary school devising creativity projects for the children (1977-78); students formed a group of tutours to students who were having difficulty at Montreal High School---some of them tutoured in basic skills while others worked on drama and film-making projects with the students (1978-79); some students worked at the Lansdowne Training Centre in conjunction with a developmental psychology learning group (1980-81); there were exchanges of students with the "Alternative de Sherbrooke" in 1981-82 and 1983-84. The latter projects were very exciting and well attended and they were not for credit. In conjunction with a Religion course at Dawson and one at The New School, some students worked at the Yellow Door Elderly Project, helping to meet the needs of elderly citizens in the downtown area of the city (1984-85). In the Fall of 1987,the first year of my research for this study on The New School,I facilitated a learning group on the project. The students did all the

interviews of ex-New School faculty for this project, and their trips out in the community were very meaningful to them, although this was a very modified outreach approach. In her survey on the development of "academics" at The New School, one student observed that the number and frequency of student outreach commitments trailed off seriously after the 1983 strike:

> ...it seems that over the years, it is more often that an outside resource person must come to us: as students, we go out into the community much less than we used to. The increasing reluctance of New Schoolers to "reach out" into the world around us and find learning opportunities there is echoed in the facilitators' observations that a greater proportion of students than ever before appear to be lazy, unmotivated or just not very involved in their learning groups. New Schoolers also appear to have increasing difficulty attending outside events that relate to, or are even required for, a learning group. I'm not sure of the reasons for this, but one factor is probably the growing number of students who have part-time jobs that occupy much of their free time.[1]

Outreach activities take a great deal of supervision in order to be credit-worthy. The resource person within the school cannot simply send the students out to "do something" and then record an arbitrary mark. If the student is working with an external supervisor, the supervisor must be informed of the school's philosophy and methodology. The resource person must ensure that the school's pedagogy is being supported and that the methods of on-going and final evaluation are consistent with the school's ways. Usually, the sponsor of the project must also make on-site visits. Because of all these variables, an outreach activity can be even more labour-intensive than an ordinary learning group. With the increase in faculty workload and the increase in the students' commitment to part-time jobs, there is less energy available for

displacement from the college and the supervision of outreach projects.

While it is important to offer the largest possible choice of learning groups to the students, it is also of primary importance that the pedagogy within the learning groups be consistent with The New School's philosophy and methodology.

Our efforts to maintain a high level of Critical Humanism and a concomitant praxis within the Learning Groups have meant a continual struggle against the historical tides at work in the politics of higher education in Quebec. While to some extent the historical tides we have tried to overcome have to do with an increasingly individualistic **Zeitgeist** informing the values of our students and staff, the structure in which we work has also forced us into increasingly labour-intensive adjustments in order to maintain a viable system of accountability within The New School which conforms to the criteria of a system with which it has little of essence in common. Our accomodation to the demands of accountability within The New School, within Dawson College and within the CEGEP system demands detailed explanation.

B. **Accountability**

1. **Curriculum Advising:** Originally students were accountable to their Bands for their academic curricula. Band facilitators maintained records which were passed on from Band to Band. Although the Bands did an excellent job of helping people understand their own affective/cognitive needs and choosing appropriate learning groups, this supervision was only provided on a term-by-term basis.

No one had an over-view of the students' work. Consequently we decided to change the curriculum advising system. Each faculty member would be curriculum advisor to some 15 students for their entire careers at the school. That way it would be possible to discern if a student were avoiding certain skills which s/he needed and to discuss this avoidance. Many students also needed to be encouraged to attempt fields they had never tried, rather than staying with the "tried and true" where they may have achieved their best academic standing in high school. The Curriculum Advisor often was very instrumental in helping students decide what their next steps would be after CEGEP and would help students find appropriate programmes for continued study. Curriculum advisors were first assigned to students; after their first term, the students could make one change for the balance of their time at the school.

While curriculum advising serves an important function in the school, it is a service not generally offered to pre-university arts students. This service worked reasonably well from 1978-83, when we were able to maintain a fairly stable faculty presence. Since that time, however, because of college cut-backs, there has been a large faculty turn-over. Frequently a student may have as many as three different Curriculum Advisors over a two year span at The New School. This makes it much more difficult for students and advisors to reach the kind of familiarity which is really helpful to the students. While the college itself has academic advisors,these excellent but over-extended resource people do not

have the knowledge of our students that faculty have,nor do they have a sufficiently intimate knowledge of our methodology and actual offerings necessary to make suggestions consistent with our philosophy and pedagogy. While there is no doubt that curriculum advising is a necessary service for quality control in our programme, our general resourcelessness makes it difficult to maintain a sufficiently rigourous level of individual student supervision. While it may be argued that our students certainly get more individual supervision **per capita** than the average CEGEP pre-university Arts students, the practice is still very far from our own ideological commitment.

2. **Contracts:** Students and staff contract all learning groups. While some people argue for a standardized contract form, the majority object that the self-to-subject processes within the school would be jeopardized by such a "bureaucratic" solution. Usually there are written group contracts establishing group norms and expectations and individual written ones to establish individual goals. Contracts are used throughout the groups to assess the groups processes and are important tools for the evaluation process.

3. **Student Records:** Since its beginning, the New School has had a double record-keeping system. We have had to maintain an internal method of assigning course numbers and noting students' grades, [consistent with our own pedagogy]. On the other hand, we also were committed to providing comprehensible and negotiable

transcripts for the students. We have always benefitted from the expertise available from the Registrariat, although we have had to change our methods three times since our beginning, due to an increasingly narrow cost-accounting system within the CEGEP system, where staffing is decided by a formula in which teaching positions are inextricably attached to the number of student places per course section. This means, in practice, that the number of actual Cahier course numbers available to us has been reduced from over 200 in 1973 to approximately 35 in 1988-89. Over the years, it has taken increasing ingenuity to meet the governmental criteria as well as the pedagogical mandate of the school, a practice which entails increasing clerical work with sharply reduced clerical resources.

In the first year of the school, all students were registered arbitrarily in courses consistent with their programmes. By 1974, students were beginning to complain about the following matters:some had been registered in the wrong programme;others were getting marks and course titles on their transcripts which had no relation whatsoever to their actual work. During the summer of 1974,three four-semester profiles were generated, one in the Social Sciences, one in Language and Literature, and one in Creative Arts. This process was developed for the maintenance of student records:

> Students at the beginning of the term, simply choose one of the fields of concentration and register for that profile. At mid-term, as part of the mid-term on-going evaluation process, each student reviews his/her registration and undergoes what we call "post-registration registration." That is, a list of alternatives has been generated for each profile, and students can usually find courses which correspond much more clearly to what they are doing. We have found this an extremely valuable mode both

> in terms of maintaining our own records, and in keeping credibility and integrity within the CEGEP structure.[2]

The Curriculum Advisors were expected to keep track of the students' actual learning groups and the course numbers to which they had been matched. They also were expected to receive the students' marks on forms signed by the facilitators of their learning groups, enter them on the students' match sheets, and submit them to the administrative assistant who would then enter them on class lists, per Cahier number and send them along to the registrariat.

This method of reporting was maintained until Winter, 1982. Here it was decided to attempt an more finely calibrated match of New School learning groups with Cahier numbers. We were told we could only offer as many course numbers as there were sections for which we were staffed. For that reason,we had to be extremely exigent in choosing course numbers, attached to descriptions which would be applicable to several learning groups simultaneously. We would then pool these numbers, ensure that the distribution of students was fair, and match them to appropriate groups:

> It was decided that...[we]...would match up specific course titles to each New School group offered, therfore each student in a group would have a choice of 2 or 3 course titles to match with the group [and with his/her own programme needs]. On the whole this worked out well although there were a few cases, with graduating students, where none of the matches fit their course requirements for graduation and adjustments were necessary at the end of term.[3]

II. The Formation and Pedagogy of The Learning Groups

Over time, a New School methodology has developed for

Over time, a New School methodology has developed for organizing learning groups,formulating their contents and methodology,and evaluating the group processes and the students' and facilitators' participation and performance within the groups. While I will describe this method as fully as possible below,it must be remembered that we try not to exercise any coercion on the faculty regarding this methodology. It is true that experienced students will try to ensure that the methodology used in their learning groups is consistent with the school's regular practices and ideology, but there have been some instances where teachers have either ignored these pressures or refused to comply with the students' demands. In a school where the contents and methodology of all learning groups **must** devolve from the intersection of the students' and the facilitators' interests and needs,any use of coercion is untenable. There have also been cases where very well-intentioned teachers simply couldn't get the hang of it---of remaining on the one hand loyal to their subject matter and métier and, on the other, of having the flexibility to allow the students power in determining the structure, contents and processes of the groups. Since 1980, we have had relatively few hirings specifically **for** The New School. Rather,we have been dependent on attracting faculty members entrenched in the various disciplines/departments in the college. While most of these have come with open hearts and minds, there have been some reluctant faculty members who found themselves very uncomfortably situated in this kind of educational setting. On the whole, though, faculty "bumped" into the New School

have showed immense good will in trying to do things in a different way, and many of them have succeeded, thus contributing to the development of the school's methodolgy.

Learning groups are formed in the first two weeks of term. By the time the students arrive,the faculty for that term has had workshops in which facilitating skills have been discussed and in which various objectives have been set for the term. Frequently the setting of objectives is reactive to interests or crises which have arisen in the preceding term. If,for example,there has been large scale poverty identified among the students,it might be important to give attention to life and work skills; if there have been racist,sexist or homophobic incidents,there may be a need for groups on prejudice; if students really seem not to understand the basic philosophy of the school, there may be a need to examine the tenets of Humanistic Education. Often in the winter term, teachers are aware of students who may want to continue pursuing on a more advanced level a study undertaken in the first term. All these possibilities are discussed with the understanding that the faculty's assessment of the situation may not be the same as the students', and that the students may not accord the same priority to the same issues even if they do recognize them. It has been our experience that even when students do not wish to pursue learning groups on issues identified as important by faculty, discussion of these issues still percolates through the community.

A. <u>The Process of Forming the New School Academic Program</u>

1. **Academic Shopping:** When the students arrive, there is always a period of orientation to acquaint them with the school's philosophy, pedagogy and objectives for that term. The faculty and all learning group resource people and/or facilitators have written profiles of themselves which have been distributed to the students. The profiles should say something about the **kind of people** the facilitators are,what their basic areas of interest are,and how they like to see learning groups develop. Under no circumstances, should the profiles include course descriptions or outlines. At the most,they should allude to areas of study. Here is an example of a faculty profile from Fall, 1988: Susan Caldwell-Psychology :

> Back for a second consecutive year at The New School Now it's that time for profiles, to try to put down on paper what my concerns are and how that might affect what will be the learning groups under the title of "Psychology." So here goes.
>
> First I'm interested in learning how to parent an adult. My son is 18 and that is requiring changes in our relationship. This has lead to a lot of thinking about what our expectations are of our parents: what do we want them to do, who do we want them to be. I have to look at this both as being in the parent role and being in the child role. So perhaps some of you might be interested in looking at your own mother/daughter, father/daughter, mother/son, father/son relationships. This would be in the context of your own growth toward adulthood and autonomy.
>
> I'm also the resident science buff and computer buff (not hacker, buff. This means I'm more interested than knowledgeable!) With respect to psychology this means that a learning group on the brain and its functioning is always an option. With respect to the computer part, depending on what access we have to a computer, we might do a methodology course in which we could use computers to construct and analyze interview data...As you can tell, I'm desparately awaiting your ideas for developing learning groups.[4]

As it turned out in this case two groups formed: one on adult/child relationships and one on the brain. Here is what the teacher said about them in the New School Annual Report:1988-89:

> I think both of them worked well, although as normal with the "developing curriculum" set up, there are things that I would do differently "next time." What amazed me the most was the interest of so many students in a science-based course---The Brain, and I may offer it again if demanded. The Parent...course was good but needed much more development, mainly in terms of what readings are appropriate and a more structured and varied way of having the students write what they had learned. Also the drop-out rate was higher as it touched on some very "dangerous" emotional material. I enjoyed them both-but as I said, there is the frustration of "knowing I could do better next time."[5]

When the students have read the profiles, they spend several days "shopping" for academic groups. The facilitators are available for this process in which they are interviewed by students,singly or in groups, who question the facilitators' interests and describe their own. Experienced faculty will be open to exploring the students' interests and motivations with them. In the course of this process, the facilitators take notes on the people who have expressed interest and what those interests are. The time-table has not yet been released because we do not want students to choose their groups on the basis of scheduling and planning "on" and "off" days. Students are advised to choose more than the five groups they will need for a regular course load in addition to their Bands. There will probably be a certain number of time conflicts which will force students to make choices; hence, they are advised to keep other possibilities in reserve.

2. **Negotiating/Finalizing:** After the shopping has finished, the facilitators must decide what groups they are going to facilitate. Usually this is done by examining their own interests and training along with the interests expressed by the majority of students. They will then post the names of the groups they are giving and when they will be taking place. Students are given times to come together to "finalize" negotiations for learning groups by participating in the intitial contracting process for the subject matter of the group. If this appeals to them, they will make a commitment to that learning group. Sometimes a configuration of interests will result in a learning group with a fairly broad description which will enable members to pursue multiple possiblities:

> Relationships: Winter, 1982. At the outset of the term, several students approached me about giving groups on the family, on friendship and on romantic love...all subjects which they knew interest me. Since it was impossible to give a separate group on each of these topics, I suggested a compromise: there would be a group on relationships, and people within that group would formulate the curriculum. At our first session, I asked people to "brain-storm." Here are the issues that they found important: 1):**Love:** They were interested in "falling in love," the importance of love relationships, women and love and men and love, women's role in relationships, infatuation versus love, is the Harlequin Romantic vision true? long distance romance, physical affection vs. sexuality, finding the perfect partner, reciprocity...is it essential? Romantic love vs. "real love," must love deteriorate to dependency? love and power, monogamy,and long-term love relationships. 2) **The Family:** our relationships within the family; how does the family perceive us and how does that affect our own future relationships? 3) **Friendship:** does physical affection ruin a friendship? "Platonic" vs. sexual relationships, reciprocity, power, selfishness.4)**Saying Goodbye:** How do we terminate love relationships and friendships and separate from our families?
>
> This was a big order. We finally constructed the following syllabus which we adhered to very closely...with weekly commentary in the students' journals and class

discussion:

A. **The Family:**

1. inter-relationships within the family;
2. the family as teacher and perceiver of the individual;
3. the family's effect on ones future relationships;
4. "saying goodbye"---detaching oneself from the family: what to take and what to leave.

Readings: Satir, Virginia. Conjoint Family Therapy. and various articles.

B. What is the function of Love? Do we need it to live?

Here we read Plato's Symposium, had a guest lecturer to comment on it and discussed it at length.

C. **Romantic Love:**

1. Its History and Function

Readings: Capellanus, The Art of Courtly Love. Denis de Rougement, Love in the Western World (excerpts) and poetry from the 14th-20th centuries.

2. **The Infatuation "Hype" vs. "Real Love:"**

Here we talked and intended to read a love comic or a Harlequin Romance but never got around to it because everyone already knew the "hype" very well.

3. The Long Haul:

The importance of love, reciprocity, monogamy and dependence vs. independence and polygamy.

Readings: Karen Horney, "Distrust Between the Sexes," from Feminine Psychology.

4. Putting the Puzzle Together:

Why relationships? Where do they take us? What else is important in life?

Readings: Constantine Safilios-Rothschild,

Love, Sex and Sex Roles. [excerpts] [6]

3. **Contracting:** Once the students and facilitator have negotiated the general contents of the learning group, they negotiate other aspects of the group such as expected tasks and behavioural expectations. They also discuss the evaluation process which will be used for arriving at students' final grades. Eventually they arrive at a written group contract which everyone signs. The following passage continues to describe the process undergone in contracting the Relationship Group and some of its outcome:

> Aside from their weekly journal entries which were all immediately commented upon by me, the students had to do a long final essay, integrating all the readings with their own experiences. These,for the most part, were excellent. As well, they formed small "relationship" groups within the learning group. They were all formed arbitrarily and their task was to form relationships within the sub- groups and monitor their progress in the journals. Of the four groups [of four] so formed, one disbanded due to lack of interest, another disbanded due to lack of interest and anger at this lack, another met successfully informally but could never manage to meet formally (an interesting comment on the need for casualness in the students' lives), and one was highly successful. This latter was composed of the three most reticent members of the learning group, two women and one man. They had wonderful outings and exchanges, dinners at each others' homes, movies, etc. They claimed that having to meet helped them overcome their natural shyness.
>
> ...I was glad that we were truly a multi-disicplinary group, touching on Sociology, History, Psychology, Literature, Philosophy and Political Economy. As well,the students were gripped by the class. We shared some inter-personal crises with some of the students, and that also was demonstrative of relationships and what they can mean. With one exception, they all finished the course with good work; the rate of absenteeism was less than 5%. I think that says something about the need of adolescents to explore this subject in a rigourous manner.[7]

The learning group contract should be reasonably specific and should be signed by all students and the facilitator with copies made available to everyone. Frequently members of the group append their telephone numbers so they may contact each other to discuss the work.

The contracting process is a very important one in the school. It is essential that all members of a group "buy into" the contract. The facilitator must make sure that all students understand and state their own motivation for the group. If this is not established at the outset, later on students may claim they didn't realize what the group entailed, they were less interested than they thought, or that they had simply gone the route of least resistance in following the other students. The following excerpt is from a student who has not made a tight enough connection with the material in two learning groups and has been unable to complete her work. She would now like to complete her work, and she describes how she has become remotivated. It would appear that the sources of her new motivation are unrelated to the subject matter **per se**. However, they certainly are related to her regaining her self-esteem which she emphasizes as a necessity for her learning.

> I haven't been doing the work in Children's Literature or Creative Writing. I didn't feel like I was doing it for myself but because you asked us to. It was becoming too distant from me. I really want to do the work now.
>
> There's something I want to tell you. I just realized there might be a connection...on Thursday night both you and Ron really gave me a really good feeling. I was feeling really tremendous and I went to Rosemere with this feeling. I'm tutoring one person there ,but what happened was I ended up helping out three people. Michael asked me after if I wouldn't mind working with all three in a spontaneous way. I felt really terrific. I felt it was

> important to give some feedback to me...especially positive.[8]

While the contracting process may be very time-consuming, it is central to the success of the group and worth the investment of time. This original process is central not only in specifying the motivations and interests of the students and facilitator for pursuing the contents, but in helping the group to form its own identity.

4. **Personal Contracts:** In the early years of The New School, students were expected to write personal contracts, explaining their particular motivations for the group and what they as individuals hoped to achieve. These were shared with the group, consulted if students wanted to renegotiate their contracts,and in the process of final evaluation. For some years these personal contracts were considered redundant. Lately, however,some facilitators are using them again. It is my own opinion that they are especially useful in providing an occasion for students to reflect on those feelings which provide motivation for the group and for linking individuals to the subject matter. Often the students' personal contracts will mention their fears and anxieties as well as the interest they have,as is the case in this recent contract for a learning group entitled "Memoir Writing."

> I took this course essentially to refresh and improve my writing skills. The past couple of terms I've immersed myself in the visual arts, and though that has been very fruitful, especially in affirming my abiity as an artist, I feel the need to revive my interest in structured writing.
>
> I've never taken a course specific to writing before. I hope that it can give me a clearer idea of how literature

> is created as well as giving me the practice in writing more efficiently and effectively. I should like to exmaine how to write factual yet creative prose and also to develop my own voice.
>
> Finally, the subject of the course, my memoirs, excites me yet scares the Hell out of me. I think at the end of the course I will have encountered a number of personal obstacles and skeletons and I intend to overcome them. I believe that the most one can write about is what one has experienced, and it excites me a lot to take a look at and create from my past.
>
> I hope this sufficiently outlines my goals (and my apprehensions) about this group, and I can hardly wait to get started.

In order to demonstrate the variety of needs and the way in which they may be brought together, I have chosen to focus on contracts and a re-negotiation into a Women's Studies group. Here are some examples of two personal contracts for a Women's Studies group which focused on the conceptual history of women:

> The reasons why I wish to take Women's Studies are many. The most obvious is because I am a woman and a feminist. I feel it is necessary to study in this area because of the manner in which women have been regarded in the past, and the way women are thought of now. I think it is important to me personally because I have just been married and need assurances that my identity isn't being snuffed out the way my name was. I am interested in the thoughts and writings of contemporary women, as well as the women in history. I would like to study how women were viewed in history, to see how those thoughts have evolved today. I am particularly interested in reading the works of Sylvia Plath.

In the above example, the student clearly is concerned primarily with her own identity as a woman. She wants to situate herself historically. She has already read Sylvia Plath and is aware that this gifted young writer committed suicide, leaving a husband and two small children. Perhaps she is worried about being "snuffed out" like Sylvia Plath. All these issues were explored when she read her profile to the class. As it turned out in this

group, she was the only person interested in doing an in-depth study of Sylvia Plath. She was able to satisfy this need by writing a paper on her and sharing her work with the group. Another student raised different issues:

> From an early age, I have had mixed emotions about being female. On many occasions I had actions and reactions toward prejudice which stated that I had accepted my given role, one of passivity and inferiority and ought to consider myself fortunate when permitted to join in a game of hockey. Even then, it was only after I had paid each of the boys a long-saved and precious quarter from my allowance that they let me in.
>
> It seems that each time I begin a job I am not a "new employee", "fellow worker," or even "friend," but simply the "new chick" to be tested and flirted with. In addition to the fact that I "can't do" this or that kind of job, I must cope with the harassment from the men and competition from the women. As determined as I am not to get involved, I must admit that the whole situation distresses me. Jobs have been refused me because the woman interviewer decides I'm "too pretty" and would distract the men from their jobs...I am another unemployment statistic.
>
> I find male neighbours who used to call me [a nickname] and...carry me on their shoulders suddenly giving me the once-over at my parents' parties.
>
> Men I consider friends suddenly hate me when I say "I thought we were just friends."
>
> These are various situations that are ever-occurring. I know that I am placed in defined roles and that people react certain mays to me. The conceptual history of women should help me to understand why, as well as assisting me not to be as bitter.

This contract carries within it two important concerns which may be shared within the group: the first is the young woman's dealing with her sexual identity---the way people are reacting to her now that she is grown up. The second is the theme of justice and equality in the public sphere (sports or the work place). That particular learning group covered, among other subjects, the historical and current treatment of women as the sexual temptress, as the mate, as the creative artist and as the worker. There is

something very liberating in understanding the historical contingencies that have led to ones personal sense or fear of oppression. Both young women indicated that this was an important factor in their choice of the learning group. As well, both of them expressed the need for help in knowing how to react and how to stand up for themselves and be autonomous people.

Here the teacher was "shopped" for a Women's Studies group. She and the students then "negotiated" for its general content and considered a preliminary contract. Then each student wrote a personal contract indicating how she related to the generally designated subject matter. From the process of sharing the personal contracts and recalling the larger outline of our interest, a more detailed group contract was drawn up.

5. **Re-Negotiation:** All learning groups undergo an evaluation of their progress and functioning half-way through the term. In this case, the group reconsiders its original objectives and decides if it wants to make any changes. Often,in the case of groups with personal contracts,students will also indicate that they would like to renegotiate their contracts. New interests or personal experiences and insights have changed their direction,as was the case of another student in the same Women's Studies group from which contracts have been quoted above:

> Owing to my situation at the moment, I would like to negotiate some changes in the focus of my work..I have found the work so far quite interesting, but it lacks a personal identification which I feel I need right now ...to maintain my involvement.
>
> Over the past year, my relationship with my family, particularly my mother, has been going through changes as I have begun to assert my physical and emotional independence in establishing an identity apart from my

family. My frequent absence from home, my questioning of their values and opinions, and the transferral of emotional support from my family to my friends and myself; all of these changes in our traditional pattern have created confusion and strangeness in our relationship. Paradoxically, to a degree, they have also given me a more human, less role-oriented insight into the individuals in my family, and the objective distance to understand them outside the dependent-supporter relationship.

I have begun to work on a character sketch of my mother which I am finding very difficult: the real person, my mother, who has a past that extends beyond my beginnings, who sometimes sits up late at night and thinks and feels and remembers is a person I have never known or considered. She will always be my mother, just as I will always be her daughter, but as I move into adulthood, our relationship must expand and maintain itself through love, not dependence. I feel that through writing about my mother, I can begin to clarify my feelings towards her...and the recent dynamics of our relationship.

Another change going on inside myself which has preoccupied me a lot lately is the facing and admitting to my sexuality... Recent experiences and discoveries have forced me to face the fact that I am a woman and have led me to want to explore my sexual values and mores.I have been writing fairly prolifically on the topic, and I have started to write poetry again, which I would like to work on with you.

A very strong need for awareness and understanding of my development into an individual and a sexual being is what I feel needs concentration, and that is where my energy to work is right now.

Recent exposure to very different, traditional attitudes towards women has provided a contrast to my middle-class Protestant values and my so-called "liberal up-bringing." The people I work with are of various ethnic groups, most are immigrants, and their beliefs are rigid and outdated in the context of contemporary North-American society. Their treatment of me and our relationship is something I have never experienced before, and this too has broadened my awareness of myself as a woman and what it means to be female.

So basically what I am saying is that I would like to explore my own womanhood directly, taking an affective focus. I would like to continue reading and doing a cognitive exploration also, but I'd like to deal with material more directly pertinent to myself.

While it is clear that all three contracts have many themes in common, the focus of each student is somewhat different,

depending on her preoccupations at the time. It is also likely that the preoccupations shared by the majority will become the group's focal points. Young women between the ages of 17-21 all have strong emotional needs to clarify their situation **qua women**. Sexuality and autonomy are clear themes. The mother-daughter relationship is related to both of the above. The workplace is also important. The teacher must find ways of tying the subject matter together and must be dedicated to helping the group investigate the **feelings** surrounding subject matter. This requires facilitative skills but also a very broad and deep grasp of the subject matter and its literature. More often than not, the facilitator can find readings whose level and contents touch many of the concerns of the group. It is also essential to arrive at tasks which are appropriate to the articulated needs of the students.

6. **Evaluation:** It was the initial belief within The New School, and it has almost always been its practice, that students take a significant role in the evaluation of their own performance, that of their peers, and that of the facilitator. While there are always occasions when some students are more interested in getting their marks and/or their credits than in the **process** of evaluation, on the whole the majority of evaluations are conducted in an appropriate way and the people who participate in the evaluation process learn a great deal about themselves and others.

Frequent criteria of evaluation, outlined within the group contract, are: attendance, punctuality, participation in the group,written work,progress from the point of departure,any extra

work done for the learning group. In most cases,students are asked to write self-evaluations or to arrive at the evaluation period,prepared to present them orally. Sometimes they are asked to write evaluations of the other group members as well. Students present their own evaluations and then receive feed-back from the group, and eventually a grade is negotiated. The process itself always includes an evaluation of the group itself,its functioning and its honouring of its original objectives. This is an important facet of Critical Humanism where the interaction of individual and group holds a fundamental value within the process. Here the questions to be asked are: Did the group work together as a group or simply as a collection of individuals? Did the group acknowledge and meet the needs of the individuals who compose it? Did individuals within the group all recognize the importance of maintaining the group's integrity and infra-structure of mutual support and critique as central to its success? If the answers to these questions are generally affirmative, the learning group or Band has worked well and deserves a good evaluation. In such cases [and in cases where the answers to these questions are generally negative], groups often arrive at a group mark and then scrutinize individuals in relation to the established norm. This usually works well,unless there are cases of exceptional students at either end of the spectrum who feel they are being cheated. In the case of exceptionally gifted students, whose capacities have developed above the group norm, it is possible to ensure that their contributions to the group are congruent with their level of

comprehension. Here is part of an evaluation by an exceptional student in a learning group on Holocausts:

> ...I think that my two main contributions to the class were the influences I had on our intergroup relations and as a kind of second animator, helping to bring up the level of intellectual disscussion.I felt (quite happily) that I was sometimes a sounding board for your [the facilitator's] ideas, and you for mine. I was, however, at time worried that some of the other ...members might be bored or even resentful of this principally two-way relationship. Yet, as a whole, I think it helped the class... One of the things that I like best about The New School is the fact that many classes can adjust to the level that each of its members can deal with. This is to me part of the true meaning of "self-to-subject," and I think that in this group we have seen this principle actualized to its full potential. Although it may have involved a great deal of time and effort on my part, I am glad (and proud) to have, with some encouragement from yourself, been able to put my best effort into the group. What makes me even happier is that I feel that many of the other group members did as well.

His views are corroborated somewhat by another student:

> I feel good about having taken this course and I found that it triggered a search to redefine my own principles. We were a strong group with a lot of fabulous ideas to contribute to the learning process. Had I not felt so strongly about my denial of Jewishness, perhaps I would have been more vocal about what I experienced at..[a Jewish parochial school].

Another important aspect of evaluation is peer evaluation. While sometimes it is delivered orally, it is often delivered in writing,giving each student something to carry away for reflection.I allows for the evaluation feed-back to be made in a time of reflection away from the dynamics of the group rather than in reaction to those dynamics. Here are one student's evaluations of other students in a Creative Writing group where the criteria for evaluation were the students' work and their contributions to one another through written critiques of submitted works:

Ruth: I was a bit disappointed with Ruth's writing. I felt that she wasn't aiming as high as she could, especially in her story about Emma. I felt that some of her over-simplification was an effort to keep the story short and to remain uninvolved with her characters. However, she seemed to put more effort into her poetry, which she likes better. Her comments were very positive but not very critical, and her impact on the class was cryptic. However, I felt that she progressed over the semester.

Phil: Phil was also pretty regular with his work. There was a glaring difference,however, between his last-minute and his well thought out work. Needless to say, I much preferred the stuff that had been pondered over. In class his participaiton was good. He held up his side when it came to discussing readings.

Joyce: Joyce's first story impressed me. It was too bad to see the quality of her work dip a bit, but ...[the title of a story]...seemed to be a turning point for her. From then on, I could really see an attention being given to the senses in her pieces. Her work output was a bit irregular but hardly detrimental to the class. Her comments remained at a high level of quality (among the four or five people in the class whose comments were considered helpful). Her in-put seemed steady;she was very present in the class.[9]

It is clear that the performance and commitment of all the class members is essential to the well-being of the group. Often discussion about a particular individual's lack of productivity or blocks to learning are important for the whole group: "I also think that the time spent on discussing certain students' problems with writing wasn't wasted, at least with me."[10] One of the most important factors in our emphasis on group discussion and group work is that it breaks down systemic and personal barriers:

> I have learned to accept my feelings and to express them, but sometimes I'm not sure of how to deal with them.
>
> I have also learned that a lot of different people have the same experiences as myself. It is strange listening to people read their work and being able to relate to it.
>
> I have also learned how some of the work can be used practically. For example the piece on politics [they were asked to write on what politics meant to them] and the

> discussion in class helped me to understand how politics works in The New School...
>
> ...I think one thing that will stay with me is the sharing of common experiences, even though I was convinced that I had my own...[and]... nobody could have the same.[11]

While one might argue that only poor and mediocre students "need" group support to excel,very able students are also very positively reinforced by the group environment:

> I have enjoyed our creative writing sessions very much this term. More than this, I have gained from them. I now find it not only easier to criticize others' works, but also to take criticism myself; as I grow more secure with my skills, I will also become less defensive about them.
>
> I got a lot out of watching people creak that tiny bit out of the coffin we all keep ourselves locked in. I got a lot out of seeing people's writing skills improve. There is definitely something to be said for working in a group.
>
> ...I think our group was very successful; the improvement in our writing has been evidence of that. But what I'd also like to believe is that we've learned something besides, and that maybe our appreciation of each other has deepened as well.

Eventually, though, students must be individually evaluated by themselves, their peers and the facilitator. There are numerous ways of initiating this aspect of the evaluation process. Sometimes it is useful to use evaluation exercises like: "on the one hand...on the other hand." In this exercise each member of the group writes on one side of a sheet of paper (or an index card) what they liked best of the student's performance in that particular learning group. On the other side, each member of the class is asked to write one criticism. This can be varied, particularly in art classes where there is a product visible to all. Here, members may write something they like about the **person** on one side of a card and a critique of the **work under**

consideration on the other side of the card. The point here is to help people to learn how to accept and contain criticism. So often people globalize critiques, thinking that their total being is under criticism and being rejected, when in fact what is being discussed is only one facet of their lives.

Sometimes the facilitator will "reserve" part of the grade for the quality of the student's written work, which in many cases has not been seen in its entirety by the group. In this case it is important to emphasize that the group must trust the facilitator's judgement and integrity for this to make sense. Progress is very important to our pedagogy. However, it is often difficult to arrive at equally fair and just assessments of both the talented student who is able to produce high quality work with little effort and the student whose quality of finished product is inferior, but who has invested enormous energy and effort and has improved considerably over the term. By having to tackle these issues, students are impelled into fascinating and consciousness-raising discussions about the nature of evaluation itself, its efficacy, and purpose. While evaluations in The New School usually result in students receiving credits, their more important long-range contribution to students is in their process, in the intensity and openness with which individual students and entire groups assess their own processes and give and receive feedback.

> It [evaluation] teaches you how to evaluate yourself fairly which you've never had the opportunity to do before, and then you can't avoid looking at what you've done more honestly because people don't let you. You can't say, "I did this," when you didn't. So it gives you a sense of really taking a good look at yourself and measuring what you've done, and it also allows you to do that for other

> people. This give you a better idea of what it's like for a teacher or facilitator to have to mark and what really goes into it, the considerations you have to make. So I think it teaches you about a whole new angle of education that you should know about because it's very pertinent to you.[12]

Initially students may imagine that being party to the evaluation process will yield them better grades than the regular teacher-evaluator system. Before long,however,they become very clear about the educational value of the evaluation processes in the school---especially as a source of empowerment. Here are the remarks of a graduate:

> I think one of the important things about the New School is that people here felt that they could have an influence, that they as individuals and collectively with other people could make an impact on their learning process. Well certainly that's what we felt at the New School, but I think we also took that with us when we left and felt that we could affect other areas of our life and other people and I think that's very important.[13]

It must also be said that some subject matter lends itself especially well to a kind of self-to-subject evaluation. In the following extract from a self-evaluation in a learning group on reading and writing memoirs, one student refers back to her contract where she said she wanted to deal with her feelings about her parents' current divorce proceedings:

> My first reason for taking this class was that I felt that I had to stop running away as I was to look back and see where I was at. I think I achieved that and I even started to walk again towards my future.
>
> I realized a lot of things about myself, and especially about my solitude and my relationship with my parents. I haven't written the paper on the separation of my parents, though. I didn't feel I was able to deal with it in an honest way, so I preferred not to do it.

Significantly, this student shows her ambivalence about dealing with her feelings in the concluding paragraph of her self-evaluation:

> ...I will continue writing about myself. I realized that writing about a situation helps me see it more objectively when I read it after. That is what will stay with me because I know I let my passion take over too often, less often now than I did in the past, but still too often.

The assurance that a Learning Group is just a beginning in the development of a new interest is common in written and spoken self-evaluations. In an excerpt from another Memoirs group four years later, a student more or less expresses the same feelings:

> I feel really good about having written about myself, it is a long process and it feels really good to get my feelings down clearly on paper. I do not feel that the end of term and of class signifies the end of my memoirs, but a beginning. Writing my memoirs will become a continuing process that I will learn from for as long as I keep faithful to the practice.

While cynics might imagine that students misrepresent themselves in the evaluation process in order to get higher grades, this is rarely the case. For one reason, if a reliable norm of honesty has been established in the Learning Group, their peers will confront dishonesty. Naturally, the functioning of evaluation sessions is always informed by the entire school environment and atmosphere, especially since the students frequently share or have shared various Bands and Learning Groups. This is why it is so important to maintain an atmosphere of trust, accountability and personal honesty within the entire New School community: the whole is not only greater than, but actually influences,the well-being of all its parts. Here is a student's assessment of his

participation in a Creative Writing group:

> I try as hard as I can when I do write, but sometimes it just doesn't come out. I have found myself working on my writing more than I have in the past. This may be because I have had to write more than I ever did before. I am trying to keep up a journal...the need to write on a daily basis.
>
> If any of the...criteria is lacking, it is in my effort. I am still battling with myself to write on a daily basis...I still find myself doing other things when I could be writing. Effort is where I must keep working hard.

Or another student's self-evaluation in a Memoirs course a decade later:

> As far as my own contributions are concerned, I feel that I have given as much as I could in this class, considering the size...I did go through a disruptive stage during this semester, but I feel that I kept my disruptive behaviour outside of this class, aside from my extensive laughing.

In the latter case, it was up to the class to decide whether the disruptive behaviour of this student was problematic. In the end they judged that while it had been difficult in the beginning, both he and the class had eventually adjusted to a norm of acceptable behaviour which seemed to work for all concerned. While this was taken into account in his evaluation, it was not considered the most important factor in his case.

In their written evaluations, students will often critique the structure of the group, the quality of the readings and the teacher's participation. Their views are always worth considering, as are these of the Holocausts course of 1985:

> Frankl's book, Man's Search for Meaning, should not have been used to start us off. The de Beauvoir would be a great replacement because the "otherness" theory is useful in understanding men's nature. Once people can see what would prompt a fellow human being to destroy "the other," the specific instances where this took place throughout history can be better examined. Keep the course

> moving in chronological order rather than jumping back and forth. Your idea about reaching back to Biblical times sounds terrific. My only problem with it would be that you already "squoze" so much into such a short few months' period, I am afraid of an overload of information.

Because the facilitator does not control each entire individual mark, it is most likely that we will get fairly honest evaluations of ourselves from the students. It is important to hear what the students "got out" of the course in order to improve as a teacher and maintain the kind of self-reflective consciousness we want the students to have.

In 1987-88, there was a Learning Group at The New School on Research Techniques whose purpose was both to help me with organizing this research and to teach the students something not only about their school and its history, but about research techniques. Students negotiated to: analyse previous student publications, interview ex-faculty, each undertake a thematic analysis of all the annual reports. The subjects for the latter were: Bands, Academic Life of the School, The School Community, Resources, and Teacher Morale. There was also much discussion each week on topics about the school which the students would raise either from their research or from their observations of the current life within the school. These excerpts from two evaluations not only indicate a variety of response, but also differences. They also show the consciousness the students gained of themselves, their communication skills and of the possible future usefulness of the skills they learned in this group:

> An important aspect of the group, in my mind, were the discussions...about various facets of education and our society and how one feeds the other. In these discussions

we got a chance to talk about our own lives and our own thoughts about our education and the whole educational system. As well, we talked about apathy among students, the increasingly lower priority school seems to be taking for students, and other societal factors such as the breakdown of the family.

I definitely enjoyed doing the interviews the most, and therefore I feel I learned the most from that experience. All the way from the phone-calling to arranging a time and place to meet, to the actual interview, I felt I was putting necessary practical skills to use. One thing I found really quite embarrassing was that in listening to the taped interviews I discovered what a big mouth I had - and also about my rudeness at times. I was constantly interrupting or probing the people I was interviewing. I think a lot of it had to do with my insecurity that they'd get bored answering the questions with me just passively sitting there in front of them. I do think I may have gotten a bit more information out of some people, but in the last analysis, I think I just did more harm than good.

...I can't honestly say I like reading through documents with an analysing eye, but I feel I am able to do it when necessary...

and

It [the Learning Group] has been a good experience in learning to interview, as well as analyze and summarize documents. Hopefully I will be able to put to use some of these skills in future endeavours; this seems likely.

In particular, the interviewing process taught me how to formulate unbiased, non-leading questions that leave space for the interviewee to recall incidents or make comments of his/her own volition. Through my own, and other group members' experience in contacting those on our "hit lists," I found that one must be persistent, take initiative, and be creative in tracking down ones targets. Also, my initial nervousnesss at asking for someone to volunteer their time eased some after that first successful phone call. From the interviews themselves, I'd have to say that the thing that most struck one was how <u>nice</u> people were!

...In terms of group discussion in this group, I am quite pleased at my contributions. I think I spoke more often and more easily than ever before at New School; I'm not sure why---maybe because of the feedback I received last year in some of my groups. In any case, I found myself taking more risks in expressing my views orally; although everyone in the group did not always agree with them, they usually saw my points as valid.

...It was fascinating to hypothesize and analyze in regard to how the changes in social, economic and political

> climate have affected the general student population, and how this has in turn affected the New school in terms of size, student involvement in Community and Learning Groups etc. I really began to see things from a wider perspective, and not feel so much like we---New School---were doing something terribly wrong. It began to look more as if our difficulties (ie declining student population, dwindling resources, cutbacks in staff etc.etc.) had more to do with outside circumstances...

Students often like to speculate in their evaluations how they will "use" what they have learned later in life.Students in Women's Studies groups often entertain such speculation because of the affective impact of the material on their lives:

> I stated once in a group that I felt that women could never be happy in our society; what I was of course expressing was my own loneliness and unhappiness as a woman. I realize now that I had a very big chip on my shoulder about being a woman, that I was desperately trying to prove the obvious. I also realized that I would never be happy, content, or even comfortable with a part of myself if I had to defend it so rigidly; I <u>can</u> be happy as a person. I had created an image of myself as feminist, strong and 'liberated'---an image I could not live up to, that I see now is unrealistic, in terms I was using, to assume I could live up to.

Sometimes the material in Women's Studies forces students better to understand their families and their own positions within their families:

> When I negotiated into this group, I spoke a lot about my family and the influence they have over me. There is a lot of preaching but not practicing done in my house. My parents were the first to give sex education courses and birth control information, but they have eight children and I think they would rather see me taking acid than the pill. Not because they don't believe in the pill; they just don't believe in Jane or Susan or any of their daughters taking the pill. Women's Studies didn't create any miracles for dealing with my parents and my brothers and sisters. If anything, it has made me more distant from my family. I don't think this is wrong. I think this is growing up. I'm trying not to feel guilty about disagreeing with them anymore. I'm trying to understand them. This is where Women's Studies has helped. My parents were also brain-washed; even more than I. So no wonder hints of chauvinism

show up in their liberal attitudes.

Occasionally the last evaluation students write enables them to sum up their entire "New School Experience" in a valedictory way. It is often touching to read these evaluations, most of which exceed the demands of the group by far, and to understand that the students are situating themselves here at a point of reference to which they may return with pleasure later in their lives. It is often most heartening to the facilitator to witness this kind of synthesis of an experience. Here is an extract from an evaluation made in May, 1975, in a learning group on Modern Existential Drama.

> It has come time for me to evaluate this, my first ever experience in working with you, Pat. Firstly,I must admit that I enjoyed very much the enthusiasm that both you and others brought to the drama that we did together. Though I seemed to both cast myself and be cast by you in the role of hard-to-please cynic, I wish it known that the enthusiasm rubbed off on me. It pushed me to look at the plays harder, to abstract many notions inherent in the writing, and to voice my likes and dislikes of each work. ...I suppose, Pat, the best writers are probably those who manipulate the language in its most exact and expressive manner. The more written pieces which come into the public eye distort words, lock them into associations which are eons away from their original meaning, the more I think our language cheapens. Also the more I think our perceptions of language cheapen....I sense the solid emergence of a new, lazy man's language. ...As always, I realize that only the thinnest of lines separates exactness of langauge and reason from a self-induced alienation from people and events around me. I will continue to push myself for a better use of my language. This is, on my final evaluation in The New School, the thought I wish to leave others with. Again, thanks to people for this group 'cause I enjoyed it and 'cause it provoked me enough to write this. For which I am grateful.

1. Kathy Presner, "The Development of New School Academics:1974-1987," unpublished paper. Montreal,QC:Dawson College,November,1987, pp.2-3.

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2. Greta Nemiroff,The New School Annual Report:1974-75,p.8.

3. Alan Gaudet,The New School Annual Report:1981-82, p.82.

4. Susan Caldwell,The New School Annual Report:1988-89,p.14.

5. Susan Caldwell,The New School Annual Report:1988-89,p.14.

6. Greta Nemiroff,The New School Annual Report:1981-1982,pp.41-42.

7, Ibid,pp.42-44.

8. Note from a student in November,1974, asking to renegotiate her work in two learning groups.

9. These remarks come from an evaluation of a Learning Group in 1984. The names of the people have been changed.

10. This quotation is made from the same evaluation as that of other students quoted above.

11. This evaluation is from a Memoirs class inwhich this particular student was the only member of a visible minority, a common experience of hers. It is clear that she was finally able to find some communlaity between her and people from other ethnic and racial backgrounds.

12. Christine Nairn.Interview,1984.

13. Marion Lockhorst, Interview,1984.

CHAPTER SIX

RESPONSES TO THE NEW SCHOOL PEDAGOGY

I. The Teachers

I can think of sometimes when things suddenly turn about. When you come in and maybe students aren't prepared or things aren't going according to what the set pattern was supposed to be, and you can turn it around into something very very exciting and suddenly you get feedback from students. ..One time there was a workshop last term and I was feeling very low, I was very overworked and just extremely pressured, and I sat down in the theatre and I said: "This is going to be a misery-loves-company session." I was talking about the things that were upsetting me and the problems and the pressures that I had. We went all the way around the whole group, and out of that emerged no solutions but a very strong kind of growing together in the fact that we could kind of stop and say this. In fact, it made the work that we did for the rest of the term much more of a team effort, much stronger.[1]

Here the minute that I walk in I'm totally me, I'm 100% myself. I think that students really appreciate that fact.[2]

There are very few sites in the CEGEP system where teachers are expected to conform to a particular pedagogy which is based on an articulated philosophy of education. While there may be common understandings regarding the epistemology of various disciplines,on the whole departments are formed by people recognized as having the appropriate educational formation and/or experience to ply their trade in a particular discipline.

The New School is founded on a clearly articulated philosophy and it has over time refined a methodological framework which still allows for a large range of pedagogical styles. In the early days of the school, when the CEGEPs were in a mode of expansion, we were

able to choose our faculty according to the criteria of our evolving philosophy and methodology.By the early eighties,changes in the collective agreement determined that there would be only one recognized department per discipline in each college. The New School is not a department but exists locally as a programme, unrecognized by a DGEC programme number. This has meant that our hiring has been divided among the departments at Dawson whose disciplines we share. some teachers who come to the school unwillingly often settle in very well, only to be "bumped" out the next year, perhaps to be reinstated the year after. Staffing is at the mercy of bureaucratic formulae which do not take pedagogy into account.

In 1983 I circulated a questionnaire to 13 ex-New School teachers still working at Dawson from the following disciplines: Anthropology,Communications-Cinema, French, Humanities, Music, Philosophy, Psychology, Religion and Sociology. Their average experience at Dawson was 8.9 years and at The New School, 4.3 years. Of the five who had been bumped into the New School. three reported trepidation about this placement. The same percentage of those bumped out of the school left with trepidation. However, only 33% of the teachers bumped **into** The New School experienced difficulty adjusting to it while a full 83% of those bumped into the rest of Dawson reported a difficulty of adjustment. Faculty moving **into** The New School cited the support of their colleagues as the central factor in their growing acceptance of the move; here they claimed that the weekly staff meetings were essential in

helping to acclimatize them to the place.[3]

> I think the striking difference is the tremendous support system you get from your colleagues, although they're very hard on you when you make a mistake, also they're there to support you with those mistakes and to point the way. You can really be yourself with them also. You're not alone...here I'm part of something, I'm an important part of something, when I'm not here I know I'm missed and when I'm here I know my contributions are valuable. I feel part of something that's going on and you feel that support and that belief in you. They trust you.[4]

The sense of support is particularly strong during most crises affecting the school, as indicated in this excerpt by a faculty member who was with us for the year of the bitter strike, 1982-83.

> I feel a great loyalty to the staff. I linger on their faces and their spirits and feel they were generous of themselves. We had sufficient adversity to know where lay the core of each person, adversity enough to feel the weight of our support for each other. I leave, enriched.[5]

> Faculty bumped into mainstream Dawson appreciated shorter and less demanding schedules, few faculty meetings, no obligatory extra-curricular activities, and the chance to share their experiences and resources with people in the same disciplines. At The New School, with the exception of English, there was only one teacher per discipline. While some respondents cited individual teachers who had been supportive to them in their move, most of them indicated that they had not been able to count on departmental support in their regular Dawson departments. Many teachers bumped **from** The New School enjoyed adapting the New School methodology to a new setting. Other advantages they found to having taught at The New School were that they learned to trust students, to facilitate group discussion better, and how to disclose more of themselves in the teaching process. 91% of the respondents said their New School experience had a positive impact on their teaching elsewhere.[6]

As a result of numerous interviews with teachers as well as their contributions to the annual reports, more positive and negative factors emerge regarding their reaction to The New School. One negative factor cited by three in the 1987 interviews was resentment at having to be close to the students:

> You were supposed to be everything to a student. I resented it. Here [at regular Dawson] I get involved with students whom I **choose** to be involved with. It's a more personal kind of relationship based on some kind of personal

> connection. It's not the whole Band, most of whom I don't have a connection with. So it is a lot different here, and I much prefer it here...It's certainly less demanding at that level...I don't feel obligated to have a personal relationship with everybody, and people don't expect it here. So it's more normal in a certain way. For me that's more comfortable because I'm not a particularly outgoing person.[7]

and

> The students' expectations---sometimes I couldn't live up to them. Students would make a lot of emotional demands-they tread on or used teachers.

Yet this same teacher says in her interview:

> The student-teacher relations at the New School are very different than anywhere else---always much more intimate. You felt as if nobody was just a face. The relationships were much more easy to see also...There was a lot of equality betwen students and teachers, a feeling of responsibility. I'm now still friends with some of my old students from New School. Everyone was treated like a fellow human being...[8]

The juxtaposition of the last two quotations from the same individual clearly indicate the ambivalence which can be aroused by New School pedagogy. Some teachers have great difficulty in setting appropriate limits on the extent of their emotional involvement with the students.

> On a personal level,I find Bands emotionally draining. I feel very responsible for the students in my Band, to the extent that I feel like my family has been extended. I've continued helping students who were once Band members even after that have left the school. I've accompanied students to hospitals and clinics,given money,accepted phone calls at all hours, and hardest of all on me, lost sleep worrying about students who have been abandoned by parents and are coping with harsh realities on their own. If I were a professional therapist or social worker, I would nodoubt have developed the imperonsal attitude demanded by such professions,but I am not. Nor do I feel qualified to function as a therapist,psychologist, or a social worker.[9]

This particular teacher very properly decided she could no longer afford to facilitate Bands. Our experience in the school is that it is precisely because we are in a position to help people take responsibility for their lives that we must be extremely fastidious about any out of school interventions we make in their lives. While we have certainly visited people in hospitals and accepted invitations to events in their lives, it is extremely important to ensure that the students understand the limits our capacity to help them. So, while the writer here claims not to be a therapist, psychologist or social worker,it is part of our mandate to consider the motivations, possibilities for healing and social conditions of our students. Whether or not society has conveniently divided such functions into arbitrarily differentiated categories (as if an individual life existed in such discrete categories), holistic education sees them as inter-dependent and certainly as germane to the learning process.

Knowing when and how to intervene is a delicate matter and one which must be individually resolved, since different people have a different toleration and need for intimacy. However, it is clear that the students, for their own health, must comprehend that teachers have other matters of priority in their lives.The staff who fare the best in this respect are those able to set appropriate limits while not shying away from confrontation and honest response to the students' stated and unstated needs.

Naturally, the very same closeness and confrontation disliked by some faculty is indeed prized by others:

In the New School...I think about the students I'm in

> contact with, ...and that's the big thing I like,the priority of humans over subjects, over books....You jump in, you volunteer, you have a sense of willingness. The commitment you make to the opportunity at The New School, for instance, comes at the time when you start to realize that it is not an organization or a school that is separate from you; you don't refer to it as "them," you refer to it as "us."[10]

Teachers experience some difficulty and anxiety the first time they implement the methodology of The New School.They especially fear that given a free choice, the students will not choose to work with them. Some teachers report finding shopping a painful process...almost like a "popularity contest." Most New School facilitators who stay appreciate the creative possibilities of the shopping while at the same time being exhausted by the hectic atmosphere in which the shopping takes place:

> I think the biggest advantage to Humanistic Education, as opposed to a conventional one, is the fact that students have a very strong input into, first of all the material that they're going to study and then the way in which they're going to approach it. From the very beginning they are helping to plan courses and also they are approaching what they're interested in. This has a lot to do with our whole shopping process. They don't just sign up for a course. They think about the areas that really concern them, and why they concern them. They come and discuss it with teachers, and so students have a great deal of input into the whole formation of courses and groups.[11]

The flexibility of curriculum and pedagogy, based on the students' articulated interests and needs may also be a source of new energy for teachers new to the school:

> My New School experience this year,to the the least, was an eye opener. I arrived at The New School with many preconceptions which turned out to be misconcpetions since they were completely erroneous. ...The school atmosphere was one which was extremely conducive to learning. Needless to say the fact that each of the students knew each other was helpful and it was a pleasure to come into a class where the atmosphere was relaxed and non-lecture oriented. This led to much more flexibility in the methods of

> teaching, and I felt that the students benefitted greatly from this.[12]

Teachers interviewed in 1987 were asked if they thought their disciplines were compromised by the New School methodology and philosophy; all of them declared they had maintained what they considered to be their intellectual integrity.

> I do not think it means a compromising of the academic standards. I think it just means you have a given goal, and in one framework you approach the goal in one way, but you can still arrive at the same goal of academic excellence.[13]

Some teachers find it difficult to adjust to their authority being challenged by students. Maslow expressed a similar sentiment when he faced such challenges in his seminar on Experiential Approaches to Education at Brandeis University in the sixties.

> I think of the contrast with my own way of learning at their age. I got whatever I could out of all my teachers, bad and good, even if only a little. [Here] I feel ineffective, not well used, not using my full power. It's as if I took a job in a chewing-gum factory...What am I being paid for? Listening to **them**? This is a job in which I **cannot** grow, or enjoy myself...I'm doing therapeutic work, not eaching psychology.[14]

Maslow left teaching soon after this entry. It is ironic that the man who was to become for many the "guru" of alternative education and humanistic psychology was himself incapable of meeting a personal challenge to his authority.

New School teachers cannot base their satisfactionon lecturing as they can in mainstream teaching where teachers control the subject matter and how it is to be presented. This often determines the nature of questions asked and discussed in class. Even with the

most recalcitrant of classes, even in a room thick with boredom, teachers can thus deliver a lecture which they believe to be well-prepared and well delivered...and so it very well might be. There is no formal mechanism of feed-back to inform teachers if they are doing well or badly,and frequently teachers are buoyed up by sincere or insincere responses of interest on the part of a very small percent of their students. Teachers in this situation have more control over maintaining a high level self-esteem. After all, if they have been fulfilling their self-defined commitments to the students, those who fail or do poorly are to blame for not having taken advantage of the situation. In The New School it is impossible for teachers to avoid engaging with **all** their students. While they may lecture from time to time, most contracts assume the importance of student participation. Thus, the teachers' sense of well-being and self-esteem is based on how the students perform or succeed in what **they** undertake to do. Appreciating the possibilities of this system can appear risky to those teachers who have established over time an "official story" about their teaching and the unreceptivity of the students. Other teachers, disillusioned with teaching, frequently have taken their heart out of it in a move of self-preservation. They may resent being put in a position to risk disappointment in themselves as well as in others. At a recent staff meeting one teacher, who has over twenty-five years experience and chose to teach at The New School, expressed suprise at how difficult she has found the transition, especially since she had used many "humanistic" techniques very

succesfully in a regular classroom. It was only when the supportive and authoritarian infra-structure of mainstream education was removed that she realized how vulnerable she could feel when she faced the students' unobstructed responses.

The single most destructive blow to teacher morale and motivation at The New School was the increased workload of most Arts teachers from eight to nine sections per year and for Art and Theatre teachers from eight to ten sections per year. While the number of sections each teacher taught at The New School remained constant, the school's **percentage** of each workload had decreased. This meant that the teachers, already living the double lives of mainstream and alternative teaching, now had an even greater load taking their attention and energy away from The New School. This had a very serious effect on staff morale in 1982, 1983, 1984, and 1985:

> I am angry that I cannot teach or be as I would like to be. My anger is probably shared by every conscientious teacher at Dawson since the decree. My preparation, my concentration, my immersion have to be continually short-circuited in order to move into another area. Yes, I'm adept at doing this. When things go well, I can even have a sleight-of-hand sense of pride. When things don't go well, there is never enough of me me left over to make sufficient extra effort. I am apportioned out. Hence, continual guilt---and rage.[15]

> ...you're adding on a full day within a five day week of time in meetings [Band and staff], and some of those meetings are very dynamic and very emotionally absorbing, not necessarily unrewarding but emotionally absorbing, and that's one of the difficulties I find in the New School, because it's asking teachers who are now being over-burdened by government regulations and are given more courses to teach, it demands a unique sacrifice from teachers. They have to sacrifice. They're not getting paid the extra hours and I find that difficult. I also find it difficult when you're dealing with emotional problems, say in community meetings, in Bands, it's difficult to turn

that off when you go home. You tend to take them with you.[16]

Another negative factor in the staff morale was the inequity of the system vis-a-vis the M.E.D's [the teachers on surplus], many of whom are only earning 80% of their possible salary. The inequities among people in the same staff creates an asymmetrical environment where it is difficult for teachers not to personalize their difficulties:

> This [being on availability] is always the most difficult aspect of my teaching at Dawson. It is extremely demoralizing, it takes so much of my energy to fight for my right to continue to do what I love best and what I'm best at. Although I have vowed not to let my being on availability interfere with the quality of my teahing and with my commitment to my profession, I often feel devastated by the futility of my struggle.[17]

and

> From the moment I decided to bless this planet with my incarnated presence, I knew I wanted to teach...A girl-friend and I organized a school for pre-schoolers the summer we were eight. I began teaching the kindergarten class of Sunday School when I was nine. Gave piano lessons from twelve to sixteen. Taught drama at summer camp when I was eighteen. Conference leader at twenty-one. The rest is on my curriculum vitae. Now, it seems, I am to be paid not to teach. Do you really want to know what I think about it? Do I want to be retrained for industry, recycled into another profession, given teacher-related tasks, retired early? Maybe I should move to Palestine where I can teach in illegal schools as a political activist. After all, it's better to be bombed than to be pecked to death by a flock of bureaucratic chickens.[18]

While the school has certainly had numerous problems which result both directly and indirectly from the larger systemic changes around us,it continues to provide a great deal of satisfaction to those teachers receptive to what it has to offer. One area in which there has been great success and satisfaction

over the years has been in team teaching, although opportunities for this have decreased with the increasing fragmentation of faculty availability.

> One of the things that I've done within the last eight or nine years is...a lot of team teaching. I think I'm the professional on the staff for team teaching. Almost every year I've had an opportunity to teach a course with someone else and that's always quite exciting. It's not only exciting, it's also a bit of a relief. You don't feel all the burden on yourself. [19]

One of the most prevalent factors in the teachers' appreciation of teaching at The New School is that they learn new things about teaching,about their subject matter, and about themselves. If they are receptive to what they can get from the situation, there is much in the situation for them. All of our faculty interviewees claimed to have learned skills useful at work and in their personal lives.

> I've learned to be more open and I've learned to rethink my thinking in my actions before people because I've been confronted and I think that's a beautiful thing. Even in my time, my age and the number of years that I've been teaching, which runs about thirty years. You know some people might say, "Hey, you've been around the block a few times and have seen a few schools and have been in a few classrooms,etc. there isn't much more we can teach you. But there is, a lot. [20]

II. THE STUDENTS

There have been numerous kinds of student responses to The New School programme. Over time our average percentage of drop-out has been 8% in the first term and 5% in the second term. The primary reason students drop out is usually a mixture of financial difficulties and the personal stresses and problems which result from them. Frequently young people move out of home without

a clear idea of the cost of living and without the skills to maintain themselves. Some students who drop out have always had school phobias and hope The New School will provide credentialization without the kind of academic work they dislike or feel unable to do well. A third group leaves because they do not like the school. These are a minority who find confrontation with others and themselves painful or undesirable. They might also find that they prefer a curriculum other than the one we offer and want to transfer to another programme at Dawson or another CEGEP.

Conversely it must be said that frequently students who have hated school and academic work in the past find themselves "turned around" in their attitudes to school through their time at The New School and go on to higher studies after they have finished their CEGEP education. About 40% of our students also transfer to The New School from other CEGEP programmes because they haven't liked them.

The most common factors students report in positive reaction to The New School are:increased motivation for school which results in a sense of empowerment; student-faculty relationships; intellectual stimulation and a sense of connection with other students and a sense of comfort in The New School Environment.

Some students find themselves succeeding at and liking school for the first time in their lives. This has a very positive effect on their self-esteem:

> I didn't even like school, but after I came here it brought me sort of more aware of myself and made me realize exactly what school and what learning should be...This place more or less teaches you to enjoy working, and you actually want to work instead of being forced into a situation where you have no choice...It's probably just the atmosphere around here. I find that I enjoy learning and

> I want to become somebody once again, and I'm doing something about it for the first time from the support I get from other people around here.[21]

It is difficult to isolate which comes first: an interest in new subject matter or improved self-discipline. However, it is clear that there is a dialectical relationship between the two in re-motivating the students throughout their academic commitments.

> Once I really started to develop an interpersonal relationship with what I was doing as a student, I found that my skills, my intellectual skills really just came out in an explosion.[22]

> What I'm taking from the New School into the future is how I've been taught how to discipline myself, how to motivate myself even though I don't want to. How to get things done and done on time.[23]

> ...you had to account for yourself not only in the teachers' eyes, but also to your peers which made you feel...that what you were doing had a lot more worth because you weren't just doing it to please an older person like your parents, but you were doing it to...pull your weight in the group...You were part of the class instead of just filling another seat.[24]

In many cases graduates claim that they were introduced to subject matter which interested them and motivated them towads working hard. Their interests broadened and they also learned many skills through the exploration of subjects they might never have tried in the past.

> It's given me the opportunity to explore new areas that I'd never touched on before. I'm taking theatre and photography courses, and before I'd stayed very much in the English/Humanities area of things.[25]

> I learned a lot of fundamental stuff in high school, and I brought that to The New School. I expanded on that as far as English and history is concerned. I started to be able to express myself really well on paper and write the way I was feeling...that's really important.[26]

> I [developed] an interest in political science, women's studies, and just creative aspects of myself I didn't even think of exploring until I came to The New School. I think The New School opened up a whole avenue in terms of giving me the courage to explore those areas even though I hadn't done them before... there was really an encouraging attitude... so I think I carried that attitude with me out of the New School, so that now I'm taking piano lessons and I'm learning a new language...Dutch.[27]

Frequently students are encouraged by new attitudes to subjects to which they have previously been exposed. They are also often empowered by the fact that their expertise and experimentation are recognized and respected in the school. There are very positive reactions to the quality of intellectual life in The New School. Numerous students have been stimulated by the discussions, readings and presentations in the school as well as by the initiative of one another:

> .. just the level of intellectual discussion was very high, the amount of excitement and enthusiasm that people had about what they were learning, the amount of commitment people had to the material they were learning and to the class was very very exciting. I'd never experienced that yet in a learning situation I've been in. And people were very responsible about their learning, people did their work and really participated in classes and it just made it such an enjoyable experience....[28]

> I think what the New School did was it turned me on to education, to learn, and that continues today...It was stimulating and that carried through to university...just my reading habits. I'm a pretty avid reader and I enjoy it....It's fun to continue learning.[29]

One important factor in the success of students' learning at The New School was the quality of teaching and also the sense that the teachers cared about the students. Numerous students and graduates indicated this in the surveys mentioned above as well as the interviews:

> I really had worked very hard here and got good training

> and individual care from people who would sit down with you, go through your papers, and spend hours and hours on you. Turn you on to all kinds of books. You get a lot of individual care and attention...In a sense I felt that the faculty here was very committed and honest...After coming here and going to university, I was very disappointed with university.[30]

Many students identify improved communication skills as an important result of attending The New School:

> I think the communications skills that I learned here, the basic social skills which I take for granted, but which I'm learning are very very important when you're out there working with people, you have to know how to communicate and especially in the field I'm in...nursing. Communication skills are extremely important when you're dealing with the emotional and physical health, well-being of the patient. Also communication between health team members is extremely important. You have to communicate information accurately and you have to get along with people in the work situation.[31]

A common theme in interviews with graduates is the positive effect their sense of belonging to a community had on their success at the school:

> I remember most positively I guess the feeling of belonging that I had when I came here. Feeling there was a place for me when I came through the doors off the bus from Chateauguay, feeling that there was a place for me. I could go and get myself a coffee and plunk down in somebody's space, in a classroom, and sit down and feel at home, knowing that there was something for me and a real purpose to my being there. Not that I was just there to sit and take notes and get up and leave.[32]

While ultimately the mixture of exposure to new subjects and new ways of doing things as well as the insistence on authentic communication with people of varying backgrounds and values influences the levels of motivation, connectedness and performance in students at The New School, one of the most important values they take with them is an openness to learning and to other people

which stand them good stead in whatever their future undertakings may be:

> I used to think that my attitude was the only attitude, the only opinion. You get more open-minded because you realize that there's just so many viewpoints about one thing that you have to open your eyes, open your ears, open your heart a little bit and listen to other people.[33]

III. What Happens to Students After New School?

A. The Survey of 1978.

On the occasion of our fifth anniversary, in 1978, we distributed a questionnaire to our graduates and to those students currently at the school. Here are some of the results: 2/3 of our graduates went on to university, and of these 2/3 were full-time students. 90% of those who continued in school held part-time jobs. 85% of those graduates who were no longer students held full-time jobs. 95% of our graduates stayed in Québec. An increasing number of our graduates over the most recent years of the survey cited an economic basis for their choice of post-CEGEP educational programmes. The large majority of our graduates who continued in their studies did not perceive themselves to be less prepared in terms of skills and background than their peers from other pre-university programmes.Twenty percent of the respondents were involved in some type of community activity. 75-80% of the respondents remained highly positive about Humanistic Education and felt that the New School was different and better than other CEGEPs. While 80% of the graduates who were in university did not

feel they could change their current schools to fit their needs, they felt they were able to "negotiate" for themselves by working independently. 90% of the respondents expressed a desire to keep in touch with The New School.[34]

B. The Survey of 1982.

In the Fall of 1982 some members of the staff also constructed a questionnaire to be given out to the participants in our 10th anniversary party.We also did a random mailing to another 250 graduates of the school. We had a response rate of 25%,117 respondents. 84.6% of the respondents had continued their education past The New School, 12.1% in other CEGEP progammes, 76.7% in university, and 11.1% in other kinds of institutions. 38.3% of those who had opted for university had already completed their degrees: 71% at the Bachelor's level, 7.9% at the Master's level, and 5.2% at the Ph.D. level. When asked about the transition to higher education, approximately 35% of the respondents found it stressful; about 65% found "very little stress" or ease. 81.9% of male respondents and 93% of female respondents felt that they had adapted to university in the combined categories of "very well" and "adequately." Of the students who went directly to work, 73.4% reported that the transition from New School to work imposed very little stress or was easy. 66.6% of the students who traveled after leaving school experienced little stress or found the transition easy, and around 95% of them claimed they had adapted to their new

situations very well or adequately.

Respondents were asked to rate which elements o f the school were the most important to them while they were at the school and in retrospect. The highest rating while at the school went to "other students" and "learning groups;" in retrospect the hightest priorities were "learning groups" and "accountability."

When asked to rate the importance of the New School experience in their lives, 84% claimed it was positive, 11% claimed it was neutral and 8% claimed it was negative. When asked if they expected to attain success at accomplishing what they wanted to in life, 85% responded that they would, 13% responded that they might, and 2% responded that they would not. 76.5% of the respondents were still in touch with fellow New School students and 38.2% were still in touch with New School staff. 78.2% had visited the school since they had left it, but 73.6% of them had only been back rarely. When asked if they would recommend Humanistic Education to others, 99% of the respondents said they would; 91% of them would also recommend The New School to others.

C. **Anecdotal Data**

We are also left with some anecdotal information about how their experience at The New School has affected some graduates since 1983. These accounts are available either through the massive interviews of 1984 or through correspondance. We were particularly interested in how their New School experience affected their future studies and work situations.

...I think one of the things that's most important of what

> the New School teaches students to do is take responsiblity for their education and not to sit back passively waiting to be served an education. I think that when I was in university, I took the initiative a lot. I approached professors and I tried to get involved in designing my curriculum as much as I could in a university or a traditional setting.[35]

> I did not find it a difficult transition at all to go to university. I found that the skills that I developed, while they had to be refined somewhat, left me in perfectly good standing for my university career.[36]

Certainly many graduates were influenced in the choice and execution of a variety of future jobs by their New School experience:

> I think that it [The New School] gave me a sense of my ability to work with people and to reach people, and that certainly has affected decisions about what I wanted to do professionally...I have an M.S.W. and I have worked as a social worker primarily with adolescents.[37]

> I was regional advisor [in Grand Prairie] for a university in Edmonton. I was their liaison centered up in Grand Prairie. I counselled students academically...in the Peace River area and I provided services for students....I think certainly the interpersonal skills with the students were important... I learned at The New School that each person, each individual was very important and worthy of special attention and care because that's basically...the kind of care that we got at The New School.[38]

> I think The New School helped prepare me in that it exposed me to a lot of different situations...I am now editing for...an educational publisher in Toronto...I love the job...and I see this as the career that I was meant to do...when I go into meet with an author for the first time, I think back on my experience at The New School, of how I had to be well prepared and how it was a very diplomatic situation and one that required great tact. I see those are really the same skills I use here every day on my job, only it's at a professional level now rather than an academic one....I think of The New School certainly being one of the highlights of my life up to now. I believe that the skills I learned there and the types of things I spent my time doing still figure very much in my life now ten years later.[39]

> ...this whole idea of communicating has served me in good stead because Now I'm in marketing and it's important to

> know how to communicate, understand who you're communicating to and that's very important. That was helpful.[40]

Although skills acquired and values emphasized at The New School may seem to be almost contrary to running a profitable business, many of our graduates are involved in business ventures:

> ...we started up a computer leasing company. Myself and another fella that I met in Ottawa and knew and it sort has taken off since then...what I learned was that (this partly goes back to New School) you can't do everything by yourself. You've got to have people to work with and in this sense I've found in working that what I have to do is make alliances with people who had skills other than the skills I had...to be able to work together once you amalgamate three or four different people that have skills, you can work on different projects.[41]

Several students traveled after leaving high school, and some of them went abroad with Canada World Youth or the now defunct Katimavik. Most of these students returned to resume university studies much enriched by the experience:

> I went to Malaysia with Canada World Youth...which is a youth exchange programe with Canadian youth and Malaysian youth...Just going,having come from The New School and being able to meet people from all over, going to Malaysia and being surrounded by a foreign culture is very shocking and can be very hard. My New School experience helped me to be more open. I don't think I would be the person I am if it weren't for The New School...I see possibilities and ways that it's possible to do things differently. You don't have to do things the way they've been done before. And I think The New School taught me that.[42]

While I do not have data on the occupations of all New School graduates, I have an overview of the spread of many their occupations over fields such as theatre, fine arts, music, cinema, photography, social sciences, language and literature, writing, translation, law, medicine, social work, education, psychological

research and clinical training, and into various business ventures. Ultimately it is not the professions or occupations which will indicate our long range success. Rather, we will see our effect through their expectations and behaviour. Occupation only tells us part of the story of adult life. It is important to find out how they relate to people, how they use their leisure, what they foresee for themselves and the world, and how and where they are ready to make a contribution to their communities.

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23. Miriam Corchia, Interivew, 1984.

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25. Christine Nairn, Interview,1984.

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29. Ian Scharfe, Interview, 1984.

30. Moira Egan, Interview,1984.

31. Marion Lockhorst, Interview, 1984.

32. Sue Hanna, Interview,1984.

33. Diana Forshner, Interview, 1984.

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24. Jo-Anne Wolfe,Interview,1984.

38. Judith Kalman, Interview,1984.

39. Murray Lamb, Interview, 1984.

40. Roseann Flower, Interview, 1984.

41. Jacob Polisuk, Interview,1984.

42. Cindy Hedrich, Interview, 1984.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE STRUGGLE FOR COMMUNITY AT THE NEW SCHOOL

Of all the needs I have mentioned the one which raises this problem of the adequacy of language in its acutest form is the need for fraternity,social solidarity,for civic belonging. Needs can only live when the language which expresses them is adequate to the times. Words like fraternity,belonging and community are so soaked with nostalgia and utopianism that they are nearly useless as guides to the real possibilities of civic solidarity,and our language stumbles behind like an over burdened porter with a mountain of old cases.[1]

In 1973 our students automatically `related' to the ideas of Humanistic Education. They were young people who had lived and grown in the aethos of the sixties, of that optimistic time of economic growth when people really believed in the human potential which is the basic credo of Humanistic Education. Our students now live in a very different world. They are less likely **de facto** to believe in the basic good of people or in their own `growth potential,'or anyone else's either. They are less affluent than their predecessors (although the school has never had an especially affluent clientéle), and are more likely to be working part or even full-time(on shift work) for wages that they need to live on, unlike many of our earlier students who wanted money for "extra's." They tend to be worried about their future: will there be a nuclear holocaust and, if so, what's the point in trying? What kind of jobs will there be? Where is there any security at all? Many come from situations of domestic disorganization and serious family problems...Often we notice that we have to explain simple things like manners or acceptable behaviour to students; clearly we are living in a very heterogeneous culture where there is little common understanding of "what's done."[2]

A. The Faculty and Community

The concept of community or a particular kind of "civic solidarity" were integral to The New School's original mandate and remain even more important now in our increasingly alienated society. This ambition to form a close community has never died, but it is increasingly difficult to realize in a constant sense.

At best, we have been able to sustain an environment rich with the possibility of **moments** of community.

One guiding and constant principle of community building is that all employees and students form an integral part of the school's decision-making processes as voting members at community meetings.This mode of shared governance works and is consistent with many of Maslow's theories on good management.[3] Since teachers form the only constant grouping in The New School,their involvement is a central factor in the creation of community. Not only do teachers set the tone for the nature of the community at the outset of each semester, but they also model its behavioural expectations. When teachers participate strongly, the community morale rises. Conversely when they withdraw from active involvement,they demotivate each other and the students, and community life deteriorates. A major part of the success of the New School community as a "model of possibility" depends on the sympathy and training teachers have for this particular pedagogy,their goodwill,and their willingness to devote energy to this elusive enterprise. One way in which we have always tried to ensure a good quality of community building in the school has been through faculty/staff development---involving both faculty and our administrative staff.

The original model of The New School proposed an on-going programme of staff development, and over the past 14 years,there have been many different approaches.The most common one is simply the group discussion of problems within the school and sometimes

within people's personal lives. Staff are usually ready to support one another in adversity, and at their best the staff workshops have provided staff with the occasion to express their feelings about the school,each other,and themselves in this context.Mutual support is always helpful in building a good community.

> The staff workshops tied together many hanging threads between us. They re-iterated our need for mutual support in the constant stresses during the term. Almost all of us expressed a need for the opportunity to share our joys, our distress,our successes,our quandaries in midstream. Hopefully we can schedule this for the terms ahead.[4]

In the year following the strike of 1982-83 a new trend in community behaviour began to show. The faculty began to feel the pressure of increased work load and decreased purchasing power. These changes eroded the informal nature of much of the learning,since it was not possible for the "shared staff" to have any time at all for the sort of interchange which is fundamental to the school. The addition of the one section had a very negative effect on the teachers' morale and health [and] ... it also had a profoundly negative effect on the entire quality of education in the school itself.[5] Teachers suffered increasingly not only from exhaustion,but from the humiliation of having so ignominiously lost the strike of 1983. In the Annual Report:1984-85 there is a "...sub-theme about our future and how long we will have the emotional resources as a group, as well as the goodwill among ourselves, necessary to withstand pressures from a deteriorating work situation...and the lateral flailing that is so characteristic of people under duress."[6] That report also deplores the fact that scheduling makes it impossible for all staff to be available at New

School events. On the other hand, many students also were less available to the community; they were more interested in having part-time jobs than extra school activities.

> The amorphous community...The community seems to me to be that "element that is precisely that which is greater than the sum of its parts." To some extent our battered principles,...our diminishing resources, our increased fatigue, our age (ever-increasing while the students continue to enjoy youth)...these problems weigh on us, on our place. I have often felt that the "community" of The New School is a low priority for a vast majority of its members. Even some of the basic principles of Humanistic Psychology...one thinks of Maslow's hierarchy of values, for instance...are frequently at odds with the kind of participation and political consciousness needed to keep the community alive...I feel frustrated. We need a boost at the level of community, and I have no idea where that can come from...The students need this critical education in politics, and perhaps we must be more conscious of our role as facilitators and role-models in the community context.[7]

One of our administrative assistants suggested this reason for our difficulty in achieving real community:

> In my opinion,the school offers the guidelines or structure for Humanistic Education, but the values never quite get imbued into the community. Is it due to lack of time, lack of resources, lack of trust in the system? Perhaps students today don't want to take a self-directed approach to learning, but want more direction from facilitators.[8]

It is daunting to realize how very important staff morale is to the maintenance of the kind of a New School community that we envisage.It is clear that we will have to continue striving to achieve a staff morale which will implicate the members more in the school. Our chequered experience of sixteen years tells us the following:**1) External factors to the programme have an enormous effect on our possibility of achieving community. As resources for education dwindle,so does our chance of ensuring community; 2)**

Staff bonding and satisfaction are necessary conditions for a thriving community; 3) Mere survival is not enough on the long run;programmes based on our ideology and pedagogy need room to thrive.

B. The Students and Community

Students have difficulty relating to the notion of community. All responses to our various questionnaires rank community very low amongstudent priorities. It is ranked slightly higher for the staff. An early Band/Community Climate Survey of 1975 showed that "...while students felt very strong cohesion within their Bands, they found it difficult to relate energetically to the governance of the total school." Although "...there were students who showed a strong sense of community,...these students were generally people who had high leadership interests." A priority set for 1975-76 was that "...we try to arrive at a greater balance between our individual and communal objectives."[9] Not only has the desire to create a more cohesive community been articulated in each subsequent Annual Report, but students themselves have expressed the longing for a resolution of the individual/collective needs conflict.

The issue of power has always been important in the school. In the first years some students expressed the concern that faculty,having too much power already, should not have right to tenure, it should leave after a year. They also complained that

some teachers were not sufficiently accessible and tended to separate their private lives from their teaching. The staff resonded that since student complaints often arose in community meetings, students were able to exert a great deal of influence and power in an environment where they were the clear majority. Students responded that although they like working with the faculty on a one-to-one basis, they found them daunting as a group. They bitterly resented the fact that teachers had staff meetings without them:

> In some groups that I was in, the staff member pretended to be just another member of the group; in fact it was obvious if anyone watched the group that they weren't just other members of the group. The pay cheque separates them, the fact that if there was some sort of a split, people automatically looked to the staff member.[10]

On the other hand, numerous students reported a feeling of empowerment in their experience within the community:

> We were 140 students and we were the ones that made a lot of the decisions about how we wanted things to go during that year that we were together.Being part of a community,a small community like that where people are listening to what you have to say...people are willing to base their decisions on what you have to say...I guess one of the things that I really learned was how to be effective in a group.[11]

The school's original structure of governance by community council never flourished after the first year. Some students claimed that it smacked too much of high school elitism. As a result of various meetings it was decided to fall:

> ...into our old mode of constructive anarchy by having important meetings [regularly]...with decisions made by those present. The important decisions involved the use of Dope in the school [not to be tolerated], the issue of sleeping over [at people's houses or the school on New School related activities] and the usual problems concerning the maintenance of the school...we get greater

> participation by this loose method than by the more rigourous method of committees and councils.[12]

This way of governing the school seems to have taken hold firmly, and led to this mode: "As usual...[governance] was done by the most interested...ie those who attended community meetings.It was difficult to get everyone to feel ownership of decisions they hadn't made and this would lead to friction in the community."[13] At the same time New School students began to participate in the larger Dawson community by running for and winning positions on the coordinating council of the Dawson Students' Association. Over the next decade we had representation on Dawson bodies almost every year.This hit-or-miss mode of student governance continues much as it became stabilized in 1978. While some students have great passion about issues discussed in meetings,others seem quite indifferent.Sometimes meetings are chaired by staff and sometimes by students. It is difficult to gather together the entire community at once. There are many other commitments vying for people's time and attention [ie jobs and other teaching]; but it would seem that notion of sharing a community is becoming increasingly opaque to the students. The word itself has become cheapened by its euphemistic use in describing competitive groups as communities:"the investment community, the science community,the defense community". Governance does not necessarily imply community. While on the whole students have been rather capricious regarding formal governance, they have always been interested in wielding some power. That is one of the things which attracts them to the school,even if it is only initially defined as "Doing what

you want to do." When they arrive they find out the caveats: do what you want as long as...you don't harm anyone or impinge on the rights of others,or if it is appropriate and good for you.

Regardless of their participation in formal governance, many graduates express a strong sense of belonging at New School.This sense of affiliation may not be a sufficient condition for a sense of community,but it is a necessary one:

> ...it was very much like a large family. It was a very exciting place,a very intense place.I was always one of the first to arrive in the morning and one of the last to leave because it was, one felt so much at home there. ..It was very exciting. You were never exactly certain what was going to occur on any given day, there were a lot of dynamic people there, a lot of people from very different backgrounds. [14]

Very often the sense of belonging becomes connected to a sense of empowerment:

> I've learned a lot of group skills and group dynamics and I've learned how to speak and how to express myself.I had a very quiet voice and I had a very hard time speaking when I first came to the school. People joke about that now when they listen to me speak and they say: "Remember,remember first term when she came in here,"and they make comments about my voice...I'm going to miss the closeness with people and I realize that it's going to be a lot harder in a different setting to get the relationships that I almost take for granted here.[15]

An important aspect of the students participating in a community where they feel comfortable is their growing conviction that will be able to realize such community wherever they are:

> The thing that I'll miss the most about the New School is the friendly atmosphere, the community sense, when you get here you feel as if you belong, that it's kind of a home away from home. And although I might miss it I know that I can probably establish it in other places too.[16]

One strong indicator of well-being in the community in all the responses to interviews and questionnaires is the students' bonding with faculty.A frequently expressed response regarding the teachers in the 1984 interviews was that the teachers believed in and wanted to be at the school and cared about the students.It is very clear that those characteristics, coupled with an egalitarian pedagogy were essential in creating sufficient trust to connect students to the community:

> Well I can say that I liked most of them as people which I can't really say about a lot of other professors that I've had...they certainly worked very long hours. They put in a tremendous amount of effort. I mean they went above and beyond the call of duty because they really felt it was worthwhile...I mean they were really part of the whole experience,they weren't really removed...they were very idealistic.[17]

> The New School staff:...the main thing that I think about them ...is that they're very approachable and they're experts in their fields. When you get to speak to them you can tell they know what they're talking about, which is great but at the same time they impart it in a very equal way.It's not this idea of they know it and I don't and I really appreciate that. They've become friends which is nice.[18]

Students often arrive at the school feeling apart from the community and unsure of what a community really is. This student very graphically described the process of moving into the community:

> ...it's something that personally I had to get used to because I think when I first came in here it was obvious that it [the community] exists.. But you also have to feel powerful enough to go get a piece of that community and include youself...I think at first if you're not used to doing that it seems that the community exists and you exist out of it. But if you learn just to take your own space and jump into it...there is a space for you. You just need to go and get it. It's there![19]

In the above quotation a student describes his first step into including himself into the community in the sense of a relationship of one to many. In our individualistic society the more difficult aspect of our ideology to experience is the move from a relationship of self-differentiation to one of community: from "I" to "we." One year in the course of a community meeting it emerged that many of the students were hungry and had no money for food. Then and there a soup kitchen was organized:

> The first thing that comes to mind is our kitchen committee and the fact that we make meals for the community; and the fact that people donate money and...food and...time to make things like this work because I think that's a perfect example of what makes this place so special. What goes on here is a real feeling of giving and wanting to give and getting a real satisfaction in doing that and helping other people and sharing.[20]

In discussing our community,one of our teachers used to say, "The real New School community is out there." What she meant was that our graduates form a complex network outside of the school in Montréal and in other places in the country.

> I think what was most positive for me was the sense of community,the sense of motivation that people had in coming here, in learning,the sense of caring and interest that people had in each other... I felt often that we were one community,one whole.Many of us have kept in touch after the New School,and I think that's an indication of the level of the sense of community that we had.[21]

Most of the interviews quoted in this chapter took place in 1984 with students who had graduated before then or were in the school at the time. It is interesting to examine the positive nature of their recollections and attitudes in light of the fact that from 1981 on there have been references in each of our annual reports of the changing ethos among our students and consequently

in the school.The unhappiness of many young people has often turned them away from school in crucial years and towards strong peer bonding of short duration. Consequently they are de-skilled and have great difficulty in concentrating on re-skilling themselves. With their preoccupations with survival and materialism as well as their low tolerance for deferred gratification, school is only of tertiary interest to many of them.

Since 1984 we have had to be increasingly vigilant about drug dependency among our students. We know that regular use of cannabis is common among young (and not so young) people. However each year brings increasing numbers of young people whose regular intake of drugs and/or alcohol seriously compromises their ability to concentrate,to fulfill their commitments and to allow themselves to be intellectually stimulated and to have ambitions worth pursuing. Many of our student absences and lates are connected to the chaotic life-styles of adolescents dependent on drugs. Although those students who do not take drugs resent how their time is wasted by the behaviour of students less commited to school,they will never "rat" on their peers. This militates against honesty and authenticity within Bands,Learning Groups,and the community itself.We are charging the students with the responsiblity of finding ways of addressing this issue.Without their initiative any effort to "turn around" drug dependency will be doomed to failure.

Each time we think we have seen the ultimate destructive experience in a student's life,we later find out we haven't.Many students don't feel they matter much to anyone,treat their

surroundings ...their own community---as if it and they did not matter either. We use our pedagogy and whatever skills we have to help the students recognize their own wonderful potential as individuals and their obligations to a whole stronger than each of them.

All is not gloom, however. While our community might not meet our original expectations,there are many times when the community has managed to transcend itself and reach that ephemeral oneness. Certainly this has been the case during strikes which are always extremely destructive. In the strikes of 1976 and 1983 we were very conscious of our obligation to maintain some kind of contact and support for our students,while not involving ourselves in scabbing.We managed to arrange regular mutual information meetings with them off campus to discuss how they and how we were all doing. Both strikes had aftermaths of some bitterness with students expressing their feelings of abandonment and some staff expressing their disappointment that more students had not shown solidarity by joining the picket lines.Nonetheless as a community we did manage to come out of the crises in fairly good shape, resolving together how we were going to make up for the lost time. Naturally the endemic school survival crises always rally the students and sometimes alumni and parents.

More divisive,perhaps, have been the two occasions in the school's history (exactly a decade apart) when two teachers left us in the wake of allegations of sexual harrassment. Other difficult crises were created by an intra-staff conflict in 1985.

Students find it especially painful to be torn between parental figures and factions.We have overcome those crises through facing them as a community and through maintaining contact with our basic purpose: why are we here and are we worthy of our mandate?

It is our experience that sadness and celebration sometimes work in tandem in drawing our community together. Graduations are often very sad times for students who have loved the school. They are sad not only to cede it to others, but also somewhat apprehensive of the coldness of the "Great Out There." In 1982 one of our teachers suggested a "saying goodbye" gathering the morning after our graduation to deal with some of these feelings among the students.

Not only have we lived through communal moments of sadness,but there have been tragedies as well.In 1982 and 1987 two much appreciated graduates of the school died. In both cases staff and students together organized memorial ceremonies for them. Here is a response to a "saying goodbye" session and a memorial ceremony by our drama teacher:

> The saying goodbye of the graduates was one of the high points of the term---the whyfore of all our striving. So many students---"good" ones, "not so good" ones articulated with great sensitivity the turn-around they had experienced in being at The New School. Their capacity for living is forever renewed,they said.
> Another high moment was a gathering together of all members of the community whose lives were touched by a former student. He died very tragically in the early spring.Derek's spirit was tangibly in the midst of many people remembering,reminiscing, paying tribute. One of the times The New School really works, I found myself saying,and a most healing way of dealing with his death.[22]

It would be seriously problematic,however,if we were only able to rely on tragedy to define our perameters as a community. This is not so. We have many rituals of celebration which also draw us together:orientations with their pot-luck lunches [often a strange and wonderful mélange];graduations where each graduate is given appreciative words by faculty who have worked with him/her;annual"Saying Goodbye"workshops for those who are leaving; visitors'nights;drama and music productions;exhibitions; coffee houses organized by the students;and the reunions we have had with our graduates. All these not only help us to experience the uniqueness of our community,but they also give those of us in "active duty" the incentive to continue struggling for the bonding and common cause which make community.

Many respondents to our statistical questionnaires do not respond well to the term "community." On the other hand many interviewees gave great praise to community associating it with a a sense of comfort and closeness with staff and friends. Perhaps the word "community" provokes a sense of coercion to self-govern or to give indiscriminately. One student wrote in an essay, "I don't like having my rights pushed down my throat." We reach that sense of community in glowing moments; perhaps it is not achievable on a continuum. The time students spend in The New School is very short; this often makes staff very anxious about their ability to absorb and assimilate our values in such a compressed period of time. Ideally our ideology and praxis must devolve from the feelings of self-esteem to empathy with many and thence to action.

This growth has happened for many of us:faculty,staff, students, hangers-on---who took the risk of the unknown and gave The New School a chance. I do not think any of us can help but draw on this experience when we attempt to change the **status quo:**

> The New School gave me the opportunity to reflect inside and to realize that you really have to know yourself if you want to create change. It has to come from your own actions....I've learned that you've got to take the initiative and you've got to take that first step and realize that if you want to go out and make some kind of change in this big bad world,you've got to look at yourself and see how you're relating to people. You realize after you've re-examined this that those kind of changes really mean something.[23]

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CHAPTER EIGHT

SO YOU WANT TO START AN ALTERNATIVE? SOME CAUTIONARY REMARKS

It is my hope that this book will encourage educators in both formal and informal settings to make radical changes,not only in small corners where they work,but to change entire institutions or organizations. While my examples are drawn almost exclusively from my experience as an educator in an alternative programme within an atypical community college system, it is my belief that general principles of critical humanism can form a viable philosophical basis from which to elaborate pedagogies appropriate to innumerable actual situations: high schools, colleges,universities,labour education,management training, government training programmes, career training, technical training, community based educational initiatives, and many more settings. These cautionary remarks are directed to those who wish to broaden the scope of educational experience to include the kind of personal and contextual considerations raised through Critical Humanism. Many academic institutions evaluate their efficacy through those results which devolve from quantifiable analysis.Often they are committed to assessing the viability of their management of resources with reference to quantifiable academic criteria. Can one realistically initiate alternative programmes within academic institutions managed strictly on actuarial models? There is a demonstrable need for alternative education when CEGEP students dropp out and away at an alarming

rate. Alternative programmes can attract new clientèle to institutionss and help retain an existant but alienated group of students. There are several strategic steps for successfully introducing alternatives within a mainstream structure:

1. **A Critical Mass of Participants in the Founding Process:** Ideally the founding group should be representative of a wide range of departments and services: academic, administrative, and support. It is wise to involve some people with high institutional credibility either as active workers or as supporters who can be called in for the critical moves. Where possible involve newcomers to the college: those rare younger staff members who have both energy and excellent insight into the experiences of the students. Sometimes it is worthwhile to have two tiers of participation: active participants and "Friends of" who are interested, supportive and will speak on your behalf, but who have little time for direct participation. It is indispensable to have good relationships with unions or employee organizations.

Without a high level of trust within the founding group, there is little chance for growth or survival. It is therefore wise to begin with some staff development or group formation work before entering the final stages of programme proposal. These important questions must be addressed: What is the group's common stock of shared values? What are the members' individual differences and bottom lines? Can they accept these differences and honestly work together? How much time and energy is each person ready to invest in the project? What do people have on their plates...emotionally

and professionally? What assumptions should group members check out with one another? What are the members' hopes for the group...and their concerns? What is the group's inventory of skills? What skills are needed ? Should the group invite the participation of people whose skills are needed" Should specific training be made available to the group? When these questions have been addressed, you will have begun the process of formulating your ideological base.

2. **Ideological Base**: You must not only agree upon but also write down your ideological commitments as an alternative. Since the alternative will be part of a larger institution or system, you will eventually have to "translate" your ideology into language consistent with the prevailing norms. This does not mean altering your values or compromising your ideology. It simply means presenting them in a way that will get them accepted.It is important to keep sight of your ideological base in order resist institutionalization and to examine and reinvent yourselves. Your clientéle and membership will change, and you will have to elaborate and expand your ideology to accomodate the rapid rate of social change. You cannot afford to lose touch with what you consider unalterably right and irreversibly wrong as educational philosophy. Your vision must remain bright before your eyes.

3. **Praxis**:It is important initially to agree on praxis, on how things will be done in accordance with your ideology. The group will have to decide its tolerance for diversity and difference. Resist the ease of providing bureaucratic rationales

for decisions having an impact on praxis. True, often the external institution which supports you will force you into accomodating its bureaucracy. When survival depends on this, you will have to do cooperate or dissolve. However, always start with the understanding that you must not do violence to yourselves or to your ways of doing things. The accomodation should only be bureaucratic: finding a way of providing the providers with what they want [usually a "translation" of your **praxis** into their language] without losing touch with your own ideology and its appropriate manifestation in **praxis.**

Praxis should not become institutionalized. Always reexamine what everyone is doing. Discuss it with all members of your educational community. Ask them: are we living our beliefs? If not, which ones are we betraying and how can we get back on track? An alternative has to be an open enough community for any individual or group to come before the entire groups and say,"I'm having trouble! Help me." The combined wisdom of the group is always helpful in clarifying issues and finding solutions.

4. **Staff Development:** In alternative programmes, new staff need enormous support in unlearning the values and practices of their own educational formation and epxerience. This is best done when staff gets together on a regular and authentic basis. Never regard personal interchange or disclosure as a waste of time; it is only through taking good care of oneself and one another that a proper group spirit can develop. You will need this group spirit for many reasons: the first is so that you can build a community consistent

with your ideology; the second is that you will need a great deal of energy to provide what you idealistically have described as your mandate. You will need the opportunity to share your experiences, frustrations, failures and successes with others in your immediate environment. Such interchange can give you more energy and support your hope to continue. The third reason is that it is important for ones sense of affiliation and well-being to have honest relationships with colleagues; the fourth is that you can count on members of your surrounding institution sniping at you over resources and "privileges" (true or imagined), and you will need strong solidarity for your survival.

The best staff development programmes require a communal agreement to address personal as well as the "professional" issues on an on-going basis. However, it is important to be exigent because the pressures of the students and of day-to-day operations often make us forget our obligations to ourselves and our colleagues. There must be room for honest disagreement within the group and time devoted to resolution where possible. Because there is so often so little external validation for staff within alternatives, it is important to create situations for celebration.

5. **Attitude** is important: in order to ensure the survival of funded alternatives within regularly structured institutions, educators must be willing to live in contradiction,accepting that they will have to live in a situation of simultaneous translation where their most sincerely held ideas may appear compromised when "adapted" to conform to institutional norms. They must accept the

fact that often outsiders will attempt to "explain" themselves to themselves in terms revealing profound misconceptions. They can maintain tranquillity in the face of such misinterpretation through keeping a strong hold on their own ideological and pedagogical positions. Since they will focus on survival, they will often be struck by the unfairness of how resources are distributed in their institutions and the injustice of their being continually asked to justify themselves while other parts of their institution with less heart will never be put to such tests. On the other hand,they must learn to prize the freedom that comes with marginalization. Their only hope of long-term survival is canniness,a sense of mission,and a sense of community within their programme and with their graduates. The hegemony is not only powerful and pervasive, but it is insidious; alternative educators must remain consciously in touch with their own criteria for good education and be prepared to reaffirm these critera to themselves and others.

6. **The Students**:they are what it's all about, the raison d'être of alternative education, and they must be honoured. Learn to interpret their silences as well as their words, their body language, their absences and lates, and their "forgotten" homework. That is where resistance and low self-esteem are most manifest. While it is essential to be authentic with them, it is important to find ways of disagreeing without disconfirming them. Alternatives address the affirmation of students' perceptions, understanding and worth. Whenever possible,share your deliberations and let them teach you how to explain the school's ideology to

subsequent generations of students. Make sure they understand that alternative programmes proclaim hope for change and growth in a moribund system and society where hope has degenerated into the anticipation of gratification from ephemeral objects and occasions.

It is essential to maintain contact with your alumni and to create situations for their participation.Produce a newsletter if you can.They are important to reaffirm your hope and reenergize you.They are first rate resources in survival crises,and in bearing witness to the value of the school.

7. **Resources:** No matter how modestly an alternative starts out, it is important to understand that as it develops over time, it will probably need more resources than have been originally anticipated. Staff members of alternative progammes must be deployed into positions where they can keep abreast of the policies and financial developments of the outer institution. This means that they should be active on key institutional committees as well as within the alternative itself. If the institution is unionized, they should be ready to participate in union activities. It is always wise to run for positions on the Boards of the larger institutions in order to gain credibility as well as to have an over-view of institutional planning. Alternative programmes are frequently overlooked in planning. Since they are often political liabilities within institutions, alternative programmes are often genuinely forgotten by those busy administrators who are supposed to represent them. One must be in place to signal the alternative's needs for a just portion of institutional resources. There is

always institutional pressure on alternative programmes to conform; this may be expressed by placing them on a par with other programmes with whose needs they have nothing in common. Alternatives and their representatives have to walk a very thin line indeed, expressing their **sameness** in terms of their rights to equal resources and their **differences** in terms of **how** their needs should be met.

It is not a forgone conclusion that academic administrators or other teachers are delighted with alternative programmes which are "successful." This "success" cannot help but call into question mainstream educational practices. It is always wise to emphasize that there are "many roads to Rome." It is unwise, unless pressed against the wall, to confront in debate mainstream education in ones institution. The vindictiveness of academics should never be underestimated, no matter how small the stakes may appear to the naked eye.

Because resources are managed by administrators and their assistants, it is important to understand the political value of working well with them. This could mean volunteering to do various things for the **entire** institution and also to offering administrators support when they need it. People hold such positions for long periods and memories are indordinately long as well.It is important to maintain a large and varied network within ones institution.

One should always be on the lookout for other resources such as special governmental funding,developing fund-raising projects,

or attracting human resources on a voluntary basis. All the while,though,it must be remembered that these are supplementary resources and that the alternative programme has a primordial right to resources within its larger institution.

In short, never apologize, never relinquish the field in a snit,and never expect anyone else to hand you anything without your asking for it.Procuring resources for alternatives requires the instincts of a hustler,the **sang froid** of a spy,and the bargaining skills of a horse-trader.

8. **Institutional Interface:** A good rule of thumb is to avoid confrontation unless it is absolutely necessary. Always have an encore in mind; don't ever play your last card, and then keep a last card beyond the encore and one even beyond that. It is important to be accepting of the outer institution on which you depend for resources without internalizing its values. One must always take the initiative of "translating" ones practices into institutional language.Conversely, one must never "translate" institutional practices into alternative ones without close examination. Institutions will pressure alternatives to fragment themselves according to categories created for the expediency of administrative practices. Alternative must resist such fragmentation where possible,maintaining internal practices of self-definition and using those structures appropriate to their ideology and **praxis**.

9. **Survival:** Act as if you're going to be around forever. I don't only mean the alternative; I mean the educational team. To

be sure, there will be various attritions, and there should be. They must be explained to the external institution in the most positive light and with the clear message that people are replaceable and the remaining staff is prepared to welcome a newcomer.

One way of surviving is by keeping up a public image. Volunteer to visit "feeder" schools or institutions. Get the scribes amongst you to write up your alternative, to present it at conferences, to publish accounts. Institutions are sensitive to external perceptions of them. Use this to your account by presenting as positive an image as you can, not only of the alternative---but of the entire institution. Use the media, and get your students involved in the community and telling others about your programme. They are your best emissaries,but they will only "go forth" if they feel important and trusted.

* * *

As you can see, running an alternative is a hard task, a bit like juggling. You must maintain your personal integrity, be a confirming colleague and educator, keep an eye on the "outside" and potentially harmful world of your providing institution---not to speak of the educational system. At the same time you must continually scheme for resources and survival. As you teeter on one toe with several bright globes in the air, you might from time to time wonder if it's worth it. If you love learning and learners,

if you love the bustle of politics and the sound of engagement, if you dread boredom and if you are determined to make a difference---you are probably ready to dream up an alternative educational setting where you live and breathe.

You are needed; we are waiting for you.

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