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ABSTRACT

An ethnographic study examined 2 case study students, "Nick" and "John," as they engaged in an integrated literature-United Sates history class cotaught by an English and a social studies teacher in a high school in New York state. The emergent critical perspectives and pluralistic understandings of Nick and John were examined as they were invited into a problem-posing pedagogy and thereby into the dance of creative and critical thinking. Nick engaged in the "stretching" and moving invited in the class to expand his intellectual horizons and learn from multiple perspectives. John, on the other hand, frequently referred to his fundamentalist religious stance and held fixed opinions, resisting much of the multicultural literature and some of the classroom dialogue. Nick opened himself up to the dialogic dance and grew by leaps and bounds toward productive citizenship, the communal dance of the human race. John, on the other hand, entered on the fringes and seems to have left the same way. It seems that he never had any desire or ability to know the joy of dancing with other partners, to be part of the community of learners, to experience the possibilities of expanded humanness. (Contains 44 references and 3 notes.) (RS)

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Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry men [and women] pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other (Paulo Freire, 1970).

Introduction

Reading literature has been construed as sense-making activity which can contribute to the sharp and critical mind by stimulating attention to dilemmas, alternative human possibilities, and the many-sidedness of the human situation (Bruner, 1986; Langer, 1990, 1992, 1995). Studies of English classes provide evidence that students' sense-making in literature discussions supported by teachers can create a dialogic context in which students develop dialectical reasoning (Miller, 1992, 1993; Paul, 1984). Recent analyses of literacy and literature instruction (Miller & McCaskill, 1993) support the argument that pluralistic approaches to education require changes in the literature curriculum to include in this classroom dialogue the voices of cultural groups that have been excluded from literary study in schools.

Theoretically, multicultural literatures provide a natural forum where readers encounter the "lived experiences" of others' diverse perspectives, thus offering "alternative vantage points on the world" (Greene, 1993). In this view, multicultural literatures (e.g., Latino/a, African American, Native American and Asian texts and authors) can provide opportunities for meeting many goals of multicultural education, where voices interact and students reflect, think creatively and critically, increase cultural awareness, decrease ethnocentrism, and create a global perspective (e.g., Banks, 1993; Harris, 1993; Sleeter & Grant, 1994).

Studies of the status of the literature curriculum in the United States suggest that more works by non-white men and women have been included in the most recent literature anthologies, but that only 21 percent of the works teachers reported using were written by

women and 16 percent by non-white authors (Applebee, 1993). Further, the addition of cultural information and multicultural literary texts to the curriculum, by themselves, appear to be insufficient for developing pluralistic understandings and attitudes (e.g., Adams, 1995). Research on classroom practice suggests that simply adding multicultural texts to curriculum poses problems, because students have difficulties making sense of literary texts written from cultures other than their own due, in part, to insufficient cultural information or resistance to other than mainstream perspectives (e.g., Beach, 1994, 1996; Sharma Knippling, 1993; Jordan & Purves, 1993).

Teachers and researchers have begun to argue that students limited by narrow cultural perspectives need to engage in discussion, writing, and other dialectical activities supported by knowledgeable teachers who prompt examination of knowledge construction from multiple cultural perspectives (Banks, 1993, 1995; Miller, 1992, 1993; Muhammad, 1993; Purves, 1993; Sharma Knippling, 1993). As Friere (1970) describes in the epigraph which heads this paper, in theory knowledge emerges only through inquiry as we invent and reinvent the world in collaboration with others. Developing students' abilities to *use* cultural knowledge and perspectives to think about literature, history, society *and themselves* from these perspectives is a necessary part of a pluralistic approach to education.

An ethnographic study of these issues examined the consequences of interdisciplinary study of literature and history in classes where students had opportunities to reflect about multicultural texts in their historical contexts through open-forum discussion, writing, and other dialectical activities which emphasized thinking critically about perspectives. A detailed report of the findings from the ethnographic study can be found in Miller (1997). That study, as well as the case studies reported on in this paper, examined three integrated literature-U.S. history classes called "American Dreams, Lost and Found--Interdisciplinary U.S. History and English 11." All classes were cotaught by an English and a social studies teacher in a high school in New York State. This paper focuses on the very different experiences of two students in one of those classes and the development and interplay of their creative and critical thinking over the course of a school year.

The Dance of Dialogic Teaching/Learning

As we analyzed the pedagogy of the integrated class and the work of students within it, we have found the generative metaphor of dance a useful means of understanding the

rich complexities involved.

> *Dance is movement, and its opposite, in time and space. It is this continuously changing fact that gives its structure - its permanence in fluidity - and provides a fascination that impels a good many people to be concerned with it: choreographers, performers, teachers, and spectators (Sheets, 1966, in forward).*

In the integrated literature-history class, the teachers opened the floor, creating a free space, inviting students to enter in, playing the music of activities; they asked students to compose their "improvisational dances" in talking and writing, alone and together, and to try to understand possibilities from their own and others' interpretive movements, which would likely turn or spin in alternative dynamics.

Opening the floor. A challenge to contemporary educational theory and practice is to translate an increasingly complex and pluralistic society into meaningful understandings for individual students to function effectively within diverse social communities. In his study of effective high school teachers, Csikszentmihalyi and his colleagues (1993) noted that students were treated not as "mere learners" but as "emerging persons"(p. 195). Similarly, the teachers of the integrated classes we observed not only treated the students as "persons" but were able to create a safe and caring environment where mutual respect was modelled not mandated. Lewis, Schaps, and Watson (1995) note the importance of this type of classroom climate:

> A . . . reason for the importance of developing a "caring community" is that children are constructive learners in the social and ethical domains, as well as in the intellectual domain. Children need many opportunities to discuss and apply in daily life such values as responsibility and fairness; to talk about them as they come up in literature, history, or other contexts; and to hear others' perspectives and experiences (p.551).

This approach to student learning as choreographed through dialogue was the structure for the success of the integrated class.

Developing and enacting a pluralistic curriculum and a caring pedagogy in the combined history-literature classes was a complex orchestration. Creating "permanence in fluidity" and stability within change, creating a meaningful dance of learning in this new environment meant that roles were flexible and members were welcome to create

new dance steps; the whole was always in a state of developing.

Dialogue was focal to the class. To create a community of learners actively engaged in dialogue with texts and with each other, the teachers, with the students, opened the floor, providing a safe place to share their opinions together. Composing and considering opinions was central to the philosophical stance held by the teachers, Sharon L. and Ron M.:

> We believe that education is a process which involves thinking, analysis, problem solving, effective communication of ideas, cooperation, engagement, and enthusiasm. Our projects, both group and individual portfolio, are designed to help students develop and have these skills and attitudes.

Through cooperation and engagement students of the combined class became part of a problem-posing context (Friere, 1970) that challenged them to become more active and aware participants in the social and intellectual construction of their lives. Students had opportunities to engage in the dance of dialogic teaching and learning, to recognize their own and others' improvised moves as part of a rich play of interpretive possibility. Some--like Nick--learned to leap for new horizons, and a few--like John--remained invisibly choreographed to a fixed routine.

Different dancers. This paper will examine two case study students, called "Nick" and "John," as they engage in this literature-history class. The year before the course began Nick discovered that he was 1/8 Native American (Choctaw), and as the course progressed he sought opportunities to understand this discovery by connecting to Native American lived experience in literature. Nick engaged in the "stretching" and moving invited in the class to expand his intellectual horizons and learn from multiple perspectives. John, on the other hand, frequently referred to his fundamentalist religious stance and held fixed opinions, resisting much of the multicultural literature and some of the classroom dialogue. Yet John did engage in some activities in his way, and he influenced the kind of thinking Nick developed over the year. In our analysis, we examine the emergent critical perspectives and pluralistic understandings of Nick and John as they are invited into a problem-posing pedagogy (Friere, 1970), and thereby into the dance of creative and critical thinking. The theoretical and research base for developing this dialectical thinking, which we turn to in the next section, suggests explanations for how the work of the class provided opportunities for growth and change.

Theoretical Framework--The Dance of Dialogue

> *What makes each dance uniquely significant is the dynamics of the form; hence, the unique interplay of qualities inherent in movement as a perpetual revelation of sheer force. The dynamic organization of the form - attenuations, diffusions, potencies, quicknesses, slownesses, verticalities, amplitudes -is the way in which movement as a revelation of force. . . spatializes and temporalizes itself (Sheets, 1966, p.83).*

A central means for developing a problem-posing context within the class was the dance of dialogue. In Friere's pedagogy for critical consciousness (1970), the teacher initiates activities to pose problems and initiate a critical dialogue. Through this problem-posing approach to history and literature offered by Sharon and Ron, students had opportunities to reflect on new and perplexing issues, particularly when the lived experience of the people in literature from previously silenced perspectives were juxtaposed with the mainstream textbook version of American history.

Students were challenged to reflect on the discrepancies in these accounts and engage in dialectical thought, akin to Dewey's (1933) reflective thinking, "the kind of thinking that consists in turning a subject over in the mind and giving it serious and consecutive consideration" (p. 3). This conscious examination of grounds for beliefs and conclusions is impelled by a state of doubt as an inquiry moves back and forth from generating alternatives to evaluating warrants for these possible resolutions of perplexity. Paul (1984) describes dialectical thought as thinking critically and reciprocally within or among opposing points of view, a dialectical reasoning, which, he suggests is "the master-principle of all rational experience and human emancipation" (p. 14). In his view, by being confronted by issues where multiple standpoints can be plausibly developed, we become aware of the need to construct a point of view by considering opposing lines of thought, to construct tentative, conditional knowledge for ourselves. The similarities of these views include both the dialectical nature of thinking as described, and also, unlike Friere's emphasis on dialogue, a decidedly individualist focus.

The significance of dialogue in education is informed by the work of Vygotsky (1978). As John-Steiner and Souberman (in Vygotsky, 1978) note, "he viewed education as a profoundly social process, emphasizing dialogue and the varied roles that it plays in instruction and in mediated cognitive growth" (p. 131). Relevant here is Vygotsky's (1978) notion of "play" as an intellectual endeavor: "From the point of view of

development, creating an imaginary situation can be regarded as a means of developing abstract thought" (p. 103).

Ron and Sharon mediated students' growth by engaging them in open-forum conversation in discussions and journals, and also through imaginative activities, such as simulations of trials (e.g., of Columbus) and writing stories for children using themes of diversity. In all activities, the teachers lent their "structuring consciousness" at points of need (Vygotsky, 1978) to support student thinking in many ways. For example, teachers provided heuristics for critical and creative thinking:

> Explicit sequences of questions were posted and used to approach texts, for instance, this one: Who is speaking? What is the speaker's agenda? What voices are missing? This sequence became the basis for a critical stance toward text. . . . Another important heuristic in the class was the one for "making connections," which was explicitly taught, required, demonstrated, and applauded. The teachers followed the line of student thinking and made responsive moves with new perspectives, information, and questions, "mediating" structures (Vygotsky, 1978), which over time assisted students' learning a dialectical thinking (Miller, 1997).

These patterns and regularity in language activities served as scaffolds (Bruner, 1986; Langer & Applebee, 1986), part of the "dynamics of form" which structured the process of thinking while generating diverse alternatives. These flexible structures helped to create the "permanence in fluidity" of supported discussion and dance.

Initially choreographed by teachers, performances then evolved into shared events collaboratively developed and revised while in the midst of the enactments. Sometimes quick, sometimes slow, occasionally choppy, and at other times fluid, the playful dance of the dialogue in the cross-disciplinary context took on many forms and movements. Through cooperation and engagement, the problem-posing context challenged students to become more active and aware participants in the social and intellectual construction of their lives.

The Dance of Creative and Critical Thinking

Creative and critical thinking are defined and understood in a variety of ways. There are, however, general characteristics that cut across the formulations of creative and critical thinking. (This is not to say that creative and critical thinking operate

independently of each other but, rather, that effective thinking contains both.) In the combined history/literature class in which students were introduced to content in a problem-posing manner, development and use of creative and critical thinking abilities were particularly needed to compose coherent meaning from pluralistic understandings and critical reflections. The recursive dance of creative and critical thinking developed as students participated in many dialogues in the class and created steps that would allow them to move to the rhythms of their emergent questions and potential answers.

Creative thinking. Discussions of creative thinking are frequently found in the work on creativity. For the purpose of this paper, one such definition (Isaksen, Dorval, and Treffinger, 1993) will serve as a guide. In this view, creative thinking involves

> Making and expressing meaningful new connections; it is a process in which we perceive gaps, paradoxes, challenges, concerns, or opportunities, and then think of many possibilities; think and experience in varied ways, with different viewpoints; think of new and unusual possibilities; and extend and elaborate alternatives (p.376).

Providing opportunities for such creative thinking were key goals for the teachers of the integrated class. Activities were aimed at juxtaposing literary and historical accounts of events to reveal gaps; students were asked to make connections between texts and their lives or among texts to elaborate meanings; open-forum discussions threw a student's own responses and interpretations into relief against other possibilities and provided the opportunities to extend and elaborate alternatives. The writing journal became a tool for students to explore their creative thinking, since its purpose was to capture experience and to provide opportunity for reflection about experiences in or about the class content and context.

Creative thinking, as we will use it then, requires sensitivity to problems and gaps and ability to generate alternative possibilities and varied perspectives on issues or problems. Theoretically, the problem-posing learning environment lends itself to developing creative thinking, especially in the juxtaposition of cross-disciplinary content intended to heighten awareness of real-life problems. The curriculum, context, and pedagogy of the class were aimed at prompting students to take the risk to "enter into" learning something new which might not be consistent with old understandings, and to hear alternative perspectives not previously considered. Creative thinking, as it will be used in this paper, takes into account these characteristics that serve to expand the boundaries of experience

through imagination, which includes inviting the experience of others into our arena of understanding.

Creative thinking involves use of the deliberate and active use of imagination. In this imaginative realm, abstract thought is encouraged in the form of playful mental dance. From this perspective, we will be searching for creative thinking that is both generative and imaginative as Nick and John see gaps in knowledge, experience, and understanding and begin to struggle with them.

Critical thinking. Definitions of critical thinking are diverse and often contain characteristics of what we have defined as creative thinking, For this paper critical thinking will be examined from a perspective that allows for a conceptual separation. According to Isaksen, Dorval, and Treffinger (1993), critical thinking is:

> The process of analyzing, refining, developing, or selecting ideas, including categorizing, comparing and contrasting, examining arguments and assumptions, reaching and evaluating inferences and deductions, setting priorities, and making choices or decisions (p. 377).

This definition operates in tandum with the definition of creative thinking, just as the two forms work together in the mind, or like two legs walking--or dancing. They are separately analyzed here to help focus attention on (1) the dialectical nature of reflective thinking--its *dialogue* of generative and evaluative dimensions and (2) the qualitative differences in reflection that occur when one or the other dimensions is slighted or ignored. From this conceptual framework, it is understood that situations are complex and that effective thinkers defer judgment while exploring multiple possibilities prior to making choices, decisions, or opinions. This is not to imply that there is one right answer, but that generating and examining multiple possibilities in a dialectic of creative and critical thinking strengthens interpretations, decisions and understanding.

Another reason for separation of creative and critical thinking is to amplify the difference between productive critical thinking characteristics and the less productive. According to Runco (1994):

> Some critical skills are just that -- entirely critical, tending to find fault -- but some are necessary for creative expression. The latter are valuative and appreciative, and may help the individual select what is original and identify what is useful (pp. 285-286).

From this perspective, the dialectical dance of what we have called here creative and critical thinking is important, and a skeptical critical skill without its generative, elaborative, evaluative reflection is a limited way of thinking, akin to dancing without moving. This distinction provided insight as we examined Nick's and John's development as effective thinkers. Paul (1984), whose description of dialectical reasoning suggests the play of creative and critical thinking as we have defined them, cautions, further, that

> To the extent that people lack critical thinking skills, they conceptualize those who have them as prejudiced, close-minded, overly academic, negative or nit-picky. It is well, therefore, to emphasize . . . that the ability to think critically is a matter of degree (p. 6-7).

As teachers of the integrated class engaged in dialogues with students, they were challenged to negotiate the many "degrees" of critical thinking that Paul describes.

Creative and Critical Thinking: Recursive Movement and Mental Dance

It should be clear that there are no distinct lines or boundaries that make identification of creative or critical thinking characteristics separable into compartments that can be isolated for analysis. Rather, characteristics of both are identifiable and can be examined as they transact recursively, thus, the metaphor of mental dance. We believe that effective thinking is a conscious and active recursive engagement in both aspects of thinking. Separating them for analysis can be helpful in teaching and learning situations for identifying strengths or deficiencies in thinking, which might be due to getting stuck only in creative or only in critical thinking.

For the purpose of this paper, it is the dance of creative and critical thinking that we explore, guided and modified by the song and the rhythms of new pluralistic perspectives. Questions guiding the case-study analysis were these:

1) Is there evidence of creative and critical thinking in the two focal students?
2) Is there evidence that the diverse literature, journaling process, and dialogic nature of the integrated class had an impact on the development of pluralistic understandings and critical reflection?

Method

In the ethnographic study in which these cases are nested, author Miller and a graduate research assistant, who was also an English teacher,[1] became participant observers in two literature-history classes, observing the ongoing class activity two to five times per week for eight months, recording field notes and audiotaping student discussion of multicultural texts and activities related to pluralistic approaches to history and literature, and interviewing the teachers and students.

Case Study Data Analysis

Data for the case-study project included field notes, classroom artifacts, Nick's response journal and writing folders, transcriptions of interviews with Nick and John, interviews with teachers, interpretive field notes and transcriptions, and anecdotal notes and artifacts from class lessons. Nick and John were members of a largely white heterogeneous class integrated for study of U.S. History and English in Lakeview High School, located in a suburban school district in New York. The gender-balanced class of 24 students was referred to by our focal student Nick as "the white kids' class." By April, though, he said, "It's really such a diverse class;" his classmates, he learned, had one-parent families, different ethnic backgrounds and different working backgrounds ("parents have totally different jobs"). A detailed description of the site, teachers, methods, and findings from the ethnographic study can be found in Miller (1997).

We used recursive analysis of the multiple data types and data perspectives (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993) to triangulate evidence of relevant factors in Nick's and John's critical and creative thinking and pluralistic understandings within the context of the work of the integrated class. The analysis presented here emerged over the year following data collection, as author Cliff engaged in content analysis of journals and interviews with Nick and John in the context of our research group[2] for collaboratively analyzing case-study and whole-class data from the two classes. In her intensive focus on the journals and interviews, Cliff used a constant comparative method (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), including recursive recording, annotating, analysis, memoing, and coding. We focused on a descriptive narrative account of Nick's and John's thinking evident in

the work of the class (Erickson, 1982) and included relevant factors in the developing contexts which affected Nick's and John's responses to and reflections about diverse texts.

Nick and John offer an opportunity to examine different perspectives toward creative and critical thinking as we watch them enter into the movements of the new pluralistic dance in the integrated class.

> *When dance is* there *for us, we intuitively know that it is there; something alive and vibrant is happening on the stage, and we are totally engaged in our experience of that happening, we too are alive and vibrant . . . (Sheets, 1966, p.3).*

Case Study Findings

Introducing Nick. Nick provided us with a description of himself from his journal. He did so using a checklist format in which he placed checkmarks next to each of the items he listed. The final item on the list had many check marks:

> Here I sit in the library with my uniform . . . Uniform? you ask . . . what does [Nick] mean by uniform?
>
> My . . .
> circle hat
> blue jeans
> white sox
> boots (army color)
> sweat shirt
> no smile
> some part of your head shaved
> bad grades
> cute little wave to girls
> football jersey
> asshole

From this description, one can almost feel the beat of the music, like a rap song in which Nick creates the image of his own character. This description focuses on the public Nick rather than the private Nick who surfaces throughout the data. The teachers recalled that he had initially seen himself as a "dumb jock," although he resented others seeing him

that way. One teacher commented that he was "depressed the whole year . . . and then he came out of that," noting that Nick overcame some of his negative perceptions of himself as the class progressed.

Nick was described by the teachers as "thoughtful and very passionate about many of the things that he encountered." Nick saw some of this in himself, it seems; in his journal he describes himself as a "deep kinda guy." Although Nick is athletic and into sports, teachers noted that his passionate, caring side emerged at times during the year.

At the end of the year when he presented his anthology on the Native American experience, which he called "Freedom," Nick played his guitar and sang to the class something like a Neil Young song," recalled his teachers. Nick wrote in the preface to his anthology that the song was called "Pocahontas," which he described in beautiful double-voiced imagery, as "icy poetry to the ear, layed over a gentle and haunting acoustic."

Often in his journal Nick seemed to be grappling with his public and private selves; the public "jock" image and the private "deep" and "passionate" self. Ron noted that he talked to Nick about his weight lifting and complimented him on how he was "getting pretty big there . . . I didn't want him to think that it was one or the other; he could do both." The "both" refers, we think, to Nick's physical and reflective parts, the public and private images that Nick held of himself.

Significant to Nick on a personal basis during the combined history-literature class experience was the discovery of his Native American heritage. Of this he wrote:

> I had no idea until 2 years ago that Indian blood runs through my veins. Choctaw blood. When I found this out I did a very little amount of research on the topic and learned from my grandmother that she is half and I'm an eighth. An eighth . . . and my father just mentioned it to me in casual conversation. I wondered if he is ashamed of it. I'm not. I am proud of it.

Although Nick did not discuss his heritage explicitly again in his journal, he became interested in learning more about Native Americans. The class offered opportunities for him to explore his heritage, and the topic became a passion for him. His final project anthology on his self-selected subject prompted a personal exploration through literary and historical narratives: *Lakota Woman* by Mary Crow Dog, *The United States: A History of the Republic* by James W. Davidson, *American Indian Myths and Legends* by Richard Erdoes, *In the Spirit of Crazy Horse* by Peter Matthiessen, and *The American Heritage Book of Indians* by Burke I. Simon.

How Nick's insights and observations, his public images and private passions, transact in his personal dance of creative and critical thinking in the combined history/literature class are focal points of the analysis.

Introducing John. John offers few opportunities to get to know him from written artifacts. Although he volunteered to be one of the focal students chosen for the ethnographic study, John refused to allow reproduction of his journal or any of his personal writings or paper assignments for this research project . He offered a reason for this during an informal conversation -- he wanted to avoid the potential risk of a negative impact on his future career as a lawyer and politician. As he noted in another interview, "I want to be the majority leader and a lawyer." He took the integrated class, he said, because, "Well, it's interesting. I took it because I was curious about the way education is going. And I was curious what actually went on . . . actually first hand."

John was strongly influenced by his orthodox version of his religion. An article from a local newspaper describes a student who "took on" the School Board of his high school to have a book censored. According to the article, "He requested that *The Great Santini* be removed because he felt it was anti-Catholic, and had sexual and violent content (including a rape scene) not suitable for students his age." This story suggests John's adherence to and the influence of his religious views and beliefs. As a result of his challenge to the School Board regarding censorship of the book, the newspaper article also mentions that "[he] was honored at a meeting of the Coalition of Concerned Catholics. . . ."

Paul (1990) cautions about the illusion of critical thinking in a phenomenon which may be similar:

> For instance, we systematically confuse group mores with universal moral standards. When people act in accordance with the injunctions and taboos of their groups they naturally feel righteous. They receive much praise in moral terms. They may even be treated as moral leaders, if they act in a striking or moving fashion. For this reason, people cannot distinguish moral from religious conformity or demagoguery from genuine moral integrity.

The type of moral support and recognition given to John through his religious affiliation seems to support his image of himself as a leader. The issue of John's unreflected

conformity became an issue of importance in our analysis. John saw himself as an unchanging person, set in his ways and his beliefs. As he put it in his final interview: "I rarely change my views." He told a story about changing his mind once in the "past few years," as the result of a personal conversation in a cathedral with a Monsignor who argued against capital punishment. The power of the Church, sacred text, its representatives, and its teachings seemed to be the ground in which John rooted himself.

During teacher interviews it was mentioned that John was suspected of "copying words from an article" for his journal entries. When Ron asked about the language in the journal, John said he had summarized some articles, but never remembered to bring them in for Ron to see. During our interviews with him, John's body posture was notably different from other students -- arms and legs folded, sometimes leaning over so they touched, or his right hand over his mouth. This defensive posture assists in filling in the gaps of the picture of him. During these interviews John, unlike all of the other students interviewed, maintained a formal language and a kind of legal defensiveness that was unsettling. Below are illustrative pieces of the final interview:

EXAMPLE 1:

Miller: I wanted to start off to have you sort of think back over the year, and your experience in the class, and I'm wondering if there were any highlights for you . . .

John: Just a listing?

Miller: Well, you could do it any way you want. Talk about it a little bit.

John: Positive highlights or negative highlights, or just a highlight?

EXAMPLE 2:

Miller: I wanted to go back to another thing that you said. You know, I guess, there are some differences of opinion about whether literature is a way of understanding time periods, or understanding what goes on in time periods. What is your opinion on that?

John: Versus?

Miller: Not using literature to understand historical time periods?

John: Are we referring to literature in textbooks, or other forms of literature?

This bartering back and forth permeated the interviews and rarely seemed to be genuine lack of understanding on John's part. It is difficult to know whether he is struggling with

expressing his ideas freely, is resistant to attempts to learn more about him, or is engaging in some sort of power play by maintaining a formal tone and control of questioning.

In a paper entitled "Authority as a Process: Issues of Gender in the Classroom" Kasik (1993) addresses the problem of dealing with students who seem to be similar to John:

> Traditionally, it has been off-limits to talk about failures attributable to the idealogy of democratic, student-centered classrooms. However, these classrooms fail for a particular kind of student -- the male student who defines himself with a quasi-religious, extremely religious or political stance and who demonstrates strident rejection of racial, religious, political, and gender considerations different from [his] own (p. 1).

The issue that Kasik dealt with was the student's disrespect for her because she was a female teacher, a role that he felt in conflict with because he felt only male teachers were proper authority figures. Although she notes that "according to Debois, a necessary component of one's inflexible allegiance to his code is low self-esteem" (p. 12), she does not reach any conclusions about how to deal with a student like John.

It seemed clear to us that John was not open to exploring his thinking in conversation. He was interested in and believed in "the truth" and what is "right." During the final interview he notes that "fiction can be problematic when not balanced out with fact and truth, because fiction is fiction." Symbolic meanings or connections to reality derived from fiction are not possibilities to John; there is fact and there is fiction. John notes:

> For me personally, most of my truths come from an inherent feeling of right and wrong, and the fact that I guess maybe that's one of the reasons I'm Catholic . . . that when I have a view, I don't have no view, and merely accept the view of the church.

Perry's (1968) developmental schema calls John's stance dualistic, a world view that sorts things as dichotomies (us/them, right/wrong). Kohlberg (1981) would view this as an egocentric stage of morality in which that actor confuses the position of authority as his own. His epistemology is based on truth as determined by his fundamentalist interpretation of religion. This acts as an impediment to learning and growing in a problem-posing classroom environment.

Tracing the Dance of Creative and Critical Thinking: Nick and John

In contrast to John, Nick has a more reflective epistemology. He was not looking for "the" truth or "the" answer, but rather for understanding about multiplicity through reflection. By the end of the year Nick notes:

> The more informed a person . . . or the more angles a person looks at something . . . or the more time a person spends thinking about something . . . the more the person is gonna understand that particular thing.

In this section of the paper, we examine evidence of creative and critical thinking development. Using Nick as the guide, we trace his reflections as he moved through the activity of the integrated class. Whenever relevant, we weave in the limited data showing John's reflections on the same subjects to exemplify the differences in their responses to texts and activities prompting multiple perspectives. As this paper will show however, the dogma in which John is so deeply imbedded will become problematic for his entering into creative and critical thinking.

Nick entered into a responsive dance from the beginning. During our first observation, which took place on the twelfth day of class, Nick told us that he had "already lost a lot of prejudice about things." He engaged in the discussions and his journal with some enthusiasm. An early entry in Nick's journal in September is a response to *The Scarlet Letter* and demonstrates his emergent reflective style. He moves between intense seriousness, irony, humor, optimism, pessimism, and the bizarre as he engages in playful mental abstractions and reflections. Nick quickly diverges from discussing the content of the book, giving his response honestly, to turn the idea of the book over in his mind in his own unique style[3]:

> Is this one of those books like *Alice in Wonderland* that if you keep digging and analyzing and digging and analyzing that eventually you will come w/something that makes sense, As a possible theme I would say the point that Hawthorne is trying to get across is that being a writer in the 16th century sucks, and I'm very sorry that this book also sucks but it had to, if I was to get my point across. Hey, Nathaniel. What was your point? I thought when I signed up for this course that my years and years of reading things of no consequence were over. But low and behold the first thing we read is *The Scarlet Letter* which in my opinion is the undisputed heavy weight champion of the world of books that have no meaning.

Nick is not bound by what one might consider to be academic convention (responding to "the book"), but rather engages in playful mental abstraction in which he quickly sees connections between this book and another in their similar symbolic nature. He uses an analogy with repetition to suggest his distaste for an analytic approach to literature ("digging and analyzing"), and he imagines a dialogue with the author, "Hey Nathaniel. What was your point?" Whether his response to *The Scarlet Letter* is due to the timing of this book in the class, or the content, or the fact that it does not meet his expectations is immaterial. Regardless of the reasons, he makes interesting and imaginative connections, moves on to take a humorous shot at 16th-century writers, converses briefly with the author, and wraps it up with his honest opinion of the book . . . all done in a few sentences. His journal entries typically consist of many layers of generative and evaluative language that are not limited by formal structure. Rather, he demonstrates himself as a thinker who can dance among and between many different academic and cognitive moves in a playful reflective style.

In contrast to Nick, John had a quite different reaction to *The Scarlet Letter*. During a final interview he mentioned this book was one of the highlights of his class experience:

The Scarlet Letter I enjoyed very much, because I'm interested in Puritan Society, and find I have a lot in common with them. And, I like classical literature a lot more than contemporary, so I liked that. And that was the only piece of classical literature I think we read this year so I liked that.

> John's response reflects adherence to a more formal style of language and belief about what constitutes meaningful literature. Leaning on commonality between himself and the Puritans, for John, gives the book more credibility. This evaluative type of response based on formal criteria -- here, "classical" and Puritan -- is typical in John's interviews. There are no excursions about meaning or personal engagement. Instead, only a kind of "if-then" response: If a classic, he liked it; if not, he didn't.

By not entering into a dialogue with the text, John has missed the conflicting social voices at play, including the "double-voiced" ironies resisting the values of the Puritan society (Bakhtin, 1981; Miller, 1997). As if learning the waltz . . . one-two, one-two, one-two . . . inventing his own dance steps was not necessary because the footprints are on the floor to follow.

A major event for both John and Nick was a mock trial in which Columbus was

charged with genocide. Preparations for and orchestration of the trial occurred during the last two weeks of October. Role play and research to support the assigned roles provided authenticity to points of view and credibility to the event.

Nick was a witness in the Columbus trial. Responding to questions about his role, Nick says "I was a fictitious character called John something. John Richardson, or something, and I was an environmentalist. . . . ". Nick recalls his preparation for his role in the trial:

> I was trying to make a connection to the testimony of Hermann Goring to the Columbus trial. I was going to show how Goring was found guilty at the Nuremberg trials, and he was a part of an organization [the Nazi party] that had a goal, and to attain that goal eliminated obstacles in their way such as People. Columbus did this same thing and if a United States Court found Goring guilty of this then they should find Columbus guilty on the same basis.

Again, Nick uses analogy to strengthen his position. He uses it frequently and deliberately as a useful means of cognitively dancing between gaps in information and understanding to refine and develop his position. Unfortunately, after all his preparation, the defense said that it was too late and disallowed this evidence. In an interesting twist, Nick unloads his frustration, not at the events of the class, but at the larger issue of the legal system:

> That also just shows how lawyers don't care about justice. Because if they did they wouldn't not let all of the evidence possible into the case. I wonder when the system got screwed up. Probably when lawyers came into the picture (Nick's Journal, p. 148).

At this point Nick connects frustration with the class simulation to a questioning of the legal system. He is searching, wondering, challenging a system, as opposed to complaining about the amount of time and energy he spent on preparing his affidavit for this class. Instead, he moves to a higher level of abstraction to play with the larger issue. Similar to Nick's entering into literary texts, he was able to enter into the courtroom simulation as a drama requiring choices in the world of imagination within real world constraints (Wolf, 1994). As a result of engaging in the transformation of drama, Nick was able to interpret the class simulation for its consequences in the real world legal system.

In a unique turn Nick at one point questioned the validity of the whole Columbus

trial:

> This whole Christopher Colombus trial is leaving a bad taste in my mouth. We are judging Columbus and his actions by our standards today. We can't judge him for things he did 500 years ago by today's standards [at this point in this entry Nick draws in two peace signs] even though I am testifying on the behalf of the prosecution. I still do not feel that a court of law in the United States can judge something that was done 500 years ago. The mind set then and the mind set now surely cannot be the same. But on the same note there are some things that are universally wrong no matter where you are or when your there or what the mind set is at that moment. (Nick's Journal, pp. 148-149).

Nick poses a problem he sees with the trial and moves right into an examination of the implications for judgment of moral behavior. He reaches across time to challenge the contemporary sociohistorical interpretation of the actions of Columbus. He does not stop within the constraints of the trial itself, but rather mentally explores the legal system "mind set," which we interpret to be Nick's awareness of how social values and realities are constructed differently in different times and places. He considers this notion to question the fairness of the Columbus trial. He goes well beyond the concrete situation; he senses gaps, he imagines perspectives from the past and present.

This example of Nick's journal writing demonstrates how creative and critical thinking act together. As he has been confronted by trial issues where multiple standpoints can be plausibly developed, he is becoming aware of the need to construct a point of view by considering opposing lines of thought. After considering that legal systems come from a perspective and are sociohistorically constituted, he considers, also, that "some things are universally wrong." As he makes a statement about operations and issues of the Columbus trial, he is able to extend the personal to the social. Further, his recursive analysis takes him from the critique of imposing a judgment about the "then" in the "now" to a realization that "universal wrongs" are wrong in any time period. We see him here thinking reciprocally between opposing points of view and constructing a tentative, conditional conclusion for himself in a dialectical reasoning (Paul, 1984) prompted by the work of the class.

At the close of the year, Nick commented again on the Columbus trial as he describes his "American Dream:"

> The most important idea that I came away with as a result of the Columbus

> trial, was the notion of an entirely different American Dream. We usually think about the American Dream's belonging to the immigrants that came primarily from Europe around the turn of the century. What about the real Americans [speaking of the Native American Indians] that were destroyed on the whim of a mad man because of such classic American incentives as money and greed to name a few. I realize now that it doesn't matter what you do, as long as you cover it up real well.

Nick mediates the bitterness of his new awareness with ironic commentary and deliberate exaggeration -- the narrative-novelistic language for expressing conflict and discrepancy. Juxtaposing the rather heroic language of politics, "classic American incentives," with the more concrete and ironic "money and greed" shows Nick's binocular view. We can hear his words as "double-voiced" (Bakhtin, 1981). His view of "an entirely different American Dream" which had been covered up creates a different story, a conflicted one which contains the text version of European immigration and the previously silenced dreams of Native Americans.

After a year of reflecting on these gaps in representation, Nick talks back to the monologic -- single-perspective -- construction with his own formulation about Columbus. His extensive reading into Native American stories has spoken to him persuasively about injustice. He has continued this conversation, between his new understanding and his previously unquestioned version of American history, and is composing a new discourse from the heuristics he has learned (What is the speaker's agenda? What voices are left out?) and the Native American narratives he has read. Consistent with his developing belief in a social justice stance of considerateness and fairness in dealing with others, he problematizes the single frame of reference of traditional history. By the end of the year, he is concluding that authoritative history from its singular perspective has been inflexibly positioned to serve ends that are in conflict with his emergent awareness.

John, on the other hand, stays within the boundaries that he has established for himself when making meaning of the Columbus trial event. During the final interview he explained,

> The Columbus trial was a highlight because it was a very interesting issue and I want to be a majority leader so I want to go into law so it was interesting to be involved in anything like that. And I was very interested in issues surrounding Columbus and discovering America.

In this case John is concerned most with how his role as a lawyer prepared him for his career goals. There is no meaning or connection, just the facts of Columbus and his discovery of America. He does not reach out for social or legal implications and suggests nothing beyond his literal interpretation. Even his choice of "very interesting" to describe the trial does not indicate a reflective position. John keeps the exchange on the surface level. If he had deeper personal reflections, he did not share them.

John exemplifies a type of one-sided and imbalanced thinking (Runco, 1994). He seems to be either unwilling or unable to cultivate connections that may lead to new and meaningful insights. In a March interview, the following exchange regarding the Columbus trial offers an example of this type of limited thinking. John barters a bit before answering the research assistant (a female graduate student). In this exchange she wants to know whether he has changed his views regarding that period of history and how he felt about the method of studying Columbus. Finally he responds:

> Oh, I see what you mean. Well, it was interesting, I didn't, I thought [low] Columbus on trial. Little fictitious, regardless of the verdict [low]. I found that to be rather inappropriate to bring to trial someone who discovered land, and always until recently, been considered a hero. I was upset by that. If he did that, but I mean, it's just very different, it was upsetting, I don't see why he was brought to trial. The trial itself was interesting, I did not like it. I was, it was really impulsive to me. It just solidified the feelings that I had about Columbus, and it was just upset me, felt there was a lot better ways to teach, to bring a man of history to trial. On charges, arbitrary charges, so I didn't want to get involved. [low] lousy way to try to study that period in history. Because all we learned was very biased view of history. Columbus was, Columbus killed people, he's evil, and he stole land, and you know, he destroyed cultures, and that's all with that period of history, so I thought it was very biased, terrible way to teach.

The contrast between John and Nick is striking. Unlike Nick, John dwells on how wrong the method of teaching was, how biased the approach to content was, and basically how much he just did not like it. He lists, but does not engage, any of the issues raised by students from their reading and research (e.g., Columbus stole land). He seems to suggest that an "unbiased" view would be that Columbus is "a hero." He was unable to mentally extend to consider new possible facts, dismissing the event as "fictitious," finding it "inappropriate to bring to trial someone who discovered land." Finding fault at every turn, John does not go outside of his narrow perceptual range to explore possibilities, gaps, new ideas. He stands steadfast, his feelings "solidified."

In a thematic unit dealing with labor and working, *The Jungle* by Upton Sinclair prompted Nick to reflect more deeply than before. He refers to the book frequently in his journal and interviews as a profoundly meaningful and personal academic experience. As he begins to explore his ideas about the book, Nick immediately makes his move toward analogy:

> I think Sinclare believes that the capitalist system of money giving and taking, and how successful an individual is in that system, depends a lot on irony and luck. Maybe Sinclaire doesn't have much luck and feels socialism is a no-luck, low-risk sort of a deal.

Nick for the first time encounters a critique of capitalism and contemplates Sinclair's position. He simultaneously considers Sinclair's argument and considers what hidden factors might motivate his perceptions. Nick glides smoothly from summary language to the critical heuristic (Who is speaking? What's their agenda? What voices are missing?) taught and scaffolded in the class. He suggests a hidden motive, but tentatively ("Maybe..") He returns to *The Jungle* many times throughout his response journal as his reflections gain depth and new meanings.

At one point in Nick's journal, it is John that spurs a lengthy and elaborate entry generated about *The Jungle:*

> We sat in class today while [John] went on and on how socialism is an evil, and he kept comparing it to communism. If anything, communism is extreme socialism. Maybe I'm really naive but I don't see any evil or danger that socialism poses. Except for the danger to capitalism and business and The "American Dream". With communism (which I like in theory but does not account for human nature, so I really can't agree), I can see how that could be built up to an evil enemy. But I don't see that same threat anywhere in or around socialism. What is Social Security? A By-product to socialism. What is Amtrak? Goddamn I'm so sick of America. I really don't understand how people who say they're concerned with human life can be a part of capitalism. America was probably a good idea theoretically (like communism).

Anger, frustration, disenchantment, a sense of the embedded hypocrisy in the capitalist system, all characteristics of this entry. But underneath these emotional responses seems to be the person who is more deeply concerned about "human life" than he is angry about systems. His aroused perplexity prompts his play of thinking. He imagines dangers of

socialism and understands "the danger to capitalism." He generates a line of analysis, comparing and contrasting the three political systems, considering the gaps between theory and practice. His writing is in dialogue -- "What about Social security? . . . What is Amtrak?" as he questions assumptions ironically and answers an unseen interlocutor (perhaps John?). His ironic analogy of capitalism with communism -- both good ideas in theory -- provides a temporary resolution: he favors socialism. His ironic entry regarding America as theoretically good, like communism, has a rather forgiving tone that seems to resolve his earlier frustration.

In a final interview, Nick is asked about what books particularly influenced the way he thought or felt about things. He responds:

> And one of the best books I've ever read in my life I read this year. Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*. It just really, it really made me change my feeling on just socialism and communism and all I guess other isms if you could say that. Just before I really had a, I don't know if you could use the word ignorant, but a really narrow minded point of view of communists. Like I had a t-shirt, I always, you know, hated Soviet Union and the Russians. It was pretty clear cut, you know, 'The russians are our enemy,' and you know, we have missiles pointing at them, they have missiles pointing at us. And, you know, communism, you just hate communism. I grew up, it's on TV, it's on everything. I had a t-shirt called, an American soldier on it, who was really a skeleton. It said, 'kill a commi for your mommy' and reading that book, it just showed that I even think that socialism is a better, socialism, or communism is a better idea than capitalism, because it just shows that capitalism does not work, and it's really strange to have capitalism in a democracy, because if the democracy looks out for the people, or if the democracy is the people, the people should look out for themselves, and capitalism doesn't do that, it looks out for the individual. And I think socialism is a much more important.

Nick boldly takes on this new political viewpoint. He accepts and invites the risk involved when challenging his previously held assumptions based on data that he had taken for granted. He finds it not acceptable to maintain his uninformed opinions any longer. The courage to take on new ideas and positions does not seem to threaten or disrupt Nick's balance. Regardless of the change, he steadfastly holds on to his social justice agenda and his concern for what is good or right for people. Nick is a communal dancer, his weaves and moves are made with others in mind as he joins in the motion of community dance. This moving to see from a new perspective was a central goal for teachers Sharon and Ron. As Ron explained the difficulties of seeing history anew: "It's

like fish not understanding that there could be other perspectives in water that they swim in." One reason for integrating literature with history was this: "We're jumping out of the water to gain another perspective."

In a comparable interview, John takes an entirely different viewpoint of *The Jungle.* Not surprisingly, this reading was not high on his list of significant learning experiences.

> Ah, *The Jungle* was an interesting book because I didn't like any of it. But it's quite memorable because of the, what I considered to be unique style it was written in, where it progressed from a standard fiction novel, to what I would consider the last 100 pages of an empassioned plea with the reader, for the support of a socialism and communism. So it's unique. I never read a book like that. I don't read in fiction any more, I read all non fiction.

His commentary on *The Jungle* contains many of the symptoms of superficial evaluation that we have seen before. In his attempt to engage in academic rhetoric, he finds the book "interesting" and "memorable" due to Sinclair's unique style. Clearly he passes his judgment on the ending and writes it off as an "empassioned plea" for the reader to support communism and socialism. When asked about why he did not read fiction anymore he responds:

> Only because I'd rather learn things that are real, that have some historical outlets, facts historically, and historical fiction I guess I read [low]. I don't read books like the ones we read in class. So that was good but I didn't like it at all. I was quite upset by it. [low]. But it was intereresting to read and to be exposed to that particular type of mentality.

Again he repeats the word "interesting," communicating little. He does seem to be a bit confused about his response to the text; it is as if he can't quite find the descriptor that nails down his preconceived negativity. Unlike Nick, who challenges previously held assumptions about what constitutes truth, John does not examine and reflect from some deeper perspective, but quickly takes on a response of "I didn't like it." His dualistic stance toward right and wrong leaves John in his same two-step beat of the same song, the one he believes is the only "right" tune because it is the only one playing in his space.

Late in the school year another mock trial was held, this time based on the book *Savage Inequalities* by Jonathan Kozol. Nick was a juror in this case. He finds the trial approach to learning useful and would explain to teachers who want to cover historical material:

> When we say stipulated facts are just material, when we use phrases like that, then it's really, you know, history is a living thing, and that just sounds dead, and I think by doing things like the trial and other things . . . you get like a real idea of what goes on, and plus we did so many things from different people's perspectives.

Again, in the creative-critical dance of Nick's thinking we have a concise but elaborate display of possibilities. The use of analogy, "history as a living thing," invites the reader to enter into his lively arena of potentialities. Again, he embraces and celebrates the new while finding traditional learning of facts to be outdated and "dead." This new approach to learning brings to life content which might have otherwise slipped by him unnoticed.

The trial experience again brought the passionate and concerned Nick forward as the main character in his journal entries:

> It blows my mind that the sort of things that he [Kozol] describes in this book actually happen in America. I keep thinking of the question where is the funding going to come from. If they give it to someone else they have to take it from some where . . .

In his reflections on the inequities in education, Nick makes his leap to the bigger picture and the implications that accompany the larger situation. Sensing the gaps, he opens the door in his mind to explore the meaning of these newly discovered incongruities in his prior knowledge.

Nick's "American Dream" paper contains a summary position on education spurred by the impact of *Savage Inequalities* and it's offensiveness to his belief in social justice:

> This whole thing is a great example of how the American Dream is just that, a dream. How can people achieve their dreams if they don't have the basic tools to go to college, or to get a "good" job?

This is another look into the gaps of society and the negative effects that these gaps have on people. Sensing these gaps in knowledge and the tension that results from inconsistencies to his world view, Nick initiates personal inquiry and reflection, posing societal problems as real and important. In this case, the subject is not closed and Nick comes to temporary or suspended closure with a question.

The Kozol trial provided a moment in time when John was in his preferred domain, practicing for his future as a lawyer. John was the Counselor for the Defense, defending

the State. As might be expected, this opportunity gave him a chance to engage in legal rhetoric designed to dazzle his audience: "Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, you have before you today a case of such far reaching implications, the effects of your ruling will be felt through the nation."

John seems at home using legal discourse with its bounded formality, language safe from the realities of the persons it might affect. Comfortable in his bounded language, he objects due to heresay, and challenges the credentials of the witnesses. Clearly, he plays his role well, but at no time did he consider other perspectives or imaginatively engage concern for humans, feelings, or children. He didn't have to; his role was preformed, a fixed mono-drama, a straight line, a singular dance.

By the end of the year, Nick spoke eloquently about how we are all socioculturally constructed and positioned: "Instead of listening to people's ideas on issues . . . I now wonder why he reacted to it that way, and then looking at his background and then thinking, why I would react to it that way I did, looking at my background, and trying to find a parallel to why we reacted differently." Nick asked for John's opinions in discussions as he increasingly hunted for the play of possibilities for issues and texts, for the voices left out. In his final anthology project, entitled "Freedom," he moved among literary and historical texts, trying to make sense of "the deep rooted images burned into me since the birth of 'America the beautiful, home of the free'" and the "betrayal" of the Native American. He talked about a song called "Pocahontas." The beginning caused anger and disgust for the listener, but it left me with a good feeling of unity and different people just talking." We think Nick captures some of the play of literature and history, of difference and unity in the class here, of how the anger, even disgust, can be mediated in the dialogue among differences. But in the spirit of the class, Nick's dance of thinking is "ongoing:" he concludes his final paper this way, "Like Sitting Bull of the great Lakota, I am left only with questions."

Summary

Summary comments by Nick and John were reflective of the tone that has beenillustrated in these examples. Nick opened himself to the dialogic dance and grew by leaps and bounds toward productive citizenship, the communal dance of the human race. John, on the other hand, entered on the fringes and, unfortunately, seems to have left the same way. It seems that he never had any desire or ability to know the joy of dancing with

other partners, to be part of the community of learners, to experience the possibilities of expanded humanness.

During final teacher interviews, the project research assistant commented on Nick's style and learning:

> When it comes to his own learning, he's very insightful and very reflective. And it's like, he can do that in a journal, and think about how he's going to, sort of step back and go through the motions, of figuring out what it is that makes him understand something.

Noting the movement from the creative and expansive search for meaning to his own form of critical understanding in time and place, we sense that Nick has developed a comfort with ambiguity and with the multiple conflicting languages for the same thing. Teachers support this view and take it a step further as they note that they have seen him "Go far out on an attack on something, but then try to say something else, almost opposite; it shows that he's thinking about the issues." Moving back and forth, trying out new dance steps and rhythms of dialogic possibilities, Nick is not afraid to leap into the world of the unfamiliar, His imagination engaged, he explores new connections in the form of analogy before passing judgment or coming to some personal conclusion on an issue.

John, on the other hand, did not experience the same sort of intellectual freedom or joy from multiple dialectical experiences. According to one ofhis teachers:

> I think he studiously avoided intellectual and academic growth. And I think he has some pretty effective techniques for not doing that. . . . I think he only cares about the grade. I don't think there's any respect for the education process, at least what occurs in the classroom and in school. . . he wants what it will get him, so he tries to do the letter of the law without doing [unint.] he'll write the number of pages in his journal without doing any thinking or reflection in the process, if he can help it.

John, the student who avoids anything new that might challenge his belief system, walks away basically empty handed. He had built a sturdy structure, resistant to the multiple voices that beckon him to join in the dance of communal learning. Friere (1970) provides an explanation: "Problem-posing education . . . enables teachers and students to become subjects of the educational process by overcoming authoritarianism and an alienating intellectualism."In contrast, John's comfort seemed to lie with both of the latter stances

toward knowing.

Nick's "American Dream" paper summarizes the depth of his learning, caring, and reflection developed through his dance of creative and critical thinking throughout the year. He summed up a way of acting to create a coherent vision: "America is not really a place," he said, "it's just an idea that hasn't been explored, a new frontier." Nick had been learning to make links between his "own sense of self and [his] sense of others in the social world" (Bruner, 1986). Using literature to pose problems about history assisted Nick and others who engaged with the work of the class the chance to reconstrue a social world peopled with diverse others and themselves, as dancers together in that world.

Notes

[1] We gratefully acknowledge Donna MacAndrews for her work on this project. She contributed substantially to data collection and organization.

[2] Our thanks also to Gina DeBlase Tryzna, Heidi Kueber, and Diane Zigo for their work in our research group and for collaboratively analyzing case-study data.

[3] All of the student journal entries are presented as written, without editing, except for our italicizing book titles. We focus on the thinking evident in this first draft writing, rather than on mechanics, which is the approach also taken by the teachers, Sharon and Ron.

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