

Education 398 Capstone Thesis

Karen M. Yonkers

**Calvin College**

December 2017

## Education in Community

Education in the United States needs a fresh definition. Rather than the focus on achievement tests, the common labeling, and other discriminatory practices which are in place, education needs to move toward celebration of individual capabilities, equity, and justice for all students. While segregating schools by socioeconomic class has driven a wedge into “have” and “have-not” schools, teachers ought to be helping each student meet their individual potential. My own philosophy toward school, beginning from the viewpoint of an educationally focused upper middle class white family with two teachers as parents, to my diverse experience as a substitute teacher, my private music teaching, and part time band director, is a broad viewpoint covering several decades. Drawing from various experiences in the Calvin Education program and readings for my Capstone class, I explore my own philosophy toward education as expressed amongst the entire community. In this process, I will inspect what a good society consists of within that community. Next, I will delve into the cracks I see in the systems of justice, personhood, and sustainability. Finally, I reveal ideas for bringing shalom and restoration to communities by educating one child at a time in a Restorative Justice framework.

What is education? What is school? What is the purpose of education? Of school? Are they the same? Different? These questions arise as I explore my own philosophy of education. I first would like to establish that to me, education and school are NOT the same thing. School is *part* of education, but education itself begins before school, and extends for a lifetime beyond formal schooling. Somehow, educators seem to be wrapped up in *right* and *wrong*, and yet I propose that there is no universal right and wrong in education. Education begins with birth. Education is

the total of accumulation of experiences through which we view the world, learn how to exist, grasp how to treat others, and unearth our own purpose. We learn over time from our own and others' successes and mistakes. Yes, school is part of this, but education has already begun when a child enters kindergarten. And education continues well after a child, now a young adult, has graduated. And for each individual, there are aspects of all this which may clarify, or *not clarify* purpose and social interaction for those individuals. Instead of *right or wrong*, we teachers should instead focus on how to best build a relationship with our students. This time-intensive calling reveals the best route to help each individual student learn. Is our current system conducive to this calling? No. As Stanford University Deschenes, Cuban and Tyack clearly explain, schools which are age-graded and standards-based hardly allow for instructional time, let alone taking time to get to know a student! (Deschenes, et.al, 2001) Instead, students are left with negative labels, feelings of failure, and failing to meet their potential. (Deschenes, et. al p. 533) I propose that a system in which students are left with these scars has not benefitted from school.

An example which sticks in my mind of a person who contributed without formal education past 8th grade, I think of the humble poet Juan Bautista Castro, in *Amazing Grace* (1995). Jonathan Kozol asks him how he learned to write. "I had no one to teach me," he replies. "I had to educate myself out of experience. I had to build my own shield..." (Kozol, p. 242). However, more widely known examples are: Albert Einstein, who developed his theories while working as an assistant in the Swiss Patent Office, but he became one of the great physicists of the 20th Century; Abraham Lincoln, whose formal education was scant, but he became president of the United States; the great politician Winston Churchill, although he was born an aristocrat, with

access to the best school opportunities, was punished often for poor grades, and failed at math. Success in school is *not* a true indicator of success in life, or of contribution to the world. Education itself, then, is more than schooling. It flows beyond the school years. As teachers, we can best meet the needs of students if we have an understanding of what has transpired before they appeared in our classroom, of what the student is experiencing in the present, and to provide the best hope for the future. Why is this important? Knowing how the student is processing information helps us shape their instruction. Knowing the environment that students are coming from helps us shape their instruction.

There are many factors to environment besides our own classroom which influence a child's learning. Of course, as teachers, we focus on our classroom: decor, inspiring quotes on the walls, engaging (in our minds) lesson plans, riveting classroom discussions, and captivating worksheets. However, all this is in vain if a student is suffering from hunger, cannot read worksheets because of language barriers or undiagnosed vision problems, is worried about bullying in the next class, or simply does not understand the subject matter. Some, like students of a local elementary where I did observation which has 85% Hispanic student population, are worried about parents begin deported in the middle of the night. As Jonathan Kozol's works point out, drug use, prisons, absent parents, high asthma rates from industrial toxins, crowded classrooms, lack of resources, high turnover rates of teachers all affect students' learning. Maslow's Hierarchy of needs clearly and rightly asserts that basic needs such as food, water, shelter, safety and belonging have to be present before a person can pursue feeling accomplishment and finding potential. On the one hand, as teachers, we have little influence on

so many parts of our students' lives. And on the other hand, as teachers, we have the most influence on what could rightly be the largest part of our students' lives. Students (the ones who come to class), are in school more hours a day than any other place. I am reminded of a music teacher in PS 48 in the Bronx who I read about recently from a story highlighted by the National Association for Music Education, of which I am a member. Melissa Salguero is quoted in the article in Chalkbeat:

Part of being a good teacher is knowing your students! I sincerely care about them whether that is in the form of: remembering birthdays, writing positive notes home, or maintaining communication with parents. Above all, it's important to me to give the students 100% of my attention when they speak to me. It damages the relationship when the students feels that you are not present and their voices are not heard. (2017)

This confirms what I believe about relationship building as the single most important thing a teacher can do to be a good teacher. After examining all these factors of environment in education, I ask: What is the best element for positive influence on students' school environment?

Here is where ethics figures into the picture. According to Merriam-Webster Dictionary: ethics is "the discipline dealing with what is good and bad and with moral duty and obligation". Here, we avoid the formerly eschewed dichotomy of *right* and *wrong*, only to replace it with *good* and *bad!* However, I maintain that this is still more correct, as what is good for one student could be bad for another. What is good for individuals stems from their environment, from their culture, family, neighborhood, from their society. So what is a good society? We looked at several

perspectives in class: Michael Walzer, Patrick Jordan, Jurgen Habermas, Nicholas Wolterstorff, Steven Hales and John Houghton. As Walzer (2009) points out, what is good or right is different for different people and cultures. He discusses smaller societies within: movement, association, and community which all look for solidarity and common good, giving a voice to all and serving to correct societal ills. For Walzer, the state has a positive role in a good society. The influence on education is the state-created infrastructure which provides safety and school systems. Habermas also cites the state roles though with limits: security of person and property, freedom to share, but not intrusive in the civil arena. Both Hales and Jordan quantify a good society by measuring various aspects of living: freedom, health, happiness, economy, etc. Hales ends up with a dismal evaluation of the United States as falling well below the very standards we uphold in America. And Jordan ends up measuring what I feel is a subjective term: quality of life. When all the voices are heard, what I am left with is the feeling that a good society is only as good as the people who make up the society. Wolterstorff's vision of God's purposes as creator, consummator and deliverer helps to give some essence to "good" in a good society. His Primary Justice of the ethical relationship which claims the right to remain safe from injury, and the intrinsic worth of all people is key. I believe that good people create a good society, yes, and so the Messianic vision of Wolterstorff becomes reality in the here and now as *each person* recognizes their own part in fighting injustice and inequality, and upholds personhood of all people. As a teacher, this is a high calling to me. So, let me state the inverse: good society creates good people. Good education, a part of that society, creates good people. An even more basic philosophy of education's purpose is that it creates good people.

Another essential part of a good society is that it continues and is passed on to the next generation. The current climate crisis should be part of this thesis. A good society is an institution which contains beauty, liberty, pursuit of happiness, but also provides the basic needs of security, shelter, food, water. In light of threatened lives in the scenarios of climate crisis, loss of security (due to loss of fossil fuels that we are dependent on, ie. peak oil decline) , loss of shelter (to hurricanes, or sea level rise, for example), loss of foods (through destruction of coral reefs, deforestation, and extinction of whole species), and loss of drinkable water (because of CO2 saturation), it is imperative that world leaders come together for the sake of the worldwide “good society”. Houghton (Houghton, 2011) addresses this very idea in his section on sharing responsibility internationally towards sustainability. He goes so far as to call this the Christian thing to do. Again, for the next generation. (Journal #4)

Thus far, I have defined education, highlighted the role of environment and relationships for teachers to foster, and explored a good society and the importance of sustaining our world.

I have touched on Primary Justice of Wolterstorff, and the ethical relationship of inherent rights to not be harmed by another. The salvation from injustice is another pillar of Wolterstorff philosophy which applies to education and teaching. (Wolterstorff, p. 79) Along with establishing a relationship with our students, in the interest of informing our teaching methods, we also have an obligation to be an *example* of a good person. We ought to treat every student with respect and equity. We need to lift, encourage, and help, even knowing that reciprocation will probably not happen. The philosophy of “pay it forward” fits here. It is a decision to think of our students, consider their situation, and to amend our actions, or to refrain from actions, in the

name of providing the best learning environments. Through this, we help students have a feeling of wholeness and worth, bringing them higher up on Maslow's Hierarchy. We confirm that they are God's image bearers, as Mary Doornbos and Ruth Groenhout explain in their book geared toward Christian nurses. (Doornbos, et al. 2005) We employ the recognition attitudes of Love, Respect and Contributive value which Ikaheimo outlines in his essay on personhood and social inclusion of people with disabilities (as cited in Kristiansen, 2008) Here is how we actively show an example of fighting injustice. We need to embrace diversity as a way to learn about those who are not like ourselves. Information reduces marginalization and bullying amid the good society. Muzafer Sharif's classic example which I learned about in high school Sociology was the boys' summer camp. When the boys were pitted against one another for awards, they displayed shunning and bullying. However, when presented with a common goal (fixing the water supply) the competition and animosity disappeared. If schools include everyone, and everyone is bent toward the goals of learning how to view the world, learning how to be, grasping how to treat others, and unearthing their own purpose or contribution to the whole; I believe progress will be seen. The progress here is in salvation from injustice.

To me, successful education is not really about academics and test scores. It is about forming good people to make up a good society. I like the progress being made in schools from exclusion to inclusion. When I was going through school in the 60's and 70's, there were *not* wheelchair students, Down Syndrome students, or special education students in the regular classroom. Even though the EHA (Education for All Handicapped Children Act) was passed in 1975, these students were in separate classrooms. Many were barely in the community at all, as they were

relegated to institutions or boarding schools. The injustice of marginalization of disabled students needs to continue to be corrected. Much prejudice and discrimination comes from the communities and families themselves. I believe that compassion as a human trait is better learned when one is called to be a caregiver, or to take others' limitations into account, and to think of others' viewpoints. To be able to provide a place where students learn not just traditional school subjects, but how to be a good person contributing to a good society is one role of school. This social aspect should be a big part of the students' education, as it is one subject which expands beyond the classroom. Understanding and embracing differences by promoting love, respect and contributions of ALL is key to this lesson.

The word disability defines what an individual is not "able" to do. However, it is only one way that discrimination and prejudice have marginalized some students as not "able". In the history of education in America, we have labeled, excluded, pre judged, and rejected numerous children based on race, deficient character (Deschenes, et al. p 167) parentage, gender (Looy, Bouma, 2005) socioeconomic status (Kozol), and sexual orientation (Looy, et al.). For race, we think first of the African Americans, who were prohibited reading skills during the slave trade years. However, this prejudice continues with the redline housing policies which have kept schools more segregated now than ever (Mulder, 2017). The gap in resources was part of Kozol's writings from the Bronx (Kozol, 2000). The isolation of these inner-city children and different way they are perceived by social scientists and politicians serves to further label them as 'dis-abled', and expands the discrimination further. (Kozol, p 116-117) Discrimination based on race is closely tied to socioeconomic status because of housing (redlining) and terminology

(politically *incorrect*). In regards to gender, historically females were excluded from a “need” for higher education. In 1953, my mother’s parents did not support her attending college, simply because she was not a man. The gender/sexual orientation issues today are not so much exclusion from education, but *social* exclusion. This exclusion unfortunately has led to an extreme high rate of suicide among these marginalized persons. (Trevor Project, 2015) I do object to the term GID (Gender Identity Disorder), because the word “disorder” insinuates that there is something *wrong* with an individual’s gender or sexual orientation. Everyone has something to contribute to society. Teachers ought to be concerned with helping students discover just what their contribution is. Teachers should educate their students in order to remove stigma, and adjust their terminology to avoid binary designations. The classroom should be a place of refuge for all races, cultures, genders, sexual orientations, to grow as a community, and flourish.

Treating students differently because of a preconceived ‘dis-ability’, or “not able” classification is a form of discrimination which should have no place in the classroom, just as it should have no place in society. To promote the good people in a good society, our schools need to become a place of celebration in differences. As we advocate for our students, we can save them from injustice which comes from discrimination, exclusion, and unfair labeling. I see part of the fault in the 1983 Nation at Risk report (Labaree, 2011) that defined success in school by how much money one made. There are so many other ways to define success, and at the very least this mentality marginalizes the working class which contribute much to our society. It is an injustice for society to do this. Injustice also comes in [labeling because the student is immediately labeled as \*not\* able for something. Instead of being able to stand on their own and prove their worth, the](#)

student is relegated to limited class offerings, limited extra curricular classes, and thereby, a limited education. The boundaries are set by someone *outside* of them, by someone who may or may not have their best interests in mind. Too many times, schools are fulfilling quotas or financially-motivated slots with students deemed to be worthy. (Journal #7) Part of this labeling has sprung from the emphasis on standardized tests campaigned for by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. As Diane Ravitch says, tests should follow curriculum rather than determine it. (Ravitch, 2010) Teachers teaching “to the test” was something I have observed myself with my own children in middle school (2011-2013). When trying to review material with them, I could see they really didn’t understand the concepts, were just memorizing exact definitions. In my two years of subbing (2013-2015) at Godfrey Elementary in long term sub positions, I experienced the lack of instructional time from spring break until the end of the school year with my class because of standardized testing. These third and fourth grade students were spending hours out of class. There was little time to have instructional time, and most of the students really needed to have more work on basics like math and reading, as they were behind the government standards already. This was due in part to the high rate of ESL students. Some students traveled to visit family in Mexico from Thanksgiving until well into January, so already missed class time that year. These experiences served to teach *me* that the injustice of forcing students to meet some type of test or standard, especially in light of the other environmental influences of family, culture, and language, is a great disservice. It is time for a new reform in schools. It is time for teachers to embrace their students, meeting them where they are, as unique individuals. We need to save them from the injustice of the American school system which is broken.

What is broken? Overcrowded classrooms, underfunded districts, schools being closed because their test scores are not high enough, teachers feeling hopeless, students dropping out, punishing students who actually have a greater need for understanding, zero tolerance policies, achievement gaps, low performance, bullying, and no motivation to learn (Anyon, 2005; Deschenes, et al., 2001; Kozol, 2000; Kristiansen, 2008; Mulder, 2017; Noguera, 2003;). Much of this reflects the socioeconomic neighborhood around the schools; the continued segregation in the neighborhoods fueled by unjust policies I also accuse. Some of the issues begin with early labeling of individuals. And all of it involves injustice in a society that is not good. Fixing these numerous school problems involves fixing the community. It involves building a good society with the people *in* that society. Jean Anyon discusses the importance of reforming policies in the community in order to impact the schools in urban settings. Things like raising minimum wage, job creation programs, taxing the rich, enforcing anti-discrimination laws, and paying women as much as men for starters (Anyon, 2005). Anyon makes clear connections of flourishing of children and their environment. Improving home life with wage increases, or even a job where there was none before, contribute to a child's ability to learn. Finally, change doesn't happen overnight, but I see good hope in the Restorative Justice movement as it is applied to schools.

Restorative Justice in Education (RJE) (Evans and Vaandering, 2016) focuses on creating just and equal school environments so children can learn better. Included is a focus on relationships, repair and restoration. This involves respect, dignity and mutual concern, reminding me of Ikaheimo's personhood essay. For teachers, the ideals center on introspection to identify one's own bias, reflection on what message we send as teachers, and creating just and equitable

learning environments. I love the idea of talking circles as a way to build up every person as part of the classroom community (Evans, pp. 73-75) Equitable is impartial, not equal. Of course each child must be evaluated on their own scale, taking into account the family, culture, language, and past experiences, as I have already proposed in this thesis. Here also, I find the Wolterstorff reference to Shalom, peace, as a centering force to education. I also believe that restoration, or repair, of the world ought to lead the way to our good society. When each person works to contribute Shalom, through kind deeds, or Mitzvah, and righteousness, or Tzedakah, the world becomes better in an ever-widening circle around them. Teachers are in a unique position to provide this center of Shalom to students. Justice is created and injustice is destroyed when choices are made to do good (action), or to step in to correct an injustice one sees in the world. The purpose of education is to help each student realize their purpose in the world, to develop compassion for every type of person they contact, to use their unique abilities to be the best person they can be. This will be different for each individual, according to their individual bent. Perhaps the role of teachers should be less of reaching some arbitrary goal, standard, score, or benchmark, and should be more aligned with discovering individual place in society. Not to advocate for socioeconomic *class* distinction, but for individuality of purpose. *Not all students will be suited for college, either in temperament, goals, or skills. Nevertheless, all students can succeed at something, and as teacher-facilitators, we have to take into account the totality of the student: their home life, their neighborhood, their social economical status and analyse the ways that these factors contribute to the student's perception of self, success, how they fit into community. The purpose of school must extend beyond teaching a subject. It must include teaching a person.* (Journal #10)

Educating one child at a time to promote a good society is the purpose of education. School is one part of that timeline, in a focused location, and can be the most influential of all the environmental factors a person is exposed to. As teachers, I believe that respecting the personhood and individuality of each student, with the aim of sustaining that good society to the next generation is critical to promoting that good society. A society in which discrimination does *not* exist, in which relationships are key, and where flourishing takes place in students is my vision for education. I believe that this type of focus will bring about a better community as these students grow and function within it after they finish their school years. I want to be part of the germinating seed that is placed in students as they learn respect, dignity and mutual concern spoken of in RJE (Evans et al. pp. 4-5) I want to be part of sustaining a hopeful vision of community and relationships framework over classroom management and meeting test scores framework. I am excited to be part of this re-forming of intent regarding education and school.

**REFERENCES**

- Anyon, J., (2005). "What 'Counts' as Educational Policy? Notes toward a New Paradigm".  
*Harvard Educational Review*, 75(1), 65-88.
- Chambers, T. T., Huggins, K. S., & Scheurich, J. J. (2009, 03). To Track or Not to Track.  
*Journal of Cases in Educational Leadership*, 12(1), 38-50.  
doi:10.1177/1555458909334102
- Doornbos, M., Groenhout, R. (2005) *Transforming Care: A Christian Vision of Nursing Practice*. W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.
- Evans, K., Vaandering, D. (2016) *The Little Book of Restorative Justice in Education: Fostering Responsibility, Healing, and Hope in Schools*. Good Books.
- Facts About Suicide – The Trevor Project. (n.d.). Retrieved from  
<https://www.thetrevorproject.org/resources/preventing-suicide/facts-about-suicide/>
- Greene, J. E. (1968). *Four complete biographies*. Globe Book.
- Gonzalez, D. (1991, December 24). Eye on the Universe A Poet Views It All From the Bronx.  
Retrieved from  
<http://www.nytimes.com/1991/12/25/nyregion/eye-on-the-universe-a-poet-views-it-all-from-the-bronx.html?pagewanted=all>
- Gregory, A, Skiba, R, Noguera, P. (2010) The Achievement Gap and the Discipline Gap: Two Sides of the Same Coin. *Educational Researcher*, 39(1), 59-68.
- Houghton, J. (2011). *Global Warming, Climate Change and Sustainability*. John Ray Initiative.
- Isaacson, W. (2007). *Einstein: His life and universe*. Thorndike Press.

Kozol, J. (1995). *Amazing grace: The lives of children and the conscience of a nation*. Broadway Paperbacks, an imprint of the Crown Publishing Group, a division of Random House.

Kozol, J. (2000). *Ordinary resurrections: Children in the years of hope*. Broadway Paperbacks, an imprint of the Crown Publishing Group, a division of Random House.

Kristiansen, K., Shakespeare, T., & Vehmas, S. (2008). *Arguing about Disability: Philosophical Perspectives*. Cengage Learning EMEA.

Labaree, D. (2011) *Consuming the Public School*. Educational Theory at Stanford University School of Education.

Losen, D. J., & Orfield, G. E. (2002). *Racial Inequity in Special Education*. Harvard Education Publishing Group.

Mulder, M. (2017) Real Estate and the Realities of Racial Injustice: A trio of books document the long, sordid history of white homeownership and black exclusion. Referenced on Moodle.

Mscott2@mlive.com, M. S. (2015, August 20). 3 Grand Rapids-area high schools make Newsweek's top 500 list. Retrieved from [http://www.mlive.com/news/grand-rapids/index.ssf/2015/08/3\\_\\_grand\\_rapids-area\\_schools\\_\\_ma.html](http://www.mlive.com/news/grand-rapids/index.ssf/2015/08/3__grand_rapids-area_schools__ma.html)

Mscott2@mlive.com, M. S. (2015, March 06). Grand Rapids schools graduation rates reveal highs and lows. Retrieved from [http://www.mlive.com/news/grand-rapids/index.ssf/2015/03/grand\\_rapids\\_high\\_school\\_gradu.html](http://www.mlive.com/news/grand-rapids/index.ssf/2015/03/grand_rapids_high_school_gradu.html)

Ravitch, D. (2010) *The Death and Life of the Great American School System: How Testing and*

*Choice are Undermining Education*. Basic Books New York.

The Robbers Cave experiment Muzafer Sherif. (n.d.). Retrieved from

[http://www.age-of-the-sage.org/psychology/social/sherif\\_robbers\\_cave\\_experiment.html](http://www.age-of-the-sage.org/psychology/social/sherif_robbers_cave_experiment.html)

Walzer, M. (2009). What is 'The Good Society'. *Dissent Magazine (Foundation for the Study of Independent Social Ideas)*, 56(1),74-78.

Why this Bronx music teacher uses science - and bananas - in her classroom. (n.d.). Retrieved from

<https://www.chalkbeat.org/posts/ny/2017/11/27/why-this-bronx-music-teacher-uses-science-and-bananas-in-her-classroom/>

Wolterstorff, N. (2008) *Justice: Rights and Wrongs*. Princeton University Press.

Wolterstorff, N. Joldersma, C., Stronks, G. (2004) *Educating for Shalom: Essays on Christian Higher Education* Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

**APPENDIX A: Education 398A weekly journal entries. The following were written in response to writing prompts reflecting our reading each week.**

Karen Yonkers  
September 11, 2017  
Section A  
Journal #1

An ethical vision for life is different for different people. Ethical focus sprouts from early childhood experiences, and is further nourished from all the experiences we have over the years. We can learn from good experiences. We may see someone else exhibit a trait which we admire. Perhaps a parent, teacher, or congregational leader. We look for ways to incorporate that mindset into our own lives, our actions. We think about applications, and also seek out others who also value those things in order to improve, give and receive counsel, and continue to grow. This ethical vision has no “arrival point”. It is a lifelong growing, adding to past experiences and honing. Through this time, not only the good examples impact us. We are also impacted by other’s falling short. Taking away a lesson on reliability from a parent who was not reliable. We may think “I will not be like THAT!” Along with learning from other’s mistakes, we also learn from our own mistakes. These are the most impactful, primarily because we keenly feel the consequences first hand. Honesty, doing our best, keeping promises, creativity, rejoicing in God’s blessings, love of nature, love for others, love for learning; these are values I grew up with as in a family of six children, and musiking/teaching parents. I have a bit more life experience than most classmates here at Calvin, so feel my ethical vision is well developed, if you will. That being said, I have gone through some transformations in even the last decade, and have chosen a path which in some ways is quite different from my upbringing. Notwithstanding, much of my basic focus: belief in a higher power, belief in thinking and doing good, making the right choice, taking care of myself, those around me (strangers or friends), and stewardship of our world are all intact.

I am a God pleaser. I am a people pleaser. As such, my thoughts and actions are always working toward how to best serve others. I do this through a Hebraic mindset of מצווה Mitzvah. A Mitzvah, in the Jewish tradition, is a “good deed”. Something done with no concern for “payback” or compensation. Mitzvah is often interpreted as a “mandatory commandment”, by literal biblical scholars, but the connotation of charity is the true application today. A popular parallelism is the concept of “pay it forward” recently popularized by the movie of that name. However, as James points out in the New Testament: “Faith without works is dead” [i.e. meaningless]. So, I extend my ethical identity to another Hebrew word: כוונה Kavanah. This word involves the state of mind, condition of heart. This is the faith which reflects the heart’s intention. Combined with Mitzvah, doing the right thing for the right reason prevails. Good works (Mitzvah) are not done for reward, recognition, manipulation of others, etc. but from the heartfelt desire and intention to please God. God instructs us to care for the “widows, poor and orphans” repeatedly. We are to speak for those who cannot speak, or will not be heard on their own merit. I believe that the self-sacrifice, thoughtful acts which we do throughout our lives reflects our ethical focus. The works flow from the mind and heart. Focusing on the positive, beneficial things in self; and lifting up others, brings a restoration to the world.

Values which carry over from my childhood are present in my life: integrity, good faith effort, expression, creativity, kindness, looking for the good in others, learning from situations, seeking how to apply new knowledge, these are the things which drive me today. I hope to inspire others to the same recuperative elements.

Karen Yonkers  
September 18, 2017  
Section A  
Journal #2

A just vision for life is squarely based on this foundation of ethics. What we “ought” to do is to treat everyone as they should be treated. Not necessarily *equal*, as many think justice defines. For example, we would not hold someone as accountable and with the same punishment if they were mentally handicapped. In criminal justice, there is a plea of “insanity”. On the other hand, as humans, we do not treat everyone equal due to our prejudice and bias. We see an example of this in racial profiling by police. Wolterstorff expands on justice in the Old and New Testaments, focusing on the systemic injustice toward the Quartet for Justice (orphan, widow, poor, alien). The Israelites needed to be able to defend the vulnerable within their community. If they did not, they would not survive as a people. Therefore, intentional justice to these groups also protected the vision of the people of God, their nation in the wilderness, and beyond. As these vulnerable people groups are more susceptible to injustice, they should also be singled out to be recipients of the Mitzvah which I mentioned in Journal #1. I agree that all people are entitled to “full and secure” rights (NW pg 143). The question I am left with is How? How do we, in a corrupt world, make a difference in the justice around us? Looking to our faith, Wolterstorff says it best on pg 79: [Old Testament religion is] not a religion of salvation *from this earthly existence* but a religion of salvation *from injustice* in this earthly existence.” By the same philosophy, God loves justice, God is just, we are to reflect Him, so we are just. Human worth deserves mitzvah, no matter what religion one belongs to. I do not believe that the New Testament changes this viewpoint. Jesus taught his followers also to take care of those in the community. Luke records Jesus’ reading of the scroll of Isaiah including his announcement that one of his purposes was to “set the oppressed free”. Jesus reflected God, Jesus wants his followers to be like him, therefore, we are also to free the oppressed.

I believe injustice springs either from *action*, direct deeds of discrimination or oppression, OR from *inaction*, refraining from deeds which would relieve oppression, or refraining from speaking up for the mistreated. In Judaic tradition, חסד וצדקה (chesed and tzedakah) are the acts which follow performing a mitzvah. צדקה is translated both “righteous” and “justice” because of the close relationship these terms have to one another. It is *right* to be *just*. We ought to seek justice, do justice, speak justice. Especially for those who cannot seek, do, or speak for themselves. The widow has lost her partner of support. The orphan has lost their parent of support. The poor have lost their livelihood for support, and the aliens are separate from their people who would support them. It lies upon each of us to support those who are in need. The Tzedakah box in the synagogue is for monetary help, the charity box in which people provide for

the poor among them. Money is one way we can help, certainly. However, the good deeds, simply a kind word, a smile, holding a door, stopping to change a tire, making a phone call...any of these can be mitzvah in support of our fellow man.  $\text{חסד}$  is translated “kindness” or “lovingkindness”, and reflects the *deeds* which are done: the “ought to” of the mitzvah. These acts are done out of the kindness of one’s heart, with no desire for re-payment. And yet, we see that there are many injustices based on race, socioeconomic status, and gender, to name a few. Just as in the OT and NT, instead of thinking there is too much to change, and that we cannot make a difference, we need to remember that God/Jesus wants us to free the oppressed. We are able to affect certainly the people who are in our immediate vicinity. The challenge is to recognize the universal worth of all humanity, and the right of all creation to flourish. And then to act justly.

Karen Yonkers  
September 25, 2017  
Section A  
Journal #3

What is a good society? Objective measurements of Happiness, Social Progress, and Economic or Educational statistics could be used to measure a perceived level of “good”. Several authors presented their focus for this definition. Each had a bit of a different focus. To ask what *I* think a “good society” is is inherently a subjective question. As with earlier topics of ethics and justice, there is a certain amount of qualification and variance based on one’s individual sense of “ought”. Again, defining a “good society” will be according to their collection of experiences and cultural contexts. Walzer does begin his article in the *Dissent* by arguing that who defines “good” and who defines “right” impedes the world unity of a concept of “*THE* Good Society”. That being said, there were some unifying aspects to the various philosophers we explored this week. And I do believe there is a universal definition of “good” which people from around the world would adhere to. Further, the string of subjects do tie in to one another as we have progressed through the semester: Ethics → Justice → Good Society.

I think that good societies are based on good people. Yes, there is a place for the state to enforce, encourage, and uphold equality in society on various levels. Walzer seems to focus on the groups of people within the society: how they interact, the civil arrangements of movements, associations and community. He defines “good” as social democracy, solidarity, commitment, cooperation, equal access and inclusion dominate his ideal. Walzer talks about a plurality of good societies, the creation of which is a difficult, yet possible in his summary assessment. He does touch on the individual people a bit, in the context of movements, associations, and community. I think this falls short, because of my belief that good societies are based on good people. Habermas also models his “good” societies on mechanisms instead of individuals.

Habermas’ mechanisms: State, Economy and Civil are all organizations which, according to him, need to have a “positive role”. Here, I see the same semantic issue with defining “positive” as with “good” outlined in Walzer. State, Economy and Civil mechanisms in his model reflect

power, money, and public interests of the population, respectively. The Civil portion Habermas outlines is basically the three groups in society Walzer wrote about. Along with this “positive role”, Habermas states that these mechanisms should all have limits. The positive role of government was also listed as an indicator of “good” society by Hales in his intriguing article about Why the USA is not the Best Country. I found Hale’s criteria and the discussion of objective measurements of society’s worth the most interesting.

Steven Hales proposed that the universal “good” which I alluded to in my opening paragraph could be summed up as pursuit of: freedom, literacy, health, happiness of citizens, and standard of living. This provided an interesting comparison in which the USA definitely did NOT rank high, and in some categories is quite low. I’m not sure if I agree that his criteria are truly a measurement of “good”. For example, literacy is certainly important, but being able to read does not make someone “good”, just as someone who cannot read is “bad”, which is the logical conclusion to such criteria of goodness. Also, standard of living within a society reflects more the class divisions than anything. In a truly “good” society, everyone would look out for one another, and fill in the needs of those who lack. In the book of Acts, the early Christians shared all alike. This is good. I do agree that individuals should work together to share the burden for improving their society. Individuals making choices which take into account the impact their actions have on others is good. This would include factors such as carbon footprint, stewardship of resources, distribution of goods and services, collaborative health care. Professor Jordan touches on many of these aspects in his Good Society Framework.

The Good Society Framework (GSF) focuses on the quality of life. Again, another subjective word. Who defines “quality”? However, I do like the focus Jordan has on individuals. Relationships, personal development, resources available to all, culture and leisure, and personal empowerment are just a few key issues Jordan includes under his nine main categories of society. The intrinsic worth of *all* people becomes the “good” in his society ideal.

I think that a “good society” first and foremost is made up of “good people” A good society provides security of person and property. Further, freedom of thinking, and ability to explore ideas and spaces without fear is important. There should be a balance of life, the ability to share burdens, be active in each others’ lives, yet not intrusive. Relationships should be respectful, inclusive, free from prejudice, equal and just. The social structures are there to serve the individuals, and not individuals serving in the structures of movement, association and community. Too much emphasis on state controls, instead of holding individuals directly responsible within their local communities, can diminish human flourishing. For example, if government regulates lemonade stands, children cannot have the satisfaction of creating a refreshing drink and learning basic marketing concepts while serving their neighborhood, as they cannot comply to all the regulations. With regard to health care, when there are some people who can receive needed treatment, and others who cannot, this is not a just society. Now, whether care comes from government programs, crowdsourcing, or community members’ contribution of goods and services, remains to be debated and determined by the constituency.

The good society is a complex issue, but these are the beginnings of my ideas for now.

Karen Yonkers  
October 2, 2017  
Section A  
Journal #4

Continuing the Good Society clarification in light of sustainability, Peak Oil, and our readings/discussions this week: Here the consideration of a “good society” is focused on the stability to the next generation. There are several aspects from my proceeding commentary which are now brought to the forefront of the “good society”. In light of the global crisis, there is not only a sense of urgency to think to the future, but also a more concrete aspect to focus on. Instead of abstract and subjective ideals of “goodness”, “happiness”, and “quality”, we have scientific projections which clearly show that action needs to be taken quickly to shift from fossil fuels to alternative energies. Looking at the various graphs of how the USA fits into carbon footprint and income, the statistics are irrefutable. Without immediate action, the earth as our spaceship will crash and burn. Just as Hale listed “positive role of government” as an element of a good society, and Walzer on spoke of plurality, a unification, so Houghton urges the world to unite in reducing emissions, fossil fuel dependence and destructive policies like deforestation. Houghton uses past agreements and conferences on a world scale, and seems to promote a worldwide unity of stewardship on this issue.

Certainly, sustainability is important to good society. How good is a society which only thinks of the present, and does not provide for the future generations? Houghton addresses this in his opening arguments “Why care for the environment?” He connects with stewardship, which is one of the elements of good society. The climate crisis brings “society” up to a worldwide level society. All mankind must join against the common enemy of decreasing of “good” in our society through the loss of basic needs: water, land, food, clean air, etc. We will need to pull together to overcome water shortages, recover from natural disasters caused by the climate change, such as hurricanes and earthquakes. No longer geographic regions thinking only of themselves, people will have to work at keeping fossil fuels in the ground, developing alternative energy sources, and encouraging governments to limit emissions, as a *united people*.

Good Society was established clearly as a institution which contains beauty, liberty, pursuit of happiness, but also provides the basic needs of security, shelter, food, water. In light of threatened lives in the scenarios of climate crisis, loss of security (due to loss of fossil fuels that we are dependent on, ie. peak oil decline) , loss of shelter (to hurricanes, or sea level rise, for example), loss of foods (through destruction of coral reefs, deforestation, and extinction of whole species), and loss of drinkable water (because of CO2 saturation), it is imperative that world leaders come together for the sake of the worldwide “good society”. Houghton addresses this very idea in his section on sharing responsibility internationally towards sustainability. He goes so far as to call this the Christian thing to do. Again, for the next generation.

Tranter and Sharpe further define this responsibility to the next generation by connecting peak oil with Children's Rights to "protection", "provision" and "participation". In class, there were some students objecting to the elevation of children to "productive members of society". I think they missed the point of the article. What I got from that was that T & S were advocating for children's participation as a road to ownership. The parallel was made to Victory Gardens of WWII. In this scenario, the whole family pulled for the common good of the society. Either way one looks at it, I do believe that children certainly not only have a right to know about the climate crisis, but also should be encouraged to take ownership, making the changes they can for a greener society. This type of society is one that, instead of slowing killing itself and its resources, is reaching toward zero carbon footprint. I believe extending to the next generation, both in plans and thought, and in actual participation, is the ultimate survival tool for good societies.

Karen Yonkers  
 October 9, 2017  
 Section A  
 Journal #5

After a discussion on what a "good society" is, it logically follows to examine the nature of beings which make up said society. Prior to these readings from *Doornbos* and *Ikaheimo*, I just figured human beings are persons, plants and animals are not persons. However, I now see that not only have some human beings been historically labeled as "non-persons", this concept is currently held as well for certain categories of human beings, or what I would define human beings, as NOT persons. I also assumed that human = person, the *Genetic Criteria*, as the Crash Course on Philosophy video we viewed stated. Again, actual *practice* and philosophical considerations have illuminated the possibilities of DNA-defined humans as *not* necessarily equivalent with persons, or even *personhood*, which is evidently yet another distinction which I never recognized.

In my worldview, distinct from the rest of the created world, human beings are the image-bearers (to use Doornbos' term) of the Creator. I acknowledge that some humans reflect that image better than others. Abel more than Cain, Ruth more than Jezebel, Enoch over Lamech, Noah over everybody evidently, Aristotle over Socrates, Alexander the Great over Genghis Khan, King David over Solomon, Octavius over Caligula, Abraham Lincoln over US Grant, FDR over Adolf Hitler, Moon Jae-in over Kim Jong-Un. How do we evaluate which ones are true "image bearers"? The ones who most consistently uphold the laws, morals, ethics, justice and love of God. I don't think that those who have a less popular reputation are not *persons*, however. Personhood could be how others see us. The *Social Criteria* from the YouTube in class. Doornbos says "to be a person is to be historically and socially situated" (Doornbos, pg 61)

Historically, some categories of humans have had a "lesser" status. Ikaheimo highlights some of these for consideration at the inception of his chapter. Is one less of a person if they are brain dead? If they are an infant? We also discussed in class the controversial topic of fetal

personhood. We discussed how, at some point in history in the USA, Native Americans were not “persons”, not given citizenship rights, African captives were considered property, not persons, and women did not have an equal voice under the law of suffrage until the 20th Century. The historical classification overlaps a bit, too, with the cases under the law. Children who are tried as minors, not as adults. Homosexuals are not allowed marital rights of estate inheritance or joint taxes. This can also blend in with the *Personhood as a Right*. If a criminal declares “not guilty by reason of insanity”, are they then a person? Are those consigned to death row, guilty of heinous crimes, such as mass murder, are they still a person?

Another aspect then, is whether the society around the excluded human recognizes them as “non-person”. And if they *are* persons, can they *lose* this personhood? Or gain it? The *Gradient Criteria*, as well as Ikaheimo’s application to the newborn, who is not *yet*, but only an *anticipated* person, apply to this concept. The flip side to define a person is self awareness, logic, *Cognitive or Sentient Criteria*, as termed in the video. Doornbos explores this sense of self as part of embodiment and independence. I guess I always regarded self-evaluation as superior to others perceptions to define my personhood. I think, therefore I am. I can reason, have logic, can think, so I am a person. I never thought to apply the adverse: those who can’t recognize themselves as unique, separate beings (infants can’t), who cannot reason (young children, or Alzheimer’s patients can’t), or who doesn’t have “logic” (mentally ill persons), or those in a coma...do they think?...are NOT persons by this criteria. So, if I think I am a person, no matter what others say or do, how they interact with me, I AM a person. But then I remember the Jews during the Holocaust. No matter how much we defined *ourselves* as persons, the ones with power did not, so we were exterminated like so many rats. Therefore, self determination doesn’t matter, if exclusion from society is present.

Ikaheimo focuses more on the interpersonal, social acceptance criteria for personhood. He discusses this at length as a triple-tiered qualification of love, respect and contributive value which allows exclusion in my former example of the Jewish people. This also may be applied for disabled persons. The video with Judith Butler, although not directly addressing personhood, did address the inclusion/exclusion factors outlined by Ikaheimo. Personally, I try to be as inclusive as I can. I do find myself prejudging individuals at times, however. I recently viewed a video about a blind student who was participating in marching band in high school. She was able to follow the marching patterns with another student as her guide. As a music educator, I was intrigued, because I would probably not have thought of that. I would instead be relegating blind students to the percussion pit on the sidelines. I had a blind friend for a period of years, and it was amazing the things she could do. More than once, when driving somewhere, she would help me find where I needed to be when I was lost (this was before GPS). This unit has helped me see that personhood is not as black and white as I thought. It also makes me want to strive as much as I can to contribute to “normalizing” disabilities as a teacher.

Karen Yonkers  
October 16, 2017  
Section A

## Journal #6

Continuing on the Nature of Person/Human from last week, I acknowledged that normalizing disabilities is one way to draw in the marginalized of society. Societal marginalization, or exclusion, has its own modern “quartet of four”, to adopt Wolterstorff’s terms. I see them as: racial/ethnic prejudice, economic/class prejudice, disability prejudice, and gender prejudice. I will give a quick overview of each, although I do believe these are self-evident, and will devote the majority of my entry today to the last: gender prejudice.

Racial/ethnic also applies to cultures. These tend to be the ones who do not have power in the society. Along with a strong prejudice to African Americans and Hispanics in our country, I also see people of Islam and Judaism being marginalized. I know that those are religions, but they are closely tied to cultural/ethnic origins also. This goes beyond skin color, but often is based solely on skin color by the perpetrator of exclusion. To combat this, we need to look past the skin: bones, muscles, blood is all the SAME, folks!

Economic/class prejudice can also be politically oriented, as those on the political spectrum are seen to represent poor or rich, working class or those born into wealth. We see this in the marginalization of homeless people. A personal glimpse into this happened to me and my family during the summer of 1996, in which I, my spouse, and our seven children were homeless. My husband had a very good IT job, we were between residences, and just decided to camp from Memorial Day until well after Labor Day. Since we home schooled, we weren’t worried about finding a home before school started. We were on the receiving end of a few very specific pre (and false) judgements by other people, police officers, and campground employees. But we were not poor, just chose this nomadic lifestyle because...well, we could. My husband made six figures.

Disabilities include both physical and mental disabilities. Sometimes, they are seen, sometimes they are not seen. Those which are seen: wheelchair, amputees, blind, down’s syndrome. They are judged to be “lesser persons”. Then there are those who have no outward sign of disability: My son on the ASD, me with CHF and Afib. I have a friend with COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease), who has been accused of misusing her handicap parking permit, because (as this passerby said) she didn’t have any disability. So the *seen* as disabled are judged to NOT be able, while the *unseen* as disabled are judged to BE able. Both assumptions are very prejudiced and wrong. And, as I outlined last week, other’s perception of ability seems to override any personal identity the “disabled” person has, unfortunately.

Finally, we come to gender prejudice. This applies to gender stereotypes, masculine/feminine assumptions and the prejudices which go along with that. For example: “Teddy can’t have purple as a favorite color, it’s a *girl* color” (true story of one of my grandsons...when he started kindergarten, he changed his “favorite color” because of these type of peer judgements). It also applies to LGBTQ stereotypes, intersex binary gender assignments at birth, and transgender identities. I have heard the parallel that the LGBTQ community is ‘sort of at the point that the black people were at in the 1960’s during Civil Rights. It was such a hysteria about interracial

couples, just like with same sex couples today’, I have heard people say. And, at first, I agreed. But now, I think that is an oversimplification of the matter. It is not just black and white, not just African and European. There is a myriad of grey in the sexual orientation/gender identity issue.

The readings this week: Looy and Bouma, Myers, and Joldersma, all attempted to find some type of balance of understanding with LGBT discrimination issues. Looy and Bouma addressed the facets of intersex and transgender individuals. Both identify with a gender other than the limited biological dichotomy of male or female. The authors then addressed the way that Christian believers should interact with these people. Ultimately, they come to the same conclusion as I do: these are one of our “modern day quartet of marginalized persons”. I emphasize that they are, most evident to me, Persons. Both by their own cognizance, and by a good society.

Myer, instead of gender identity, addressed sexual orientation. He cited various sources trying to find an explanation for homosexuality through inheritance, environment, biology, or some combination of these. He seems to find the biological explanation most convincing. He also does state that “sexual orientation is a natural disposition” (Meyer, 135), which I see as a step in the right direction of inclusion for this marginalized group.

Finally, Joldersma includes both gender identity and sexual orientation in his article: addressing a general LGBT community. He makes the parallels also to the *primary justice* and *claim right* of Wolterstorff. However, in upholding the CRC official position of exclusion towards homosexual persons, he falls short of truly applying Wolterstorff’s ideal. Having been married to a bisexual for 30 years, with a father-in-law who was a pastor of the CRC faith, and seeing the resulting damage that my ex-husband went through by having to hide his orientation from his father to avoid ostracization, has made me very prejudice against the CRC position since 2002. I have kept abreast of the Synod, and the developments over the years, and this attitude (“be who you are, but live celibate, or you can’t serve in the congregation”) as very exclusionary and outdated. I am encouraged by my Reform Jewish faith, in which the inclusiveness is refreshing. Our last Temple president was gay, and there are several same sex couples, married and not, some with children who are enrolled in our Sunday School. But being LGBT there is not a big deal. No one singles these persons out as LGBT, they just are themselves, and loved. I enjoy the normalized marginalized here. We are called to love our neighbors as ourselves. There is no qualification on neighborliness. In fact, in the famous story told by Jesus, the “good neighbor” was a Samaritan. As the mother of three bisexual daughters and a gender-fluid pansexual son, I cannot exclude my own children from my love. Nor do I want them excluded from society. A society which does this is **not** good.

Karen Yonkers  
October 23, 2017  
Section A  
Journal #7

This week, we have an opportunity to apply the discussion of exclusion, stereotypes and equality to the school structure. Labeling and Tracking in Deschenes et al and in Chambers et al, along with class discussions have helped me to think through the implications for these constructs. Overall, it seems to me that labeling and tracking are both unjust in the school. If being human involves celebrating our differences and embracing those who are unique (and aren't we all?) then the pre-judging involved in labels and/or tracking is very unjust.

Labeling is unjust because by narrowing someone's identity to a label: stupid, lazy, disabled, SPED, or any other type of label, we are also narrowing the opportunities that that individual may experience. By the labels, the student is immediately labeled as *not* able for something. Instead of being able to stand on their own and prove their worth, the student is relegated to limited class offerings, limited extra curricular classes, and thereby, a limited education. The boundaries are set by someone *outside* of them, by someone who may or may not have their best interests in mind. Too many times, schools are fulfilling quotas or financially-motivated slots with students deemed to be worthy.

Labeling also serves to build up a defeating attitude in the student. "If they don't think I can do it, these persons in power over me, making life decisions for me based on their [expert knowledge] superiority, I guess I can't do it". Self-fulfilling prophecy comes into play here, and the cycle begins very early, as early as kindergarten. This seems wholly unjust to me, to judge someone this early in life.

I am reminded of a personal experience, one which became one of my motivators for schooling my children at home. I am the youngest of 6 children. As such, I was accustomed to older activities when I was 3 or 4. I would color *inside* the lines, pronounce words properly, with a high vocabulary, I listened to classical music, understood waiting my turn, sharing, and could read. I don't know that my IQ was ever tested, but I believe I would have been labeled "gifted". When I was 4, my parents thought that I should be exposed to children my own age. Going to nursery school, as it was called, was quite a culture shock for me. Here were children who scribbled, mispronounced words, threw temper tantrums at just about anything, couldn't read, and didn't know how to lay still during "nap" time. I remember being bored out of my mind, I liked the rocking horse. There is a class picture of this time. Because I was taller than my peers, I was made to stand (I wanted to sit on the horse). My face is totally lacking any emotion, and I am sucking my thumb. My mother tells the story that, a few weeks into school, my teacher called her to meet. At this meeting the teacher said "I'm sorry to tell you this, but Karen is retarded". Now, where she got this idea, or if there were any actual tests, I don't know, but I doubt there was anything to it other than her idea. I think her general impression, since I didn't participate with other children, and sat in the corner on the horse sucking my thumb, was that I was stupid. My mother laughed and told my teacher how intelligent I was, and how I had told her how bored I was at home. Fortunately, my parents knew better than my teacher, and that label didn't stay with me!

And this type of thing is exactly why tracking is a failure. The language teachers use to classify students contributes to this stereotyping and prejudice attitude. Language shapes behavior

(self-fulfilling prophecy mentioned above) and thinking. Students will live up to the standard we set. If it is too low, the students are not able to reach their full potential. This is a shame in education. One purpose of teachers is to help each individual student reach their highest level, to learn and continue to learn. The fact that white students are labeled and placed into higher tracks over students of color shows how unjust this truly is. Instead of reinforcing a certain track as the *only* place a particular student can function within, as educators, we need to expand and enhance our students' opportunities to cross these boundaries and grow.

Karen Yonkers  
October 30, 2017  
Section A  
Journal #8

In Educational Theory (2011), David F. Labaree writes an excellent review of how education has fit into society in the past 400 years in America. In his view, education has gone from a faith based focus (colonial - pre Civil War), later to upholding the Republic (pre Civil War to WWI), thereafter to progressive Democratic growth (WWI - post WWII), to striving for Equal Opportunity (1950-early 80's) and finally favoring the interests of individual education consumers (1983 - present). I contend that a parallel *philosophy* concerning education has additionally evolved along these lines since colonial times. I will explore this idea in detail later in this entry. In addition, the subjective topic of ethics, leading to a definition of "justice", which in turn defines "good people" successively defines a "good society." And the good society will have a "good" purpose of education, which is the building block of society itself: inculcation of the next generation. As Habermas says, a "positive role" of education. The purpose of education, I believe, is as subjective as the other social constructs we have probed in this class. Education, after all, goes beyond school.

The philosophy concerning education and individuals within that educational system have evolved since Colonial times. As Labaree rightly stated, educational methods, goals, and curriculum at first reflected religious foundations. Of course, he is referring to white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant education. Other cultures living at the same time had different focuses for their formal education. I am thinking of Native Americans and Catholics, both groups which were actively persecuted by the Protestant settlements. The irony of fleeing England to pursue religious toleration/freedom and then marginalizing other groups here is too blatant for me to ignore. The philosophy I see aligned with this "faith-based" period, is that of tradition. Holding to the traditions of the past becomes the definition of "rightness" in education. For those who do not comply with this tradition, shame and exclusion follow. The second philosophy I see is that which is fixated on the present. Past tradition does not figure in as strongly as other-directed systems. In other words, the dictates of the government, the economy, race and status in society, then the test results, the benchmarks: all depend on outward definitions for "correct" education.

This characterizes all of the Labaree periods from the war years to 1983. Each had a different “other” to direct definitions of success, but the philosophy was the same: meeting the needs of this “other” standard. For those who do not comply with the outer standard, anxiety follows. The final Philosophy, which I believe we are entering, takes the past experiences, in light of the present, and provides an *inner-directed* focus of exploration, inquisitive that is present within students (consumers, if you will), and developing that.

I stated earlier: One purpose of teachers is to help each individual student reach their highest level, to learn and continue to learn. I believe that the consumer focus Labaree promotes in our current educational philosophy as a country is a step in this direction. As I stated in the opening paragraph of this entry, the definitions of “good” society, or justice, or education are centered on *who* defines good. The individual student will define what that is. As educators, we need to be sensitive to what is important to each student we teach. Here, I draw on Jordans’ Good Society Framework in which the worth of all people is paramount. Ikaheimo’s essay on Personhood with the love, respect and contributive value aspects rings true as well. I think, too, of the South Bronx children depicted in Kozol’s writings. Reaching individual highest level will be different for all students, therefore standardized testing is useless. Students need to learn, the measurements should accordingly be on growth and progress as individuals. Does their reading level improve? Do they reach another plateau in mathematics? Are they able to speak and write in successful ways? Are they learning how to get along with others who are different from them in various aspects? Do they take ownership and responsibility of their own learning? Purpose of education is also to assist students to continue to learn. Are they given skills which can transfer to environments outside of the school setting? Is their learning focused on skills which they will use on a daily basis? Is it focused on teaching them how to seek resources to find answers, to solve problems, to take charge of knowing in the future as well?

The purpose of school is to cultivate individuals who can think in many ways, take responsibility for what they disseminate to their world (defined as: their neighborhood, to their civil duties, to family, and extending ultimately to the whole world), be compassionate towards others, seeking to contribute positively. The focus should be toward the whole individual person’s education. To create a life-long love of not only accumulating knowledge, but growing in discernment of how and when to use that knowledge for the betterment of self *and* others.

Karen Yonkers  
November 6, 2017  
Section A  
Journal #9

This week, we come back to school structure. Last time, we examined labeling and tracking and how they formed and are formed by school structures, and today we do the same with discipline/control agents. First, I do want to specify that my personal definition of “discipline” aligns more with the verb “to train”, than with the enforcement of that training: punishment.

There is a certain discipline which athletes adhere to their training schedule, forcing themselves to follow a regimen. I guess the consequences of NOT following that is the punishment. In the analogy of an athlete, the consequence is a natural consequence: they do not meet their goals, they don't feel well, or they do not win the gold medal. It is not really a consequence which comes from another source as in punishment. Gregory *et al.* in *The Achievement Gap and the Discipline Gap: Two Sides of the Same Coin?*, the clear cycle of academic/personal problems → misbehavior → suspension → more academic/personal problems from absence → misbehavior.... Is not working. The Zero Tolerance, Pipeline from School to Prison we discussed in class and read in the excerpt from Noguera's book show that the current policies and social contracts of dealing with behavior in classrooms is not having positive outcomes. In both cases, the structure is interfering with school's purpose of educating students.

In the school system, I would like to see a movement to this natural consequence view of behavior, discipline and punishment. The consequences need to follow naturally from the student's choices, rather than be imposed by a teacher or administrator. Building relationships, understanding student's academic and personal problems, and fostering teacher ←→ student respect would be the key to successful teaching and learning. For example, let's say that a student is disruptive during class. Since the teacher knows that the student has xyz going on at home, they are given a cool off...either in classroom, or another, special room designated in the building, which has support staff to help if needed. The student is invited to choose to respect the teacher and fellow students by stopping the disruption, or choose to take this "time out" and come back when they are ready. I am aware that, in the current mindset of school, this would not work. Of course, the expectations need to be developed over time. In the current structure of punishing behavior, unjust outcomes occur. Students who need more help are suspended instead of getting help, and the cycle continues. The control in the system is in the authority figure of the teacher.

Viewing discipline as student choice (and choice of consequences that follow) leaves the "control" in the hands of students. They take responsibility for their own actions, choices, and ultimately, learning. This will ideally lead to building respect of self and others which carries past grade 12 and into adulthood. It is preparation both for college life and for life. If the purpose of schools is beyond learning the three R's, which I do believe, than a system of this type is best served for that. I harken back to the intent of the heart: the Kavanah of both teacher and student. (Journal 1) Is the intent of the teacher to defend the defenseless? (Journal 2) Foster Love, Respect, and recognition of Value? (Ikaheimo) Is the intent of the student to be the best person they can be, to contribute positively to their culture, to respect others? How does this fit into the purpose of school? I maintain that the purpose of school is to not simply to create "good citizens", or factory-worker mentality. The purpose should be to improve humanity by training individual humans. Of course, we want students to learn skills, not so much for the function of contribution to society, but to provide a positive self image and self worth. What is the benefit of doing a good job if one hates that job? Or, in not learning a skill, but instead hating oneself, and becoming a criminal? It would seem the zero tolerance, school-to-prison-pipeline is doing just that.

I recognize that my idea of school structure will take a different philosophy towards educational practice, in training of future teachers in undergraduate programs, training of current teachers through professional development and workshops, training administration, and reaching out to the students that are serviced by the school system. Changing focus from behavior to the person behind that behavior will involve several things. This includes providing resources like responsible behaviour reflection spaces, support staff such as social workers in those spaces. It involves a philosophy which truly teaches the whole person: academics, relationships, respect for self, and others, natural consequences to choices. I would also make a plug for my own avocation, the fine arts, as being a part of teaching the whole person. Building relationships first takes time, yes. But time well spent, contributing to a more positive learning environment in school, and ultimately to the surrounding culture.

Karen Yonkers  
November 13, 2017  
Section A  
Journal #10

This week, we look at the factors outside of school which affect educational outcomes. I really liked the studies and references which Jean Anyon brought up. Of course schools are not isolated islands of children and teachers! The readings we are doing with Jonathan Kozol's experiences in the South Bronx highlight this fact well. Anyon pulled together several influences outside of the school structure, which follows quite logically from my previous journal entries focused on school structure. We must, as educators, consider these outside factors as significant influences on the children we teach, and the policies in our districts. Federal programs contributing to high poverty within Urban environments, low minimum wage, housing segregation and studies surrounding these subjects Anyon covered well. Mulder's article gave more details on this latter aspect. To understand children in schools, we need to understand the homes they are coming from. We need to be not just aware, but actively look for ways to improve outcomes by making changes that are proven to be beneficial. First, though, I will discuss the importance of the factors outside schools which contribute to the educational inequality we see today.

Up to this point, we have been observing and speculating on the various elements of school structure, and addressing inequalities there. Ethics, justice, the nature of persons, the "good society", discrimination based on race, sexual identity and gender, disabilities, tracking and labeling: all have been explored in relation to the school structure. This week, however, we travel outside of the school and into the neighborhoods. And what we find is a history of exclusionary treatment of social-economic class in which affluent receive subsidies, poor are forced into neighborhoods with less access to potentially school-related perks like health food stores, libraries and parks. And after generations of this segregation, it is impossible to break free. I was happy to read of the various relocation projects, specifically the Gautreaux program, New Hope and the Cherokee financial assistance program. The studies all revealed that students success rates (test scores, behaviour issues, graduation rates) improved with a move to higher income neighborhoods, supplemental income, and the counseling assistance. As Anyon concludes, and

rightly so, these out-of-school structures are *more impactful* on students than in-school structures. I now want to outline specifically some things which can be done outside of school to positively impact school outcomes.

Educational inequality today can be equalized through attention to several elements outside of the school. One is improving the minimum wage. The studies clearly showed, that even with modest income increases, the sense of well-being, lessening of stress and depression, increased positive parenting; trickled right on down to the children's attitudes and performance in school. Poverty is a large factor influencing students. Creating jobs, reducing unemployment is also a factor Anyon presented as a solution to the negative impact unemployment has on students education. These programs can be funded through taxing the wealthy and corporations who have the money to spare. Reducing discrimination in housing and employment are deeply connected to this element of poverty as it relates to education. These out of school factors being in place "create a social foundation on which high-quality schooling would rest" (Anyon, 2005) I do believe that making these beneficial changes is a good first step in serving my purpose of education.

The purpose of education is to help all students reach the best that they can be. This will be different for each student. Perhaps the role of teachers should be less of reaching some arbitrary goal, standard, score, or benchmark, and should be more aligned with individual place in society. Not to advocate for *class* distinction, but for individuality of purpose. Not all students will be suited for college, either in temperament, goals, or skills. Nevertheless, all students can succeed at something, and as teacher-facilitators, we have to take into account the totality of the student: their home life, their neighborhood, their social economical status and analyse the ways that these factors contribute to the student's perception of self, success, how they fit into community. The purpose of school must extend beyond teaching a subject. It must include teaching a person.

Karen Yonkers  
November 20, 2017  
Section A  
Journal #11

I agree with the first four chapters of Evans & Vaandering's book on restorative justice. In comparing their idea of justice with my own ideas regarding equity and justice, there were several parallels. These parallels involve a vision of Shalom, inclusion and ethics, and relationship building.

Part of the purpose of education is relationship building. In my first few reflections on ethics and justice, I discussed mitzvah (good works done for the sake of relationship, not for repayment). Evans and Vaandering bring the core belief of respect, dignity, and mutual concern. In the same way, I am advocating others should be treated in an ethical way, according to their individuality. I need to constantly check my own personal bias along the way. RJE authors interacted with

readers like me in asking about how influenced I was by my worldview or other people in decision making processes. (Evans & Vaandering, pg 26). I'll develop this more in the next section on inclusion, but mention it here as it also pertains to relationship building. As teachers, we cannot allow our personal worldview, bias, or previous experiences overshadow a particular relationship. I have often heard teachers say that a certain student reminds them of another, and this often influences how the new student is treated. Another example: statistics show that black males are more often singled out for harsher disciplinary procedures. Respect, dignity and mutual concern has no room to entertain this type of personal bias. Teachers need to focus on relationships with students so that they can better know how to reach and teach them as individuals. This ties in with my shared vision of equity which is closely tied with ethics and inclusion.

In my second reflection, which was about a just vision of life, I stated: "A just vision for life is squarely based on this foundation of ethics. What we "ought" to do is to treat everyone as they should be treated. Not necessarily *equal*, as many think justice defines." Evans and Vaandering also spoke in the same way, saying that equity means fairness or impartiality (pg 46) Here is a close parallel of thought. They even used the same Hebrew words which I had written about with *sedeqah* (transliterated differently from my *tzedakah*) "צדקה is translated both "righteous" and "justice" because of the close relationship these terms have to one another. It is *right* to be *just*. We ought to seek justice, do justice, speak justice. Especially for those who cannot seek, do, or speak for themselves. " (Yonkers, Journal 2) "Relatedly, the Hebrew word *sedeqah* is about 'right' living or righteousness. When we seek to live in *shalom*, *sedeqah* is the act of doing justice." (Evans and Vaandering, page 44) We had also read about Wolterstorff's view of 'salvation *from* injustice' in the world. (have to look up exact source) Both an action of discrimination and *inaction* to choose what is right reflect injustice. As teachers, just being aware of bias is not enough. We also need to actively seek out ways to correct injustice directed toward our students. This may involve intervening in student bullying, working to restore relationships in the school building through dialog and always seek to understand. I have not always been the best at these things, but I am learning. Justice needs to be promoted by teachers towards individuals who are right next to them, whether it be students, staff or administration, or parents and the larger community. Knowing what is just for a person depends heavily of knowing that person. RJE recognizes the essential element of relationships and justice.

Finally, I find agreement with RJE with their analogy of seeds and roots of a plant. In my earlier journal entries, I stated that beliefs lead to values, which lead to ethics, and in turn defines justice. Evans and Vaandering also call these elements seeds (beliefs) and roots (values) of a plant. I would call that plant Shalom. Shalom is the restoration of justice and right. Tzedakah is the action of shalom. In the classroom, utilizing RJE philosophies is a way to restore shalom to the world. In Judaism, Tikkun Olam, תיקון עולם the restoration or repair of the world is the ultimate code for behaviour. We should be mindful of our ability to change other's lives by our acts of kindness and righteousness. In this way, we restore and repair our broken world one person, one act, one instant at a time. RJE authors acknowledge this philosophy in their central tenet that people are worthy and relational.

Evans and Vaandering's idea of restorative justice in education fits with my idea of the purpose of education. I will again say: One purpose of teachers is to help each individual student reach their highest level, to learn and continue to learn. This reflects the RJE that each student may have a different superlative level as compared to another student. The purpose of education is to find the potential, through relationship building, as RJE proposes. The purpose of education is to guide each student down their own path of success.

Karen Yonkers  
November 27, 2017  
Section A  
Journal #12

#### OUTLINE:

- I. In the beginning: Life
  - A. Environment
  - B. Education
  - C. Ethics
- II. A Good Society: Shalom
  - A. Justice
    - 1) In Action (mitzvah)
    - 2) Inaction (Cavanah)
  - B. Personhood and Good People
  - C. Sustainability
- III. Avoiding Marginalization and discrimination
  - A. Society: dis-ability?
  - B. School: History and structure
  - C. tracking
    - 1) old model not working
  - D. RJE is part of the answer
    - 1) School is not an island: addressing cultural and environmental impacts
    - 2) Relationships in school and community (Kozol)

**APPENDIX B: KOZOL REFLECTIONS: Part of the class requirement was Cross Cultural Engagement; connecting across readings and the courses IDIS 205 and EDUC 307/322. The book referred to is Jonathan Kozol (2000) *Ordinary Resurrections Children in the Years of Hope*.**

Karen Yonkers  
Kozol Reflections  
EDU 398 -A  
October 6, 2017

When reading Kozol's work, I am struck by how the individual stories help to humanize the Mott Haven environment so that social statistics fade into the background. The focus is not on the race of the children. The matter of fact way the children interact with Jonathan about serious issues such as death, (pg 73-74 Stephanie) asthma, (pg 89-90 Isaiah) drugs, fathers in prison, lack of food and medical care, for example. Katrice's way of empathizing and helping those who are struggling, like Elio. (pg 18) The way that St. Ann's feeds the hungry and homeless in the South Bronx. (pg 21) However, Kozol balances this narrative with statistics regarding socioeconomic status, race, education, health and other social structures.

I'd like to relate two social constructs to Kozol's illuminations: Poverty and racial segregation. I will connect them to the ramifications of housing and education here, although many other social constructs are influenced by the poverty and racial segregation.

Poverty permeates everything in this neighborhood. These residents are all Hispanic or Black, and emerged from homeless communities. (pg 87-88) The questions I wonder: are they poor because they are all black and hispanic? Or is it just the history of the neighborhood? Have these people been forced into this location because they lack mobility to get themselves out? If they were given opportunity to move, would they? Could they? Is this situation of these "unmarked" (according to binary social relations) individuals a generational situation? They are not white, don't know any whites (except Jonathan? Some policemen? Perhaps a doctor?) An example: The issue of the incinerator, which was detailed in Amazing Grace as well, is again addressed in this book. (pg 86-87) It is clearly forced upon the residents because they lack money to fight against the City Hall and financiers of the project. So, yes, they were forced into this location because they were poor and black or Hispanic. Not because of lack of mobility so much as financial forces of those with power and money. The subsidies blocked them from moving (Amazing Grace) I believe that they are "stuck" because of their lack of resources to leave.

Poverty also impacts education here. The schools are still separate and *unequal*, (pg 32). The conversation related between Jonathan and Eleanor regarding Jane Addams HS and the counselor which discouraged black girls from pursuing college (pg 104-05) reveals that this poverty of education is related to prejudice toward the blacks. NYC itself is not equitable with monetary distributions towards education in various districts (pg 45-46). The inequality stems from financial opportunity of the powers-that-be and is NOT controlled by the recipients. It involves money for students, teachers, resources like libraries, which are unjustly distributed.

This discrimination even is seen in the curriculum of study. (pg 100) This links back to the attitude which lead Eleanor's counselor to steer her from college work.

I see a reinforcing loop in here: Segregated populations are forced into poor districts, with poor schooling, so cannot achieve upward mobility and therefore they stay in the same segregated neighborhood which continues to the next generation. The cycle of racial segregation harkens back to pre-forced bussing here in Michigan. Although I grew up in a small, white, rural town, and was unaware of this historic issue, my ex husband lived in Lansing and experienced being bussed across town to a school with blacks and whites. Kozol's descriptions, although dated to the late 1990's, undoubtedly still exists in NYC almost 20 years later. Out of curiosity, I did a couple searches, and found that the area is 72% Hispanic, 25% Black, 2% white, 1% Asian, 1% other. (2015, nyc.gov demographics) Not a big change from Kozol's reflections.

I have added some sources which I read. The first is the source for the 2015 demographics above. Next is a 2015 NY Times article about development, and finally an NPR transcript of an interview with a developer from August of 2017.

<https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/data/2015chp-bx1.pdf>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/29/realestate/mott-haven-the-bronx-in-transition.html>

<http://www.npr.org/2017/08/02/541197462/motts-haven-in-the-bronx-targeted-for-remake>

Karen Yonkers  
Kozol Reflections  
EDU 398 -A  
October 27, 2017

Continuing the discussion on racial and cultural differences depicted in Kozol's work: Ordinary Resurrections *Children in the Years of Hope*, I want to connect his experiences now with the ones I have had through my field experiences in Education classes here at Calvin College. My experiences include Godfrey Elementary, in Wyoming, where 85% of the students are Hispanic. In this setting, where I completed my student case study, I learned that the State of Michigan compares all schools to the total population of Michigan, and that can be problematic in light of certain statistics. One example was that the PBIS system was faulted with "suspension of too many Hispanic , non-white students" by the state. Obviously, when the system is 85% Hispanic, the suspension rate of Hispanic students will be high. My experience in this setting was that the teachers and administration were understanding and accommodating toward the student population, for the most part. Obviously, for true equality in educational opportunities and measurements of success, "one size fits all" evaluation cannot work.

Unfortunately, racial and cultural differences are too often interpreted as deficits. We see this in the high rate of placement in lower levels, or even special education of the minority students. (Losen and Orfield, 2002) It is not only the unjust tracking inequalities, but the lack of resources provided for the schools which have high minority enrollment, which I examined in the previous section. Kozol also speaks of the teachers assigned to these schools, like PS 65, and the high turnover rate (Kozol, page 201) However, this need not be true of every school. The placement which I had last year with Education 302 was with City Middle-High School, part of the Grand Rapids Public School (GRPS) District. This school has a diverse student population, and a student led atmosphere with the International Baccalaureate standards. Students need to fulfill certain GPA to be enrolled, and it has one of the highest graduation rates in Michigan. However, I believe this is because it is the creme de la creme of the GRPS district, because in the years after City was begun, the other GRPS schools' graduation rates declined. What does this have to do with race and cultural differences? 70% of GRPS is African American or Latino. (\*Scott, 2015) Poverty rate at City is 32.6% (Scott, 2015) But I wonder how many minority students are cognitively able to attend City, but don't because of labels and tracking which is imposed upon them early in their education? I don't yet have answers to these questions, and perhaps there really isn't any. However, I wonder if we are measuring achievement by accurate standards, i.e. grades, test scores, graduation rates, college acceptance. Perhaps achievement is more than that. Achievement needs to be more than that. Education should involve the whole person. We are more than the sum total of our academic milestones. Unfortunately, humans tend to want to categorize people and things in order to better understand the world around them. Traditional WASP-ish definitions, which dominate definitions of "achievement" and "deficit" as seen in readings for this class, may need to be revised for true equity to be reality.

Overall, I think that the subject of racial and cultural differences, how these are interpreted by school teachers, administrators, districts, and even the Michigan Department of Education itself, is very complex. Sometimes it may be hard to figure out which comes first: is a certain student deficient in skills because of poverty and lack of "white culture" knowledge, OR does poverty and the white culture cubby hole students across the board into deficient categories? Or, is the discrepancy in student achievement (grades, advancement, test scores, graduation, college acceptance) due to a self-fulfilling prophecy which is ingrained early into the students?

Karen Yonkers  
Kozol Reflections  
EDU 398 -A  
November 17 , 2017

In this analysis and synthesis of Kozol's Ordinary Resurrections, I have tried to compare his experiences and context to those which I encountered in my various undergraduate placements and interactions. I have considered the roles of socioeconomic status, race, segregation, educational quality as it relates to all of the above. In this final installment, I will compare Kozol's personal insights and experiences with my own.

I have experienced education growing up in the frame of reference of white privilege. Living in the small town of Wayland, Michigan, situated midway between the larger cities of Grand Rapids and Kalamazoo, served to disconnect me from exposure to racial issues. The closest I got to seeing how another culture lived was brief forays to the Bradley Indian Reservation, which my Methodist Youth Group delivered goods to or did activities for their children. Maybe once a year. I came away both feeling sorry for their poverty and removed from their suffering. It was enough to ease my obligation of doing "good works", and remind me of how much I had which I took for granted. This fell into the same category of collecting for UNICEF in the neighborhood, or sponsoring an African child with my spare change. None of these activities demanded much sacrifice, even less forethought, and were soon forgotten and classified into "Christian Duty".

Jonathan Kozol, in contrast, dedicated years of his time in relationship with students, community members, and teachers in this poor Mott Haven neighborhood of the South Bronx. Enough interaction to fill at least three books reflecting on the inequalities, injustices and impact of these real issues with the children he observed. He did not simply observe, but also tutored, engaged in conversation, visited at home, and invested himself into these children.

I have found my insights and experiences flourishing not only through studying Kozol's books, but along with the other educational opportunities of learning, application, interaction in the past 5 years. Synthesizing subjects like poverty, inclusion, differentiation, and culture through the Calvin Education undergraduate program has begun to fill the void that my sheltered, naive, rural upbringing brought. Over these six years, I have grown to investigate and identify with my Native American and Jewish roots. I have considered the marginality of these groups, and felt sorry for the white privilege/power which has historically and currently oppressed these groups. I feel that I am not only changed in the way that I view the vulnerable: disabled, oppressed, subordinate racial groups, other cultures, religions and sexual identities, but I am also inspired to be a person who makes a real difference to this assortment of people.

As an educator, I resolve to not only be aware of the imbalance of treatment, but to actively speak up when I see unjust prejudice attitudes around me. Even though I will most likely be perceived as white middle-class woman, I do will what I can to break the mold of that projection on myself. I will choose to utilize the concepts I learned throughout the Calvin College classes,

interactions with students in the schools I have served in and will serve in, and apply them to a growing understanding and discernment towards others. I will strive to connect by listening to understand others' viewpoints, and to respect each person. I will teach the whole student, and be more sensitive to their individual needs. I will endeavor to invest in those around me like Jonathan Kozol did in New York.