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The Dartmouth Conference served as a forum of resistance to the predominant teacher-and-text-centered tradition that dominated schools at the time. Authoritarian teaching has enjoyed a stunning revival in the Common Core curriculum and standards that have reinstituted the technically-oriented, text-bound values of New Criticism. Dartmouth and its key products (e.g., Dixon, 1975) helped to shift emphasis from the text to the learner's development, making the student the center of the curriculum rather than the cultural tradition of established knowledge.

Known as the British "growth model," this approach asserted that an English curriculum should promote the personal growth of individual learners. Dixon (1975/1967) and his British colleagues argued that emphasizing texts, rather than learners' engagement with them, did not contribute to their personal growth trajectories. All students were expected to grow at the same rate using the same materials toward the same outcome. This idea of standardization of curriculum and instruction to produce a single sort of student product was rejected, even as the policy pendulum has now swung back mightily to reinforce it at government-imposed levels.

Dixon's (1975/1967) account of the 1960s could easily pass for a present-day critique. Xenophobia has gripped England, and President Trump has attempted to institute a Muslim travel ban and believes that a wall on the Mexican border will reduce immigration. Dixon's description of societies during times of rapid change could well describe the US situation in the present: "there is a tendency to panic, to define an external curriculum—a system into which teacher and pupil must fit—instead of helping teachers, in departments and larger groups, to define for themselves the order and sequence that underlies their best work" (p. 84). This fear in the face of change tends to produce various forms of nativism. Rather than celebrating diversity and cultivating individual growth trajectories, these programs are designed to homogenize students into a single cultural disposition.

To Dixon (1975/1967), the predominant authoritarian approach to teaching, no doubt like authoritarian conceptions of governance in general, produced a fatal inattention to the processes involved in such everyday activities as talking and thinking things over, writing a diary or a letter home, even enjoying a TV play. Discussion was virtually ignored, as we know to our cost today on both sides of the Atlantic. In other words, the part of the map that relates a man's language to his experience was largely unexplored (p. 4).

This sense of a proper education places assimilation to a cultural heritage at the center of curriculum and instruction; and some people's cultural heritages were more equal than others. In today's world, this inequity is evident in the overwhelmingly White, Anglo-Saxon orientation of both the curriculum and the manner in which curriculum materials and instructional guides are built on assumptions that subtly impose the values of the White *status quo* and discourage any critical look at societal inequity that might discomfort those for whom school is already a secure place (Berchini, 2016). Meanwhile, texts from outside this established set of materials and practices have been excoriated for allegedly undermining academic rigor, destroying American culture, and rotting the core of society (e.g., Stotsky, 1999).

In reaction against the skills and cultural heritage approaches to teaching English, the Dartmouth participants proposed a curriculum based on personal growth, outlined by Dixon (1975/1967) as follows:

- Authentic discussion, rather than teacher-orchestrated and -dominated talk, should drive daily classroom life, where students talk to one (not just the teacher) another concerning things they care about. These discussions should involve expressive or exploratory talk in which the process of talking serves as what Applebee (1981) called "a tool for exploring a subject" to help "generate new ideas

'at the point of utterance'" (p. 100).

- Writing should also allow for a process of discovery, and should not be confined to the analytic and informational.

- Students' personal experiences and emotional lives should play a central role in their education, from the topics of their writing to their infusion of meaning into the texts they read, allowing them to serve "as the vital core of English work" (Dixon, 1975, p. 48).

- Teachers should be less defenders of their own cultural heritage and more open to students' diverse orientations, including their linguistic patterns and the perspectives that accompany them.

- Teachers should not dominate the direction of learning and the materials that support those top-down goals. Rather, they follow individual children's chosen pathways and help them along the way without throwing them off their own preferred course.

- School ought to provide abundant opportunities for students to engage in drama, conceived here as the personal enactment of textual knowledge rather than the formal performance of theater.

Dartmouth, then, was situated in a time and place that called for a particular anti-authoritarian response. The schools of the early 1960s represented the status quo, stifling students' free expression and force-fitting them all into the same academic mold, one that bracketed out their personal knowledge and engaged them in the study and recitation of established, formal facts and figures. These conditions have now been restored in the US through a series of presidential administrations, both Democratic and Republican, via national mandates and policies.

Toward a More Social Understanding of Human Development

The more things change, the more they remain the same. The times and teaching profession have changed (Pasternak, Caughlan, Hallman, Renzi, & Rush, 2017). Yet current world events have produced a circling of the cultural wagons and a reinstitution of authoritarian politics and education as a way to hold society to the traditions of those who have historically held power. This effort to standardize education is eas-

ily evident in efforts to develop a national curriculum in the centrally-developed Common Core State Standards, to make standardized testing the driver of curriculum and instruction, to reduce the effects of multicultural education, and to keep the barbarians from the gates by making school policies represent the values of those who have historically controlled schools: White, upper- and middle-class men of limited cultural exposure.

The goal of removing the shackles of tradition led the Dartmouth participants to defy the establishment by encouraging young people to "doing your own thing." This individualistic conception assumed that people, by nature, are good and kind, and that they will seek a personal direction for their learning without taking up other people's space and resources. This Rousseauian conception of students as noble savages viewed pupils as innocently constructing worlds of their own, independent of cultural mediation and teachers' authoritarian direction, and without pursuing their goals at the expense of other people's needs.

This assumption has proven wrong on several counts (Smagorinsky, 2002). First, people are not as altruistic as the progressive ideal would suggest. Among the greatest menaces to school safety is bullying (Goodstein, 2013), a form of abuse that is modeled daily for them by adults, and often rewarded. Racism, xenophobia, misogyny, and homophobia are rampant throughout society and schools. The competitive structure of school encourages cheating and other dirty play for advancement in academics and college choice (ABC News, 2017). Romantics like Kohn (2011) believe that schools should simply trust kids to let their goodness and inquiry for knowledge emerge. However, such assumptions appear to work best in specialized, fee-driven environments like Montessori schools. There is little evidence to support the idea that such a plan would ever succeed on a large scale across the range of public schools. Many blame capitalism's competitive values for society's cruelty (Martin, Houston, McLaren, & Suoranta, 2010). Many more point to Finland as the epitome of possibility for humane schooling that produces a respected teaching force and high-achieving set of students, no doubt overlooking the possibility that Finland's system values equality more than excellence (Partanen, 2011) as part of its socialistic orientation, along with providing good health care and other public services that require a degree of taxation and sacrifice that Americans will not make.

In their Foreword to the 3rd edition of Dixon's *Growth*

through English, Dartmouth participants James Squire and James Britton (1975/1967) see "the impact of the Dartmouth ideas—perhaps the Dartmouth ideal—in the enterprise of individuals" (p. x). The developmental view of student-centered education outlined by Dixon, they say, suggests that "self-discovery through language and in self-expression, with writing to realize oneself, has occupied the attention of teachers" since the book's original 1966 publication (p. xvii). The subject of English comprises "the sum total of the planned and unplanned experiences through language by means of which a child gains control of himself and his relations with the surrounding world" (p. xviii). These relations are always gratifying and harmonious. They are also byproducts of realizing oneself, which should become the central occupation of school in this conception.

My concern with the assumption that personal growth and realization are the primary purpose of education comes from the fact that the personal growth curves of individuals often come at the expense of the goals and growth of others. The absence of attention to this fact has led, I think, to a romantic conception of the individual student in much educational writing since. By elevating the individual's growth as the object of education, the Dartmouth tradition has embraced an ideal that is virtually impossible to achieve except under the most rarified of conditions, those in which young people are not only free of conscious malicious intent, but do not subconsciously impose their values and priorities on those around them in the process of seeking to meet their own goals.

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The focus on individuals, however, overlooks the systemic manner in which the status quo is imposed on schools. This structural problem advantages those whose own families and communities are aligned with the mores inscribed in the school's disciplinary code, dress code, demands for academic language, reliance on specific speech genres and social languages, topic preferences, historical perspectives, conceptions of scientific knowledge, and other axioms that guided people through the day. Schools prefer certain types of people to others, and ignoring this fact can lead to discriminatory practices that are punitive toward those who come with other forms of socialization and acculturation. Schools also prefer certain forms of knowledge over others, accentuating formal, abstract, impersonal, dispassionate understandings over knowledge gained through everyday experience outside school with strong emotional involvement.

Berchini's (2016) study of how a textbook publisher's teacher's manual shapes teachers' leading of discussions illustrates how cultural values become insinuated unconsciously into everyday teaching and learning. The curriculum materials provided through the *Prentice Hall Literature* series that she studied "frames and represents [the short story] 'The White Umbrella' and, consequently, directs teachers' subsequent application of its content in a way that mutes the multicultural themes that [Chinese-American author Gish] Jen foregrounds in the short story" (pp. 55-56). Her careful analysis of a classroom episode admirably does not pathologize the teacher's conduct of the lesson. Rather, she looks at the deep structure of the curriculum to see how teachers are guided toward uncontroversial discussion topics and how they suggest that teachers point students toward literary technique and relatively trivial story elements that bypass sensitive topics. The curriculum, then, is built to bypass topics that might engage students emotionally and intellectually because they might also invite controversy and conflict. This reinforcement of the status quo minimizes opportunities for students to engage in important social critique, the deconstruction of inequity, the reconstruction of more equitable possibilities, and the design of authentic social action (Jones, 2006).

Discussion

I have questioned in this essay a major theme of the Dartmouth Conference, that being its focus on individual pathways of development liberated from the shackles of tradition, authority, and culture. Rather, I see human development as socially conditioned and meaning-making to be, not independent of social influence, but profoundly shaped by cultural engagement (Smagorinsky, 2001), from local classroom practices to school policies to curricular structure to societal conflicts.

It's important, then, to avoid the pitfall of viewing schooling in terms of the binary of teacher-centered and student-centered instruction. This emphasis, among other problems, isolates teachers from their social contexts and makes them blameworthy for problems originating well outside schools and classrooms. If the promise of Dartmouth's attention to personal growth is to be realized, appropriate

developmental theories that take into account the mediated nature of human development need to be understood at the immediate, social levels and at the deeper cultural, historical, and systemic levels. With such attention, a more realistic and socially inclusive notion of how schools can foster a nation of responsible citizens may become more possible.

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