TABOO

The Journal of Culture and Education

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Blessed Are the Curious
for They Will Have Adventures

J. Cynthia McDermott

In every area of human activity, we can find references to curiosity including the business world, education, science, and philosophy. Why is that? Because curiosity is the heart of learning, and yet it seems to be disappearing in educational institutions. Why are students, from kindergarten to college, less inclined to ask questions? How do rigid curricula, standardized testing, and social or cultural norms stifle the innate curiosity of young minds? And how do traditional pedagogical practices in higher education—such as lecture-dominant teaching and assessment-driven learning—further discourage inquiry and intellectual risk-taking? What can educators and policymakers do to reignite the spark of inquiry and wonder in our classrooms?

Encouraging curiosity involves fostering an environment where questioning, exploration, and discovery are celebrated. The best processes for nurturing curiosity often include practices that empower learners, connect to their interests, and remove barriers to inquiry. Here are some effective strategies:

1. Create a Safe and Open Learning Environment
   - Encourage Questions: Normalize asking questions, including "why," "what if," and "how."
   - Value Mistakes: Create a culture where failure is seen as a step in the learning process.
   - Diverse Perspectives: Promote discussions that include multiple viewpoints and challenge assumptions.

2. Incorporate Student Choice and Agency
   - Student-Driven Projects: Allow students to choose topics or projects based on their interests.
   - Flexible Curriculum: Design lessons that leave room for exploration beyond the set objectives.

■ Collaborative Learning: Facilitate group work where students
can explore ideas together.

3. Use Inquiry-Based Learning Models
   ■ Socratic Seminars: Engage learners in dialogue that prompts critical
   thinking and exploration.
   ■ Problem-Based Learning: Present real-world problems that require
   investigation and creative solutions.
   ■ Research Opportunities: Provide tools and guidance for students
   to conduct their own research.

4. Connect Learning to Real-World Contexts
   ■ Experiential Learning: Incorporate fieldwork, experiments,
   and hands-on activities.
   ■ Guest Speakers: Invite experts to share their passion and spark curiosity
   in new topics.
   ■ Service Learning: Link lessons to community issues or global challenges.

5. Encourage Reflection and Metacognition
   ■ Reflection Activities: Use journals, discussions, or multimedia projects
   to encourage students to reflect on what they've learned
   and what they want to know.
   ■ Thinking Routines: Embed routines like "See-Think-Wonder"
   or "What Do You Know? What Do You Want to Know?" into lessons.

6. Integrate Technology Thoughtfully
   ■ Online Resources: Use tools like virtual reality, simulations,
   or open educational resources to explore concepts deeply.
   ■ Interactive Platforms: Use discussion forums, collaborative platforms,
   or apps to enhance engagement and exploration.

7. Model Curiosity as an Educator
   ■ Ask Questions: Demonstrate curiosity by asking thought-provoking
   questions yourself.
   ■ Show Enthusiasm: Share your excitement about discovering new knowledge.
   ■ Be a Learner: Engage in professional development
   and share your learning process with students.

8. Reduce Overemphasis on Standardization
   ■ Minimize Testing Pressure: Focus more on formative assessments
   and less on high-stakes testing.
   ■ Individualized Learning: Tailor learning experiences
   to fit students' unique interests and needs.

9. Use Stories to Spark Imagination
   ■ Narrative Learning: Incorporate storytelling to frame lessons
   in a way that captivates and engages.
   ■ Explore "What If" Scenarios: Encourage students to think creatively
   about alternate histories, future possibilities, or scientific explorations.

10. Celebrate Curiosity and Creativity
- Showcase Student Work: Provide platforms for students to share their projects and discoveries.
- Curiosity Challenges: Host activities that encourage innovative problem-solving or exploration.
- Recognize Inquiry: Acknowledge and reward efforts to ask deep, meaningful questions.

Several well-known thinkers have weighed in on the topic.

In his book, *The Demon-Haunted World*, Dr. Carl Sagan shared how regularly impressed he was with the curiosity of kindergartners and first-graders. "Many of these children are natural-born scientists—although heavy on the wonder side and light on the skepticism. They're curious, intellectually vigorous. Provocative and insightful questions bubble out of them." (https://bigthink.com/thinking/why-kids-lose-wonder-carl-sagan/).

Dr. Neil DeGrasse Tyson believes as follows: The most important thing you can be in life is curious—curious about things you don't know, curious about things you do know or that you think you know, but that there's more to learn about it, curious about why other people think differently from how you think, curious about how data becomes information, becomes knowledge, knowledge becomes wisdom, curious about all of this. The more you can stoke curiosity, the more you can live a life, reaping the benefits of all that other fellow human beings have worked hard to discover. (https://www.masterclass.com/classes/neil-degrasse-tyson-teaches-scientific-thinking-and-communication/chapters/inspire-curiosity-in-your-audience).

And did you know about a new "Q"? It is CQ and it was introduced by Tomas Chamorro-Premuzic in an article he wrote for the *Harvard Business Review* in 2014:

> CQ stands for curiosity quotient and concerns having a hungry mind. People with higher CQ are more inquisitive and open to new experiences. They find novelty exciting and are quickly bored with routine. They tend to generate many original ideas and are counter-conformist. It has not been as deeply studied as EQ and IQ, but there's some evidence to suggest it is just as important when it comes to managing complexity in two major ways. First, individuals with higher CQ are generally more tolerant of ambiguity. This nuanced, sophisticated, subtle thinking style defines the very essence of complexity. Second, CQ leads to higher levels of intellectual investment and knowledge acquisition over time, especially in formal domains of education, such as science and art (note: this is of course different from IQ's measurement of raw intellectual horsepower). Knowledge and expertise, much like experience, translate complex situations into familiar ones, so CQ is the ultimate tool to produce simple solutions for complex problems.
>
> Although IQ is hard to coach, EQ and CQ can be developed. As Albert Einstein famously said: ""I have no special talents. I am only passionately curious." (https://hbr.org/2014/08/curiosity-is-as-important-as-intelligence).

In the political world, one might say that recent political activities have made it clear that people hold quite different points of view on the same topic. Analysts have made it clear that no matter the evidence, people choose to believe what they believe. This behavior can in fact cause great disruption. No matter the evidence the facts have been questioned. Providing students with an introduction to a more skeptical approach to critical thinking can perhaps aid society in joining oppositional positions. Skepticism can be defined as a methodological principle of inquiry that posits that knowledge is possible but only when supported by compelling evidence.

Within the field of anthropology, James Lett has an interesting set of principles of six tenets with an acronym of FiLCHeRS and according to Lett, evidence requires reasoning. These principles are:

> Falsifiability: This tenant states that it must be possible to conceive of evidence that proves the claim false such that if a claim is false, the evidence will prove that it is false; conversely, if the claim is true, the evidence will not disprove the claim.

> Logic: According to Lett, "an argument is said to be valid if its conclusion follows unavoidably from its premises; it is sound if it is valid and if all the premises are true.

> Comprehensiveness: Lett states that "the evidence offered in support of any claim must be exhaustive—that is, all of the available evidence must be considered Honesty: Lett asserts that "the evidence offered in support of any claim must be evaluated without self-deception.

> Replicability: Lett's definition suggests that "if the evidence for any claim is based upon experimental result, or if the evidence offered in support of any claim could logically be explained as coincidental, then it is necessary for the evidence to be repeated in subsequent experiments or trials.

> Sufficiency: Lett suggests that "the evidence offered in support of any claim must be adequate to establish the truth of that claim. Lett J. A field guide to critical thinking. Skeptical Inquirer Magazine. Winter 1990. www.csicop.org/si/9012/critical-thinking.html (accessed 25 October 2007).

An interesting demonstration of these principles can be found in a middle grade novel, AWAY, by Megan Freeman (2025) when an imminent yet unnamed danger forces people across Colorado to leave their homes. A group of kids including an aspiring filmmaker and a budding journalist find themselves in the same evacuation camp and as they cope with the aftermath of having their world upended, they grow curious about the mysterious threat. As they begin to investigate, they start to discover that there's less truth and more cover-up to what they're being told. Most of the adults in the evacuation camp are following the story they are told. But this story is an excellent example of how using the FiLCHeRS steps the characters save themselves and the community. This is an excellent story to use to test the process the Lett has created.

An analysis of curiosity from the business world follows:

The following summary references ideas from Lynn Whitney Turner's article *"Leading with Curiosity: Shifting from Expert to Explorer in Today's VUCA World"* (published June 5, 2023, by The Training Associates). This citation is offered with appreciation but without formal permission from the author.

Summary for *Taboo* Issue on Curiosity

In her 2023 article, Lynn Whitney Turner advocates for a shift in leadership mindset—from that of the all-knowing expert to that of an open-minded explorer—arguing that curiosity is essential in today's volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) world. Turner emphasizes that curiosity not only enhances adaptability and creativity but also allows leaders to navigate ambiguity with greater agility. Rather than clinging to certainty, she encourages embracing inquiry, listening, and learning as key leadership practices. For educators and scholars concerned with diminishing curiosity in schools and society, Turner's call to "lead with curiosity" offers a compelling model for transformative practice. (https://bcmj.org/premise/approach-critical-thinking-health-care-professionals, retrieved December 13, 2020).

A posting from Britannica Curiosity Compass discusses at length what they call the "Science of Curiosity." The following section is taken from their web site where they request that this information be shared:

Why are humans curious? Are other animals curious? How does curiosity work? Take a dive with us into the expansive history of curiosity and how it has shaped humankind. Explore the neuroscience that drives curiosity. And discover how your brain actually rewards you for being curious!

Perhaps it was a bolt of lightning that piqued the early human's curiosity; perhaps it was a raging wildfire. But once upon a time, an early human channeled inspiration into pure ingenuity and figured out how to start a fire. The control of fire supplemented humankind's first invention, the stone tool. Next came boats, and then spears; then language, glue, clothing, and even the flute.

Each of these incredible inventions came to fruition in the mind of early humans many tens of thousands of years ago. Some sort of special spark drove humans to explore, discover, and later, to invent. That special spark lives within each of us, too. It makes us eager to learn things and to solve problems. Whenever you're listening to music, reading a book, or watching TV, it's there, helping your imagination soar. This special spark is curiosity, the desire to seek out new knowledge and learn how things work.

Why are we curious? How does curiosity 'work' in the brain? If there's one thing that stimulates our curiosity most, it's a complex topic shrouded in mystery. So where do we start?

One way to begin exploring curiosity is to understand 'information seeking'. This behavior is observable across the entire animal kingdom – from apes and dolphins all the way down to crabs and tiny nematode worms. 'Information

seeking' means that every animal seeks information about their environment. This is so they know how to navigate it. In fact, it's why sensory organs exist – to supply the brain with information that helps you understand your environment and make better choices.

But when does information seeking qualify as curiosity? The difference, we now believe, is in the motivation. If you're seeking knowledge because of an external motivation, like school or work, then it does not qualify as curiosity. But if you're seeking knowledge because you're internally motivated – because you just want to know the answer – that's curiosity. Think about the early human, 35,000 years ago, who made the first flute. They were not driven by a need to stay warm or eat food; instead, they were internally motivated to make an instrument that could make a beautiful sound.

When something piques your curiosity – say, an interesting fact, or an unexpected noise in the other room – your brain enters into what's called the "curiosity state." First, the parts of the brain that are sensitive to unpleasant conditions light up. This shows that you are slightly uncomfortable, because you recognize you are lacking certain knowledge. Then, the parts of your brain responsible for learning and memory kick into high gear, so that you can learn, and remember what you've learned, more efficiently. It is at this point that you are primed to begin your search for answers. And when you actually begin learning new facts in your curiosity state, something even more interesting than heightened memory happens: your reward circuitry kicks in.

That's right—your brain rewards you for being curious, and for pursuing that curiosity. Researchers have determined that dopamine, the brain's reward chemical, is intricately linked to the brain's curiosity state [1]. When you explore and satisfy your curiosity, your brain floods your body with dopamine, which makes you feel happier. This reward mechanism increases the likelihood that you'll try and satisfy your curiosity again in the future.

The idea that our brains reward us for learning actually lines up with the hypothesis that curiosity helped our early human ancestors survive, too. Think about the usefulness of a stone tool or a boat. Humans needed to understand the environment, and manipulate it, in order to survive. Whether it meant knowing the best routes to flank animals on a hunt, where the best caves were for shelter, or how to find edible plants and berries, curiosity about the environment led to better survival. Our most curious ancestors had an advantage over those who weren't curious. Over thousands of years, only the most curious people reproduced, leading to the characteristic curiosity of modern-day humans.

Today, our curiosity isn't so useful in terms of survival. But it is useful when we think about education, or even what makes us happy. And when it comes to education or satisfying your curiosity, scientists say there are two distinct types of curiosity that we can express.

The first is called epistemic curiosity. Have you ever gone down a rabbit hole of link-clicking on the Internet? Or gotten so obsessed with a favorite book series or TV show that you had to research everything you could about it? That's epistemic curiosity: the drive to eliminate information gaps and learn new explicit information. When you feel that thirst to acquire new knowledge, your brain actually responds as if you are actually thirsty or hungry—that's where the areas

sensitive to unpleasant conditions light up. And that's why it feels so great to satisfy your curiosity (thanks, dopamine)!

The second type of curiosity you might find yourself expressing is empathic curiosity. Human life is built on relationships and interactions between people, and empathic curiosity is the drive to know more about what other people think and feel. When you are in comfortable social situations, your 'curiosity state' is especially pleasurable, according to research, and again, that's when your dopamine releases in high levels.

Encouraging both types of curiosity in yourself is an important step in becoming a well-rounded learner. Greater knowledge about yourself and how you express your curiosity can help you with that process. This is why Britannica has developed a quiz about curiosity (that you can take right now!) and a whole host of information and resources on the subject.

In today's world, being curious can enrich your life massively. Pursuing your passions is satisfying both in the short term and in the long term. Whether you go exploring your curiosity through social events or study, and whether you dive into biology, philosophy, psychology, your environment, or beyond, remember that different approaches will suit different people—and that it's what each of us does with the information that matters.

For fun they have created a curiosity quiz that will allow you to explore what kind of curious person you are. Enjoy and share. (https://curiosity.britannica.com/curiosity-personality-quiz) ©2019 Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc.

As you read this wonderful and diverse set of articles, I must give credit to an educator who has educated me and changed my views many times. When I read Alfie Kohn's article about the absence of curiosity, I knew that I had to make that the theme for this issue. Many many thanks to Alfie for allowing us to print that article here. Many thanks to the authors who are sharing their views on the subject. Be curious!

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Educational Renaissance
The Building of Curiosity

Richard K. Gordon

Abstract

In my dissertation, "A Phenomenological Description of Underclass Students," I argued for understanding the experience of public school children in the USA. I attempted to describe a micro-system of schooling within the much larger context of the "geography" of education. I wanted to draw attention to a particular microclimate among several other landscapes where one might see teaching and learning. The following very short essays describe another of those micro-climates. The setting is Japan and the students are a part of the Foundation for Global Children (FGC).

Introduction

That dissertation was written almost 50 years. Among the most justified criticism about that work was the lack of clarity in describing the "underclass" student. Many commentators thought that the term "underclass" referred to freshman or sophomore students in high school or college. I, on the other hand, was referring to students who happen to be in school environments noticeably lacking resources both material and human that could be considered necessary in a twentieth century school in an advanced economy. The point of that dissertation was to describe student experience using phenomenology as the investigative methodology. The term underclass was a placeholder, a device useful in articulating the importance of lived experience during teaching and learning. My concern was with the student. As such I could have written a title having any number of adjectives—the mid-western student, the tall student, or the gifted student. I was then as now, concerned with understanding *the lived experience*[1] of students in school environments. Nearly a half-century later the phenomenology of student experience is ever as important—at least to me.

In the past six years I've learned by listening to student experience, assisting students in interpreting that experience and using experience to shape their emerging future using phenomenology be considered a necessary component of teaching. Developing the sensitivity to their experience is an incumbency. Here I am not talking about hearing student voices. I am talking about easing their voices into the cacophony of societal living—almost any society. To aid educators in accessing *lived experience* I developed a seven-point instructional template for teaching and learning.

Student experience is both social and pedagogical. Teaching and learning involves the strategic integration of social and pedagogical skills. I taught classes at the FGC using the following template as a guide (see Figure 1).

The essays that follow describe aspects of student lived experience. Each essay reflects an aspect of the Instructional Template.

The first three Template elements consider research on the psychological nature of identity during instruction. Three elements of identity: Individual, Dyadic, and Group; are important constructs for teachers to consider when planning instruction. During instruction teachers can be aware of how student identity affects the instructional environment. Instruction informed with knowledge of these psychological states allows for creative as well as focused development of engaging class activities.

The middle, 4th Template, elements, reflects contemporary understanding of teacher leadership roles. The focus on teacher / professor as the classroom leader is in line with research on the significant role teachers play in creating and facilitating student academic and social success. It goes without saying that the teacher/professor is in "charge" of her class. Research on teacher leadership clarifies and

Figure 1

Gordon's Instructional Template

SOCIAL   PEDAGOGY

Identity   Instruction

Dyad

Group   Projects

Reflection
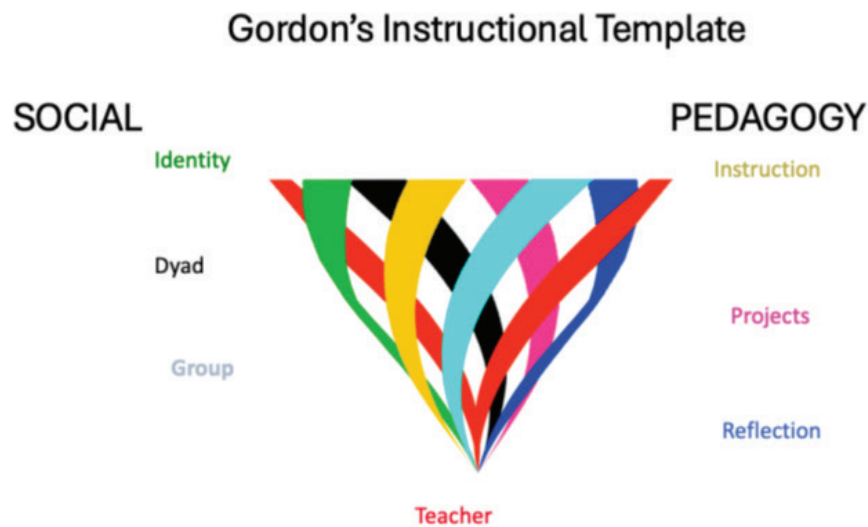
Teacher

delineates what those leadership roles are. "Teacher" in the profound sense of leader is a construct capturing dignity and authority. Societal recognition of the teacher leadership role, and self-acceptance of that role is a necessary element of successful classroom experience. This element of the Template emphasizes the importance of the ethical and moral role of teacher leaders. The point asks that the teacher/professor have a developed philosophy of education undergirding their professional practice.

Components 5 and 6 of the Template cover best teaching practices. All disciplines have literature describing contemporary practices on the best way to deliver instruction that is intelligible and easily comprehensible to students and based on the science of learning.

The concluding focus of the Template is student and teacher reflective practice. The reflective element of the Template provides opportunities for the teacher/professor to gauge progress made in blending the social and pedagogical elements of their learning community. It allows for the teacher to review how a particular lesson affected students. During reflection teachers have opportunities to deconstruct effects of various activities with students as they participated in individual, dyadic and group performances. Reflection also offers an opportunity to address instructional pedagogy.

Essay #1
Instructional Point 1 / 2 / 3 Identity Dyad - Group

Self-Knowledge and the Foundation for Global Children

Imagine leaving your village, town or city in—Bhutan, Eritrea, Mali, or Myanmar—for a place where one city has 14 million people. Now, imagine doing so as a teenager, traveling alone or with just one or two peers, and guided only by a school representative from Japan. In the past 6 years, 16 teens from these nations left everything familiar to join the Foundation for Global Children (FGC) in Japan. While their goal was academic, athletic, and cultural growth, they also embarked on a journey of self-discovery.

Self-knowledge may not have been at the forefront of their thinking when applying to FGC. At that age what would yours have been? What would your family have thought? The adults and the children would have thoughts shared and unshared. Mom's thoughts may have been different than dad's, or a sibling. Several thoughts probably converged as they boarded the plane to begin the perennial human adventure of *self-discovery*. Once airborne these now young men and women perhaps unbeknownst to them, were about to experience the full and unwavering commitment of FGC support.

A New Chapter

Leaving home at 14–16 years old isn't easy. Families and students had mixed

emotions. Once the plane took off, these teens entered a new world of independence. Upon arrival at Narita Airport, they were greeted by FGC staff, offering comfort, care and support. The initial shock—bright lights, endless cars, busy expressways, and vending machines everywhere—quickly turned into curiosity. Exhausted, they found themselves in a dormitory in Oiso, ready to begin their new lives.

The next morning, unfamiliar sights greeted them: miso soup, natto, seaweed, and chopsticks at breakfast. Communication with Japanese students none of whom spoke Dzongkha, Tigrinya, or Burmese, began with hand signals and broken English, but it soon transformed into friendship, thanks to the kyosei philosophy promoted by Mr. Miyazawa, FGC's founder.

The Spirit of Kyosei

Kyosei is a philosophical idea of harmony, inclusivity, and mutual understanding shaping FGC's vision and SEISA Group schools. Kyosei principles of understanding one another, becoming friends, and leaving no one out fosters an environment where students thrive through interaction and collaboration. Mr. Miyazawa would tell staff how the spirit of kyosei in action led him to create FGC as a place for the education of international students. He wanted students to use Seisa environments as places to interact with each other and to live their lives to their fullest. He felt that students needed to interact with each other and grow as persons. He felt that it is through social interaction that we learn how people think, how people feel, and how the world, in some small way, functions.

SEISA students taught FGC newcomers to use chopsticks, navigate trains, and fold futons. Soon, the once-overwhelming daily routines became second nature. As confidence grew, they embraced a life filled with school, homework, sports, competitions, and the occasional injury.

Transformative Experiences

Returning home after this experience was bittersweet. These teens brought back unique skills. Now, they are back in the native country. A country whose population is much less than the 124 million people in Japan. Now, they are probably one of the few persons who speak Japanese, one of the only ones who enjoys natto, one of the few persons that has frequently seen majestic Mt. Fuji almost daily, one of the few persons that has travelled on an advanced rail system, and one of the few persons who can buy a food ticket from a vending machine.

More importantly, they returned with self-knowledge, resilience, and a broadened view of the world. A few years ago, they thought they were going to Japan to study, improve their language skills, and grow athletically. What they truly gained was the strength to thrive and discover their potential. Just as Mr. Miyazawa foresaw.

Essay #2
Instructional Point 4 The Teacher
Foundation for Global Children

Introduction

The Foundation for Global Children embodies the interconnectedness of foundational concepts, specifically emphasizing the role of children as the corner-stone of society. This essay explores the essential aspects of this foundation and its global implications, focusing on children as the basis for societal growth and development.

Defining the Foundation

At its core, the term "foundation" represents a fundamental element of society—children. They are the bedrock upon which our future is built. While it may be tempting to think of a foundation as a fiscal entity, established to meet financial regulations or as a philanthropic initiative, the Foundation for Global Children transcends these definitions. It symbolizes the baseline for constructing society, driven by the energy and potential of youth. In essence, the foundation of society is its children.

The Global Perspective

Youth are not confined by geographic boundaries; they form a universal foundation for future generations. The global population of children aged 6–18 is estimated at approximately 1.2 billion, based on data from organizations like UNICEF and the UN Population Division. The regional distribution of this population highlights the diverse demographic characteristics across the world (see Figure 2).

Figure 2

Global Distribution of Children (Ages 6-18) by Region
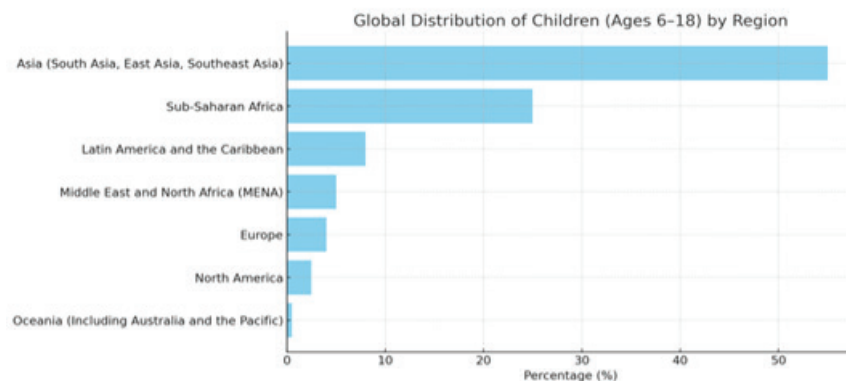
FGC students came to Japan from the two largest global regions of school aged children. Mr. Miyazawa's vision is concentrated on these regions in bringing FGC to realization.

Conclusion

Children form the foundation of society, shaping the world's future across diverse regions and cultures. Understanding the global distribution of youth underscores the need to invest in their growth and development, ensuring a strong and united foundation for the generations to come. The Foundation for Global Children is not merely a concept but a call to action to nurture the youngest members of our global community.

Essay #3
Instructional Point 7 Reflection
This is the point of reflective self-awareness. Students here reflect on the teaching and learning process

FGC and Seisa Shonan: A Spectacular Pairing

"Make history, make it, make it!" These electrifying words from Mr. Miyazawa continue to inspire former Seisa student Dejen, who recalled them after his remarkable victory at the Kagoshima Marathon. This call to action reflects the heart of FGC's mission—empowering individuals to create history—and underscores the deep, synergistic bond between the Foundation for Global Children (FGC) and Seisa Shonan High School.

Seisa Shonan: A Hub for Athletic Excellence

Seisa Shonan High School is a beacon for aspiring athletes, actively recruiting students to excel in diverse sports such as baseball, soccer, track and field, volleyball, basketball, archery, karate, and gymnastics. With top-tier coaching and facilities, these teams consistently shine at regional, prefectural, and national competitions. FGC students, who integrate seamlessly into Seisa Shonan's programs, are vital contributors to these achievements.

One unique aspect of FGC student involvement is the dual recognition they achieve—gaining accolades in Japan while earning admiration in their home countries. For example, an FGC student from Bhutan might set a personal best record while competing in Japan, earning pride and acknowledgment both locally and internationally.

Global Impact Through Sports

FGC's influence extends far beyond individual training. The organization fos-

ters international cooperation and provides meaningful support to athletes worldwide. Some of its most impactful initiatives include:

Signing a Pre-Games Training Camp Agreement with the Myanmar Olympic Committee.

Donating wheelchair-accessible vehicles to the Bhutan Paralympic Committee.

Providing athletic wheelchairs to Eritrean para-athletes.

Hosting the 1st Bhutan (BAF) & Japan (SEISA) Remote Archery Exchange Tournament.

Supporting Bhutanese para-athletes with basketball wheelchairs donated by 24-Hour Television.

Enabling FGC Myanmar students to compete in an online kata tournament sponsored by the Myanmar Karatedo Federation

These initiatives embody FGC's mission to build international bridges, empower athletes, and promote inclusivity in sports.

Living the Spirit of Kyosei

The partnership between FGC and Seisa Shonan thrives on the philosophy of *kyosei*—living and working together in societal harmony. This ethos transcends the typical camaraderie of team sports.

FGC and Seisa Shonan student-athletes train, compete, and live side by side, sharing meals, victories, and setbacks. These shared experiences create deep bonds and a sense of mutual inspiration that lasts far beyond their time at school.

SEISA Africa Asia Bridge (SAAB): Bridging Cultures

This philosophy of *kyosei* finds its grandest expression in the SEISA Africa Asia Bridge (SAAB) program. Launched in 2015, SAAB is the largest learning festival of its kind, inspired by Mr. Miyazawa's vision of building a bridge between Africa and Asia for the next generation of students from either continent. SEISA students play a pivotal role in SAAB, showcasing activities aligned with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Through performances, demonstrations, and presentations, the festival promotes global understanding and collaboration. The bonds formed at Seisa Shonan reflect the broader connections created through SAAB, uniting diverse cultures in the spirit of harmony and shared purpose.

Inspiring a Legacy of Achievement

FGC students from Eritrea and Bhutan, have graduated from Japanese universities, further cementing the legacy of this extraordinary partnership.

They are making history—sometimes without even realizing it. Every achievement, large or small, contributes to a legacy of global unity, collaboration, and empowerment that will inspire generations to come. Together, FGC and Seisa Shonan High School continue to transform lives, proving that when individuals and organizations unite, they can truly make history. Whether on the field, in the classroom, or in life, these students embody the realization of Mr. Miyazawa's vision.

Essay #4
Instructional Point 1 Identity

The Quality of FGC Students

As in many schools, FGC students take examinations and receive grades. Teachers administer tests and prepare student status reports. These tangible elements of progress are necessary and comply with various rules and regulations. However, practical measures cannot fully capture the qualitative success of FGC students.

What is this quality, you ask? It goes beyond journeys that begin thousands of miles from home to Japan and beyond dispelling myths about flying and stopping in unfamiliar countries; Beyond adapting to languages and foods unlike anything they have experienced before; Beyond observing both modern and rural Japan and noting similarities and differences; Beyond witnessing uncommon cloud formations and starry nights; Beyond encountering teachers with unfamiliar pedagogical styles—styles that are very different; Beyond routines that were never truly routine; Beyond shops that seem to have almost everything and others that have absolutely everything; Beyond the smallest student taking a train to school alongside older commuters reading quietly; Beyond the regular, super rapid, rapid, and the fastest rapid trains and aside from all these remarkable experiences, there is the quality of wanting to continue experiencing more.

FGC students continually absorb the immeasurable qualities of exploring worlds they may have never imagined. This is a quality that cannot be quantitatively measured but is continuously nurtured.

In their social media posts, you can read and see that FGC students carry the Seisa Shonan experience with them. Back in their home countries, some continue to breathe in the qualities they absorbed—from train rides, convenience store visits, and eating with chopsticks to swimming in the Pacific Ocean, climbing Mt. Fuji, and relaxing in an onsen bath.

How do you measure quality—and value? Find an FGC student and ask!

Essay #5
Instructional Point 5 Instruction and Curiosity

The Foundation for Global Children (FGC) and English Learning:
The World Coming Closer

For the past five years, nearly every Thursday, I've sent a WhatsApp message to former FGC student, Dejen. I first met him six years ago when he began high school at Seisa Shonan High School—the same year I joined FGC. During that time, I taught students from Bhutan, Myanmar, Eritrea, and Mali. Little did I know that I was forging a profound, long-term connection with Dejen and his classmates. Over the years, I came to realize that FGC is an extraordinary cross-cultural incubator for cultivating positive human relationships, perfectly embodying the spirit of Mr. Miyazawa's educational vision.

FGC students' experiences varied significantly, even within the same country. For instance, a student from Myanmar might have learned English at a school influenced by British colonization, while another, from a different region, might have attended a government school with minimal English instruction. Similarly, students from Eritrea's capital, Asmara, often had greater access to formal English education than those from rural areas. In Bhutan, the divide between urban and rural communities also shaped English proficiency.

Despite their diverse backgrounds, all FGC students were fluent in at least two languages before beginning Japanese language instruction alongside my English classes. They spoke native and regional languages, such as Karen from Myanmar or Tigre and Arabic from Eritrea. Multilingualism was a unifying thread among all FGC students. Now, they were adding Japanese to their linguistic repertoire. This rich background led me to consider how I could inspire them to eagerly continue their English studies.

What should an English language program look like for such a polyglot group? Imagine being a new student in Japan, where everyone around you—teachers, coaches, dormitory leaders, and cafeteria staff—speaks Japanese. Naturally, learning Japanese would become your priority for daily life. Meanwhile, students used social media to stay connected with family and friends in their native languages. So, where did English fit into their daily routines?

FGC students used English primarily to communicate with one another during classes and shared activities. My classroom became a captivating microcosm of multilingualism in action. For example, I might explain something in English, and a student from Eritrea would translate it into Tigre for a fellow Eritrean before switching back to English to explain it to a classmate from another country. Their linguistic agility was remarkable.

Initially, my lessons were subject-matter-based, incorporating grammar, reading, literature, and writing, with group activities. Before arriving at FGC, I had prepared a year-long teaching plan based on traditional approaches. However, I

quickly realized the need for a new strategy—one that embraced the students' diverse linguistic experiences.

English conversation became the core of my new lessons. For instance, I would introduce a grammatical concept, such as the past tense, and encourage students to use their understanding to explain it to peers or provide examples. They relied on their multilingual skills to support one another, effortlessly communicating their insights with me and their classmates. Each class began and ended with whole-group instruction, supplemented by group work and individual tutoring. The result was a vibrant, dynamic learning environment. And in Dejen's case, the conversation continues to this day.

A highlight of the English curriculum was the student autobiography project. Chapter one depicted their lives before coming to Japan. Chapter two described their journey to Japan, and chapter three reflected on their experiences in Japan, culminating in their post-graduation aspirations. By the end of each school year, each student completed one chapter of their autobiography.

The project provided a consistent focus for class sessions, with lessons integrating the skills and knowledge necessary to progress toward the project. While not all students were able to complete the full autobiography—one year, COVID-19 disruptions left insufficient time—our current FGC student is on track to finish his autobiography by March 2026.

How did such a diverse group of students find their way to the Oiso Shonan mountaintop? And how did I become a teacher of students from two of the smallest countries on two continents on that same mountaintop? The Foundation for Global Children was the catalyst that brought us together. Mr. Miyazawa's vision is a remarkable achievement.

During the autobiography project, I asked my students, "What was the most unexpected experience you've had in Japan?" A student from Eritrea looked at me directly and replied enthusiastically and with a bit of amazement, "You."

If I were asked the same question, my answer would be similar. Yes, it's you—FGC students—who have brought all our worlds closer together.

Final Thoughts

A small passage from the enchanting book,"Citadelle" by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, Section: LXXV, 687, provided me some insight on the purpose of education.

You may have come to know this celebrated French philosopher through his enthralling book, *The Little Prince*. The following passage serves as a prelude to the subsequent thought exemplifying my belief in the humanistic character of teaching and learning.

As you read engage with the words and consider what you might think is the ultimate outcome of teaching:

CREATING THE SHIP ISN'T ABOUT WEAVING THE SAILS, FORGING
THE NAILS, READING THE STARS,
BUT RATHER
IMPARTING A TASTE FOR THE SEA.
AND IN THIS LIGHT, THERE IS NO LONGER CONFLICT,
BUT IN COMMUNITY THERE IS LOVE.

For me after reading the passage, I substituted a few words, making the passage
germane to teaching and learning:

TEACHING AND LEARNING ISN'T ABOUT CURRICULUM
EXCELLENCE, DEVELOPING CITIZENSHIP OR CULTURAL
CONTINUITY BUT RATHER IMPARTING A TASTE FOR **CONTINUING
LEARNING.**
IN THIS LIGHT, THERE IS NO LONGER CONFLICT, BUT IN COMMUNITY
THERE IS LOVE.

Conclusion

The Renaissance mentioned in the title represents personal rejuvenation. Prior
to joining the FGC faculty I was a teacher educator in the USA. I had also taught
elementary and secondary students in public school districts for 15 years. From
these perspective I witnessed the seeemingly constant mayhem in that nation's
public school. Several swings occurred during my time. A thrust toward equity,
achievement, the creation of the Department of Education, STEM, and Standards.
What trend will next capture and enrapture the educational community? A com-
munity whose fickleness can be attributed to bureaucrats whose educational agen-
das are seemingly devoid of the taste for continuing learning? I would like to see
a renaissance leading to a collective educational vision of respect and cultivation
of student *lived experience* attaching to the souls of educators everywhere—re-
gardless of any specific system in which you work—Montessori, Public, Gifted,
Progressive, Special Needs, International, Religious, Spiritual, or non-graded.

Note

[1] Lived eperience has become very popular and its usage while purporting to be
phenomenologically inspired should not be interchanged with the ideas of philosophers
Husserl, Heidegger, and Merleau-Ponty, all of whom recognized the profond etilogy of
personal experience on past, current, and future actions and deriving behaviors from that
exerience.

Less and Less Curious

Alfie Kohn

Abstract

A diminished desire to find out, to be curious, only gets worse as kids make their way through traditional schools.[14] Often we don't notice—either because, as Engel warns, we think it's sufficient that a teacher is a nice, caring person or because we're falsely reassured by high achieving (albeit joyless) students. As early-childhood educator Lillian Weber put it, too many kids start out as exclamation points and question marks, but leave school as plain periods.[15]

Sure, everyone says curiosity is a lovely thing. But are we able to identify—and willing to oppose—the traditional practices and policies that fail to nurture and even actively discourage it? This piece explores this troubling truth.

Less and Less Curious

When Susan Engel, a developmental psychologist and teacher-educator at Williams College, decided to spend a few months observing suburban elementary schools, she had a specific goal in mind: to study variations in rates of children's curiosity. Which kids asked lots of questions? Which classrooms tended to encourage that? But Engel discovered that it was almost impossible to make meaningful comparisons because "there was such an astonishingly low rate of curiosity in any of the classrooms we visited."

What she kept encountering—during that project and since—were children who had learned not to bother wondering. If a classmate did volunteer a fascinated observation ("A bird flew right into my house!") or a question ("Why would it do that?"), it was soon obvious that the teacher would probably offer a perfunctory response and then direct the child back to the planned lesson. In one classroom, Engel heard the teacher say, "I can't answer questions right now. Now it's time for learning."[1]

For more than half a century, researchers have studied our desire to explore just for the sake of exploring, our itch to make sense of the unexpected.[2] The eminent educator Seymour Sarason argued that education should be dedicated, above all else, to stimulating the "intellectual curiosity, awe, and wonder that a child possesses when he or she begins schooling." Or at least avoid killing it.[3]

Curiosity is valuable in its own right—a passport to a richer, more fulfilling life—and not just for children. But it also contributes to academic achievement and, more important, to intellectual flourishing. Conservative commentators like to emphasize the importance of having students learn to pay attention and delay gratification,[4] but a 2018 study in *Pediatric Research*[5] found that pure curiosity promoted more effective learning regardless of the child's level of "effortful control."

In fact, not only was curiosity "associated with higher academic achievement in all children," but the researchers discovered to their surprise that its benefits were greatest for kids from low-income families. (Sadly, such students are disproportionately likely to face a regimented form of instruction in which compliance is prized over discovery.)

Left to their own devices, children will often seek answers to the questions that bubble up in them. But adults can help[6]—less by providing those answers than by eliciting, reframing, and building on their questions. They can call attention to connections between what different kids are asking. They can assist a community of learners in finding resources and thinking more deeply as they explore.

How, specifically, should teachers nurture curiosity, taking advantage of what Jerome Bruner once called the "energizing lure of uncertainty"?

> Not just by welcoming students' questions when they diverge from the curriculum but by rethinking the curriculum itself, constructing it *with* students, not just for them, to address their questions about the world. That includes questions to which the teacher doesn't know the answer— and, indeed, questions that don't *have* a single right answer.

> By offering readings that cover complex and controversial topics in genuinely interesting ways. (That's very different from depending on cutesy games or apps to tart up unengaging tasks.)

> By "priming the pump" when necessary: suggesting questions or offering information that piques students' curiosity about things they haven't yet considered.

> By being curious themselves. A study coauthored by Engel confirmed that "the teacher's own behavior has a powerful effect on a child's disposition to explore."[7] Perhaps curiosity belongs on an administrator's list of qualities to look for in job applicants.

> By being keen to learn how each student's mind works. Outstanding

teachers tend to do more listening than talking—in part because, as Harvard educator Eleanor Duckworth argued, the more intensely interested a teacher is in a kid's thinking, the more interested the kid becomes in her own thinking.

By providing students with what psychological theorists call "autonomy support"—encouraging a sense of self-determination — which has been shown to heighten both intrinsic motivation (a concept very similar to curiosity) and the quality of learning.[8]

Alas, these recommendations for teachers often run smack into structural constraints: an inflexible schedule that doesn't leave time for exploration; a principal who insists on quiet, orderly classrooms; a central office that imposes a standardized curriculum; a school board that cares less about learning than about test scores.

Other traditional practices, too—unhelpful but rarely questioned—have a similar effect. Among the most reliable extinguishers of the flame of curiosity are mandatory homework (making students work a second shift after a full day in school), grades and rubrics (which signal that success matters more than learning), a preoccupation with rigor (which often elicits anxiety, smothering curiosity),[9] and the use of rewards or punishments to enforce this regimen.

Then there is the harm caused by teacher-centered direct instruction, particularly when it's scripted or otherwise tightly controlled. Much of the problem comes from construing learning as a list of facts to be memorized or discrete skills to be practiced. The loss of curiosity is a paradigmatic example of how a focus on those short-term goals can result in deleterious side effects.[10]

Elizabeth Bonawitz at the University of California, Berkeley, and her colleagues found[11] that when young children were shown exactly how to do something, they subsequently engaged in less exploration on their own than those who had received no explicit direction. Likewise, enthusiasm about reading—a key predictor of proficiency—tends to be lower when children are subjected to systematic phonics-based instruction rather than a more authentic, literature-based approach, as Dominic Wyse and Charlotte Hacking explain in their new book *The Balancing Act*.[12] Math teacher Paul Lockhart, meanwhile, described the conventional curriculum in his field as "a proven cure for curiosity"[13]—which is also an apt epithet for worksheets.

What Susan Engel discovered to her dismay in the early grades—a diminished desire to find out—only gets worse as kids make their way through traditional schools.[14] Often we don't notice—either because, as Engel warns, we think it's sufficient that a teacher is a nice, caring person or because we're falsely reassured by high achieving (albeit joyless) students. As early-childhood educator Lillian Weber put it, too many kids start out as exclamation points and question marks, but leave school as plain periods.[15]

Sure, everyone says curiosity is a lovely thing. But are we able to identify—and willing to oppose—the traditional practices and policies that fail to nurture and even actively discourage it?

Notes

[1] Susan Engel, *The Hungry Mind: The Origins of Curiosity in Childhood* (Harvard University Press, 2015), pp. 87-89, 100; and "Children's Need to Know: Curiosity in Schools," *Harvard Educational Review* 81 (2011), p. 633.

[2] The beginning of systematic research into curiosity is generally traced back to D. E. Berlyne's work in the 1950s and 1960s with both rats (which demonstrated a preference for novelty and, even when hungry, stopped eating to explore their surroundings) and humans (who were better able to answer those questions that they had identified as surprising or engaging). Like most concepts, curiosity becomes more complex under close examination: Conclusions about its nature, its genesis, and its effects will vary depending on whether we're talking about an enduring trait (more common in some individuals than others) or a temporary state that just about everyone experiences from time to time. In the latter, curiosity may be merely reactive (to a certain stimulus, such as wanting to know what those people over there are whispering about), whereas, for some people, it can be proactive (meaning that such individuals actively seek out questions to answer and mysteries to explore). For a useful review of theory and research on the topic, see George Loewenstein, "The Psychology of Curiosity," *Psychological Bulletin,* 116 (1994): 75-98. For more on how curiosity in an educational context differs from related concepts such as play, engagement, and hands-on learning, see Engel, 2015, pp. 98, 166; and 2011, pp. 640-42.

[3] Seymour Sarason, "Some Reactions to What We Have Learned," *Phi Delta Kappan*, September 1995, p. 85.

[4] Effortful control—and related concepts such as self-discipline, self-regulation, and "grit"—become less necessary when curiosity is aroused or, more generally, when people care about what they're doing. A narrow focus on promoting self-discipline in students may distract us from asking how much value there is in what students have been required to learn or whether they had any say in the matter.

[5] Prachi E. Shah et al., "Early Childhood Curiosity and Kindergarten Reading and Math Academic Achievement," *Pediatric Research, 84* (2018): 380-86.

[6] Engel (2011, p. 638) cautions that some progressive educators, including Montessori teachers, tend to "underplay the role of adults" in children's discovery. Their classrooms may be notable for how quiet they are, with kids "busily working on their own," thereby missing out "on the unique opportunities afforded by asking questions and discussing answers….Talking about what interests or perplexes children gives them a chance to cultivate and expand their curiosity as an intellectual tool."

[7] Engel, 2011, p. 636.

[8] Another way to promote curiosity is to make sure that tasks are neither too simple nor too difficult. And one remarkably effective way to achieve that optimal level of challenge is to give the students themselves more say about what they're doing, a key aspect of autonomy support. Some research suggests that students often choose projects and readings that are just beyond their current level of competence. However, this is less true in the presence of grades, rubrics, or rewards for success, all of which lead

them to opt for easier tasks—those they're more likely to succeed at than to learn from. (See, for example, Fred W. Danner and Edward Lonky, "A Cognitive-Developmental Approach to the Effects of Rewards on Intrinsic Motivation," *Child Development* 52 [1981]: 1043-52.)

[9] One example of the perils of overvaluing rigor is the tendency to assume that whatever is more difficult must be of higher quality. Take Advanced Placement courses, for example. Often, as John Tierney remarked, "The AP classroom is where intellectual curiosity goes to die." This is why eight independent schools in the Washington, D.C. area jointly announced in 2018, "We will better equip our students for further study and for life beyond the classroom by eliminating AP courses entirely" and replacing them with courses that "demonstrate respect for students' intellectual curiosity."

[10] Yong Zhao, *What Works May Hurt: Side Effects in Education* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2018).

[11] Elizabeth Bonawitz et al., "The Double-Edged Sword of Pedagogy: Instruction Limits Spontaneous Exploration and Discovery," *Cognition, 20* (2011): 322-30.

[12] Contrary to the claims offered by "science of reading" partisans, there is no convincing evidence that this loss of enthusiasm is offset by higher levels of reading proficiency, particularly with respect to the most important aspects of literacy. (This is partly because motivation, a phenomenon typically ignored by those favoring the SOR label, is itself a powerful contributor to proficiency.) For more on what the evidence actually says on this topic, see Robert J. Tierney and P. David Pearson: *Fact-Checking the Science of Reading* (Literacy Research Commons, 2024); Dominic Wyse and Charlotte Hacking, *The Balancing Act* (Routledge, 2024); David Reinking et al., "Legislating Phonics: Settled Science or Political Polemics?", *Teachers College Record* 125 (2023): 104-31; Peter Johnston and Donna Scanlon, "An Examination of Dyslexia Research and Instruction with Policy Implications," *Literacy Research: Theory, Method, and Practice* 70 (2021): 107-28; Jeffrey S. Bowers, "Reconsidering the Evidence That Systematic Phonics Is More Effective Than Alternative Methods of Reading Instruction," *Educational Psychology Review* 32 (2020): 681-705; and Catherine Compton-Lilly et al., "Stories Grounded in Decades of Research: What We Truly Know About the Teaching of Reading," *The Reading Teacher* 77 (2023): 392-400.

[13] Paul Lockhart, *A Mathematician's Lament* (New York: Bellevue Literary Press, 2009).

[14] For evidence of this diminution of intrinsic motivation as students continue through school, see Susan Harter and Bradley K. Jackson, "Trait vs. Nontrait Conceptualizations of Intrinsic/Extrinsic Motivational Orientation," *Motivation and Emotion,* 16 (1992): 209-30; Eric M. Anderman and Allison J. Young, "Motivation and Strategy Use in Science," *Journal of Research in Science Teaching,* 31 (1994): 811-31; and Mark R. Lepper et al., "Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation: A Developmental Perspective," in *Developmental Psychopathology*, ed. by S. S. Luthar et al. (Cambridge University Press, 1997).

[15] Weber is quoted in William Ayers, *Teaching Toward Freedom* (Beacon Press, 2004), p. 41.

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Curiosity and the Metamorphosis of Consciousness

John LaCorte

"Curiosity is the Wick in the Candle of Learning"
attributed to William Arthur Ward

Watching a toddler exploring its new environment, touching, moving, and looking at the myriad of objects in which it is immersed, we see the initial flickers of the essential survival mechanism we call Curiosity, the primal instinct in all living things that reaches back to our primal origins at the cellular level. Through a selective mechanism called "chemotaxis" (chemical movement), going back to our pre-historic origins, cellular organisms are attracted to beneficial substances and avoid harmful ones.

In an infant's unending exploration, when they find their favorite objects, certain mental representations become fixed—that is, certain neuronal connections are formed in the brain. During the first few years of life, the human brain is particularly adept at creating millions of connections, which will be the foundation of all future learning, including the ability to utilize abstraction and metaphors, empowering Curiosity to explore the world in ever-creative ways and providing our sense of purpose in this strange world of consciousness.

Abstract

This article explores the deep cultural roots of human curiosity by examining ancient myths and religious stories across civilizations, from the biblical Fall of Man to the tales of Pandora, Yima, and the transition from Satya Yuga to Kali Yuga. These narratives share a common arc: an initial state of paradise disrupted by a quest for forbidden knowledge—often sparked by curiosity—and followed by a fall into suffering and separation from the divine. Drawing on the work of mythologist Joseph Campbell and psychologist Julian Jaynes, the article argues that these stories are not merely historical or literary relics but reflections of profound shifts in human consciousness. In particular, it highlights Jaynes's theory

that early humans once experienced divine guidance through hallucinatory voices, and that modern self-awareness—our sense of being autonomous, decision-making individuals—emerged only after those voices fell silent. The piece ultimately suggests that curiosity, while often celebrated, has historically been portrayed as a dangerous force—one that catalyzes the human condition as we know it.

Part I - We Have Become Our Own Gods

Perhaps the best way to begin a meditation on Curiosity is to start with a mystery. So, let us look at a pervasive storyline in ancient literature. Once upon a time, things were truly wonderful: No disease, hardship, or death. Then, something happened that resulted in what we can identify as the end of Paradise. At least, this is the story that many instances of ancient literature converge on.

In Western culture, the most widely known instance is found in what we now identify as the Old Testament in the Book of Genesis. Initially, Adam and Eve live blissfully in the Garden of Eden (derived from the Hebrew term (en), which means "delight). Adam and Eve spoke with God, the creator who cared for them. They were to live forever in this state of happiness and contentment. There was only one requirement: *"You must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it, you will certainly die."* (Genesis 2:17).

The serpent (which in Greek and Hindu cultures represents healing and wisdom) appeals to Eve's Curiosity, goading her to explore the effects of eating the forbidden fruit. The effects are sudden and disastrous: Fear, pain, toil, and death, and communication with God ceases (although God will later converse with Cain, Noah, Abraham, and Moses.)

We find similar themes in the Greek story of Pandora's Curiosity and the Forbidden Box. The Hindu tradition defines the transition from the Satya Yuga, a period of complete harmony with the cosmic order, to the present Kali Yuga, characterized by ignorance and conflict. In the Persian Zoroastrian tradition, the world was created by Ahura Mazda but governed by the divine king, Yima. This amicable relationship continues until Yima becomes prideful and claims credit for the harmonious world. As with the Old Testament story, Paradise is transformed into a world of suffering, pain, and death. Still other parallels can be found in Mayan, Chinese, and Norse mythology.

Joseph Campbell (1904–1987) was an American mythologist who gained much notoriety exploring the profound importance to the coherence of society held by myths. In 1949, he published his now renowned *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, which presents his theory of monomyth: Looking at the cultural stories around the world, we find a common pattern. The public knows Campbell best for his PBS interview series *The Power of Myth*. He was instrumental in bringing our attention to the fact that myths are the foundations of cultures and that these stories express forgotten memories: "Myth is much more important and true than history. History is just journalism, and you know how reliable that is."

The psychologist Julian Jaynes took the Old Testament stories as well as the *Illiad*, *The Odyssey*, *Gilgamesh*, and others in which gods communicate with humans to represent something important about the evolution of human consciousness. In his 1976 book titled *The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind,* he theorizes that our idea of ourselves as introspective, autonomous, and capable of initiating actions on our own has existed for only a few thousand years; before that, human activity was directed by hallucinatory voices and, in some cases, visions interpreted as coming from gods. Humans acted uncritically in response to the admonitions of the gods. Whatever the voices said to do was done. However, at some point, the gods went silent. This is the crucible for the creation of what we experience as our ego, the "I" that is the focus of our thinking.

Star Trek fans will recall an episode in the original television series entitled "Who Mourns for Adonais?" in which Apollo is distraught that Kirk and crew refuse to worship him, as did the ancient humans. To quote Jaynes*: "We have become our own gods."*

There have been anthropological findings in which civilizations suddenly disappear: Mayans and the occupants of the pueblos at Chaco Canyon in New Mexico are examples. The standard anthropological explanation is droughts, disease, or war, although there is no direct evidence that they were causes. Jaynes would hold that they lived bicamerally until the gods' voices suddenly stopped instructing them, leaving societal chaos.

The beginnings of Jaynes's speculation can be traced back to the 1940s. At that time, there were no effective chemical treatments for severe epilepsy. However, it was found that if the nerve bundle that bridges the right and left cerebral cortices, called the corpus callosum, is severed, the result is that the uncontrolled cascade of nerve impulses that characterize an epileptic episode is significantly mitigated. This method is still utilized for severe cases.

In the 1960s, Roger Sperry, an American neuropsychologist and neurobiologist, and his colleagues were curious about what each of the two hemispheres of the cerebral cortex does, so they took the opportunity to pursue some non-invasive observation. The Sperry group received the Nobel Prize for their groundbreaking work on the lateralization of brain function.

In one of the core experiments, the patient would be asked to cover the left eye (the way we are wired, the left brain controls the right side of the body and vice versa). Thus, sensory input to the right hemisphere is blocked. The patient is given a picture of an easily identifiable object, such as a dog, a house, etc., to look at with the right eye. The patient is then asked to identify the picture. The result: On some intuitive level, the patient knows what it is but cannot name the object. However, when the left eye is uncovered, the patient can immediately name the object.

This and other studies determined that our left cerebral cortex is dominant for language, logical thinking, and analytical tasks, and the right governs our spatial awareness, creativity, intuition, and emotional processing. Herein is the neuro-

physiological basis for what Jaynes will identify as the Bicameral (from the Latin, *Camera* meaning room or chamber) mind.

In ancient works such as the *Illiad* and the Old Testament, Jaynes finds direct testimony establishing the hearing of what appears to be outside voices directing activity. He theorizes that these voices are initiated in the right brain, the creative and intuitive side, and then interpreted as voices on the left side, the language side. In the animistic period of early religion, before the appearance of gods, voices were associated with specific stones, trees, or burning bushes. As social groups grew and became more complex, the voices became insufficient, confused, and finally disappeared. What took their place is a fascinating leap in the evolution of human consciousness.

We went from primal, inarticulate grunts and groans to developing a vocabulary of more articulate sounds to identify specific objects. This creates a feedback system that instigates the formation of categorizing words such as rocks and trees. Once the leap to the creation of abstract ideas is achieved, the way is paved for the creation of a singular idea that will be the focus of the voices within the mind—the creation of the "I" or ego. To quote Jaynes:

> Consciousness is an analog of what is called the real world. It is built up with a vocabulary or lexical field whose terms are all metaphors or analogs of behavior in the physical world. And this metaphor 'me' is then used in various grammatical constructions to narratize the whole consciousness, to make up the story of ourselves. (OCBB Book 1 Chapter 1)

Today, 10 to 15% of people manifesting no mental illness report having had auditory hallucinations. Jaynes suggests that "Schizophrenia is a vestige of bicamerality, a reversion to an earlier mentality in which the two hemispheres of the brain functioned differently, with one side 'speaking' and the other obeying, just as in ancient civilizations where the voices of gods commanded men." (OC Book 3, Ch5).

Jaynes contrasts the bicameral mind in the Illiad with that of the later Odyssey, in which there is individual thought, planning, and even deception, as in the story of the wooden horse and Helen of Troy. One can surmise that the Greeks were a bit ahead of the consciousness curve since the Trojans had not yet developed a sense of deception and, therefore, did not suspect anything untoward about the big gift from the Greeks. In any case, the contrast illustrates Jaynes's point about the evolution from bi-cameral to ego-centered consciousness. Centuries later, Descartes will write what he took to be an indisputable truth, a "clear and distinct idea"—"*Je pense, donc je suis*." (*Discours de la method*)

In the Middle Ages, the transformative metaphysician and theologian Thomas Aquinas distinguished between the Intellect and the Will: The Will must always choose the Good. The Intellect is curious and constantly trying to determine what Good is. But once decided, the Will must unwaveringly pursue it. A simplification, of course, but the model does seem to carry vestiges of bi-camerality.

In all the transition stories, there are extended periods in which little happens, followed by rapid change and a return to relative stability. The pattern of relative tranquility and then spurts of rapid change is pervasive. In the 1970s, paleontologists Stephen Jay Gould and Niles Eldredge proposed a pattern for evolution called "Punctuated Equilibrium." There are extended periods of stasis where nothing changes much, and then there is a sudden burst change again, followed by a long period of stasis.

The same pattern was echoed in 1977 when Ilya Prigogine received the Nobel Prize in Chemistry "for his contributions to non-equilibrium thermodynamics, particularly the theory of dissipative structures." Put simply, when a system's complexity reaches a point where it can no longer maintain its integrity, it will collapse and reorganize itself to accommodate the greater complexity. It would appear from the transition stories that whatever changes took place, they occurred relatively quickly after a long period of tranquility. This insight occurred several years after Jaynes wrote his book. Still, I suspect Jaynes would find this model compatible with his understanding of what brought about the silencing of the gods.

Evolution of the Gods

Another way of looking at the evolution of the ability to think about the world around us is by tracing the evolution of religion.

The Enlightenment philosopher Giambattista Vico, in his magnum opus, *Principles of the New Science Concerning the Common Nature of Nations,* or, more simply, *The New Science*, first published in 1725, extrapolates from his study of ancient literature that the foundation of our progress is to be found in our ability to create symbols and abstractions. He delineates three distinct sequential stages: Age of the Gods (*Età degli Dei*), The Age of Heroes (*Età degli Eroi*), and the Age of Men (*Età degli Uomini*).

Sir James George Frazer (1854–1941) was a Scottish anthropologist who published his seminal work, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Comparative Religion*. For Frazer, there are three essential stages to the evolution of religious consciousness: The magical, religious, and the scientific.

Language and Abstraction:
How Can We Understand What We Are Talking About?

In his seminal book *Science and Sanity* (1948), Alfred Korzybski does an in-depth study of the power of language to frame our understanding of the world. He observes that we have been locked into an imprisoning dualistic pattern of thought that he traces back to Aristotle. (And by implication, Aristotle's teacher, Plato.) The philosopher Alfred North Whitehead (1861-1947) famously observed: "The safest general characterization of the European philosophical tradition is that it consists of a series of footnotes to Plato," in *Process and Reality* (1929)

According to Korzypski, we are held captive by our rigid and simplistic A and Not-A logic. Our thinking needs to become less confined and, at the same time, more critical. Our Aristotelean logic locks into strict dualities: It is good, or it is bad, right or wrong, etc., rather than realizing that the meanings are fluid. The word is not the object but a generalized approximation of a data set.

Plato, Aristotle, and the Judeo-Christian culture that followed sought to know timeless, immutable truths. However, Korzypski maintains that we are time-binders. We create meaning over time within context, evolution, and history. One must be able to move freely around the monkey bars of abstraction.

The Map Is Not the Territory

Korzypsky's point is that we mistake the map for the territory. We believe that because we have a word for something, we fully understand what the word represents. It results from our ambiguous use of the verb "to be." Imagine you are being guided through a botanical garden. You come to an interesting plant you have never seen and ask: What is that? Your guide tells you it's a Rosa canina. You now have a sense of satisfaction knowing what it "is."

Another way to get an insight into our language is to contrast it with others, particularly languages that do not have Latin origins. It is always interesting to see how some of our concepts are expressed in other languages that are not Latin-based. In German, for example, the word for Curiosity is *Neugier,* which translates to new-greed, an eagerness for the new. It can also mean nosiness.

The terrain of meaning gets more interesting if we venture into non-western languages. Mandarin Chinese uses many compound words to form a single concept—for example, the word for computer is (*diànnao*), electric brain. The word for Curiosity is (*hàoqíxin),* literally, happy or like, strange or unusual, and heart, in this instance meaning a state of mind: being fond of the peculiar.

The connotations and nuances will vary even if the denotation is similar. Some will be more positive, some more negative.

Korzypski was writing his book during WWII and was fully aware of the human follies engendered by conflating the symbolic representations of reality with reality itself. The uncritical use of abstractions such as "honor," "good," and evil can be used to justify any action, even the genocide of the war. (His work in a language called "General Semantics" also helped treat PTSD in shell-shocked soldiers.)

One of the exercises I used in my classes to illustrate the point is a general semantics tool called the "Wisdom Machine." I would have my students create a list of what I would call higher-order abstractions: Happiness, Goodness, Sadness, Prudence, Justice, etc. These kinds of words continually influence our thinking and determine our actions.

I would then give them sentence patterns in which they randomly were to insert words from the list. For example:

_____ without _____ is _____.
_____ ends when _____ begins.
This is an age of _____ and _____.
_____ and _____ (Title of book).

Try using the word Curiosity in any of these examples.

The issue becomes even more evident if one seeks to differentiate kinds of Curiosity. This little thought experiment renders a virtually unlimited list of possibilities: Epistemic, Empathetic, Existential, Morbid, Religious, Historical, Scientific, and Philosophical are but a few.

Or, if we try to define what Curiosity IS:

> Curiosity is an innate desire.
> Curiosity is a motivational emotion
> Curiosity is a motivational state
> Curiosity is a cognitive drive
> Curiosity is an impulse
> Curiosity is an intellectual appetite
> Curiosity is an impetus
> Curiosity is a feeling of inquisitiveness
> Curiosity is a brain-driven response to novelty and uncertainty.
> Curiosity is a socially shaped trait that varies across societies
> Curiosity is the force that has driven human progress.

We shall revisit this topic shortly.

One More Distinction:
Realism, Nominalism and Conceptualism

We can define philosophy as the curious pursuit of ideas. Two closely related categories are metaphysics and epistemology. Ultimately, they seek to understand the relationship between language and reality. Over the centuries, three primary theories have emerged: Realism, Nominalism, and Conceptualism.

The origins of Realism in the West can be traced back to Plato. His worldview entails The "World of Ideas," the real world, and the "World of Appearance," the world of sensory perception. Most are familiar with the *Allegory of the Cave* found in Book VII of the Republic. It tells the story of prisoners chained in such a way that they can see only the wall in front of them. Behind them is a fire casting light onto the wall with objects, then casting shadows on it. The prisoners believe that the shadows manifest the real world. The shadows are vague copies of the actual objects.

There is a single perfect Idea for a dog: The "essence" of a dog—Doggness—the reason we can identify any particular dog no matter the species or size.

For Plato, there is a hierarchy of Ideas, with the idea of the Good being the highest. In the formative centuries of Christian doctrine, Plato's views dominated.

Following the lead of Augustine, Clement, Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, and Pseu-do-Dionysius were architects who blended Platonic Realism with Christian theology. Ultimately, the characteristics of the God of Christianity are consistent with Plato's Idea of the Good. It is worth mentioning that Kant echoes Plato's view by dividing the world into the unknown"noumena" and the experiential "phenomena."

Following a dialectical historical pattern (think Hegel), the "thesis" of Realism eventually meets its "antithesis: Nominalism. For the Realist, "Universals," i.e., specific abstract ideas, exist. For the Nominalist, as the name suggests, Universals are nothing more than names with no reference outside themselves. Occam's Razor is the principle by which the simplest is best when confronted with multiple explanations. The fewer assumptions, the better. Consistent with this view, William of Ockham (c. 1287–1347) was a staunch Nominalist insisting that the notion of abstract entities is unnecessary and, therefore, should be eliminated.

Finally, the Synthesis, called Conceptualism, takes the middle way: Universals do not exist in the physical world but exist in our minds as concepts. This view achieves firm grounding in the epistemology of John Locke, George Berkeley, and especially Rene Descartes, who says that the one thing we can be certain of is his "clear and distinct" ideas, the most important of which is the idea of himself. Thus, " I think, therefore I am."

Which of these categories do you think "curiosity" falls into?

An "Awful" Diversion

The etymologies of words provide an interesting historical record of the evolution of ideas. Sometimes, the meaning of a word will completely reverse over time. The word "awful" is a good example.

In Old English, awful meant filled with a sense of reverence before the power of God or nature. It shifts to meaning something terrible sometime in the 19th Century. This can be contrasted with awesome, which has retained its original meaning. What does this shift tell us? We can only speculate, of course, but it would appear that the reverential connotations of the word were diluted by it becoming a common term in not-so-reverential discourse. Here are some examples from Dickens: In *Oliver Twist*, Dickens writes, "It was a nice awful night," and in *Pickwick Papers*, he uses the phrase "an awful state of excitement."

As mentioned earlier, another aspect of this period was that the culture was gradually moving from a religious to a secular paradigm. Any term that acknowledged a higher power became increasingly rare in everyday discourse.

Curiosity: A Short History

The word curiosity has a long history, although it did not take on its current meaning until the 18th Century. Tracing back to its earliest form, we come upon the Latin word *cura* meaning attention or concern. Then, the word makes its way into

Old French as curiosité, carrying a tone of caution, fastidiousness, and exactitude. It retains a similar meaning as it enters the 13th Century's Middle English. For example, Chaucer uses the phrase: "With knottes of gold and curious werkmanship."

Its meaning, more consistent with its present use does not appear for another four centuries. We find this in Francis Bacon's *The Advancement of Learning* (1605):

> For men have entered into a desire of learning and knowledge, sometimes upon a natural curiosity and inquisitive appetite; sometimes to entertain their minds with variety and delight…

Did Curiosity Kill the Cat?

Looking at the history of the phrase "Curiosity killed the cat" can provide further insight into the transition in meaning.

It appears that the original form of the phrase was "care killed the cat appearing in the 16th Century and meaning sorrow or worry, harking back to its original Latin root, *cura*, meaning care and concern. In Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing,* Claudio, trying to convince Benedick not to worry too much, says, "What, courage, man! What though care killed a cat."

By the time we get to late 19th Century England, the term curious carried a tension between exploration and fear. This was around the time of the publication of Darwin's *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*. It was the final break that had been percolating during the Enlightenment. Questioning and doubting long-standing "truths" was still a bit scary, especially since one's eternal salvation might be at stake. However, the cumulative empirical information directly contradicting the old cosmologies was overwhelming.

Getting Hooked on Curiosity

In its earliest iteration, the term curiosity carried a sense of caution and, to some extent, fear. With the onset of the scientific method and the breaking of the fetters of religious dogmatism, we began to explore new worlds, not so much with fear and trepidation but with excitement and a sense of satisfaction. An analogous transition has taken place in our brains hormonally. The fear initially associated with the actions related to the uncertainty of whether something will kill you created adrenaline, the fight-or-flight hormone increasing heart rate and blood flow to the muscles, etc. Now that Curiosity is usually associated with much more benign activity, we have found that it is associated with adrenaline's milder cousin, dopamine.

The Progression of Paradigms

In his 1963 book, *Conjectures and Refutations: The Growth of Scientific Knowledge (*1963), philosopher Karl Popper outlines a path of Curiosity, showing

it as the basis for advancing all scientific knowledge and beyond. Popper sets forth a theory of learning that begins with the curious quest—"Why?" From that foundation, we pursue the possibilities as to the "because." To be valid, a conjecture must be subject to a process of refutation. If the refutation is successful, the conjecture fails; if the refutation is not successful, the conjecture is provisionally valid but will always be subject to the possibility of refutation.

When applied to political theory, Popper was critical of Plato, Hegel, and Marx since the metaphysical structures they set forth were absolute and not subject to negation.

At about the same time, in 1962, Thomas Kuhn published his well-known book*, The Structure of Scientific Revolution*, which approaches the Curiosity-driven progress of scientific knowledge in the context of shifting models or paradigms. If a paradigm can no longer account for the data it encompasses, it collapses, and a new one takes its place, awaiting yet another shift in the future. The paradigm shifts from Newtonian physics to Relativity Theory to Quantum mechanics are good examples: A fixed understanding of space and time evolves to understanding them in relativistic terms when considered in conjunction with velocity and gravity. The relativistic model is then further modified, or perhaps replaced, by a quantum model in which consciousness impacts events. Does sound exist if there is no one around to hear it? Do phenomena exist without some entity perceiving them?

This evolution in our fundamental understanding of reality and consciousness continues unabetted. Curiosity is now driving us to the precipice of yet another paradigm shift in our understanding of consciousness. Is it driving us randomly or leading us in some specific direction? Are we to embrace the opening lines of National Lampoon's 1972 poem, *Deteriorata*: "You are a fluke of the universe. You have no right to be here", or is there some *telos* we are pursuing?

The Jesuit priest, philosopher, and paleontologist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, in his book, *The Phenomenon of Man (*1955), and other works, proposes consciousness is in pursuit of an Omega Point, not as a final destination but a unification with a universal principle of consciousness in which we all participate. Gary Zukov, in his *Dancing Wu Li Masters* (1979), appeals to our understanding of the quantum model, joins it with Eastern Philosophy, and comes to a similar conclusion. In his 1930 book The Mysterious Universe, physicist James Jeans states, "The universe looks more like a great thought than a great machine." In response to Bohr's quantum theory, Einstein said, "God does not play dice with the universe."

Part II - The Metamorphosis: Human and Machine Consciousness

In 1970, Alan Toffler wrote an influential book entitled *Future Shock*. His premise is that all societies seek stability and continuity and adapt slowly to rapid change. Linear societal transformation is now exponential. What ensues is confusion, isolation, depression, the absence of a sense of permanence,

and principal stresses on the social order. Given the present uncertainties and threats of world conflict, economic collapse, and ecological and biological disasters, maintaining a sense of meaning and continuity with our present paradigm becomes even more elusive. To survive, we must restructure our understanding of the "I" of our consciousness. We need to be able to move from a closed system to one that breaks the fetters of strict either/or thinking as well as "This is how it has been, and therefore it is how it must be."

What Happened to Curiosity?

Once upon a time, it was common for children to ask questions like, Why is the sky blue? Why do leaves change color? Where do babies come from? Where do rainbows come from? Many families owned encyclopediae and used them. Libraries played a much greater role in providing fertile ground for intellectual exploration.

In the early days of television, programming was rich with educational content: Live telecasts of plays by Shakespeare and other great playwrights, live concerts of the New York Philharmonic and other great orchestras were common. In time, interest began to wane, although there were still productions that engaged the mind NOVA, Carl Sagan's *Cosmos, A Personal Journey* (1980), Jacob Bronowski's *The Ascent of Man* (1973), and James Burke's *Connections* (1978). Some vestiges remain, such as the ongoing NOVA series on PBS and paid subscription provider Curiosity Stream. What appears to have happened is that our attention span became shorter. Instead of dramas filled with deep character development and complex plot details, we transitioned programming with little more than a collection of brief and simple vignettes. Popular books suffered the same fate, moving from classical, intricately crafted novels by Austin, Bronte, Dickens, and Dostoyevski. Schools moved from classical curricula, including Latin, Plato, Aristotle, and other great thinkers, the requirement to study at least one foreign language, to insipid curricula focused on achieving a baseline competence in math and science, and even failing. Students were constantly challenged to engage ideas and write essays in longhand, all of which taught them the art of thinking.

Popular entertainment has moved from providing any uplifting programming to now being dominated by characterized vapid sexuality and gratuitous irrational violence; all focused on stimulating our primal limbic brain. An advanced extra-terrestrial looking at what we consider entertaining might assume that we have not yet evolved past bicameralism.

Another reason for the disappearance of Curiosity is the disappearance of leisure. From when we wake up to when we retire, there is constant activity, sound, external stimulation, and neo-cortical chatter. Recent studies show that the average person spends 10 to 12 hours a day on a screen, be they computer, television, or phone. Even if not watched, televisions are on to provide unrelenting sound.

The sound of silence is feared, not cherished. Recreation, derived from re-creation, is no longer a time to relax and regroup but is often filled with more activity. The gods may have gone silent, but we now seek to eradicate the silence. In his leisure, Einstein imagined traveling along with a beam of light and ultimately developed the Theory of Special Relativity. The famous mathematician Henri Poincaré recounts his frustration at being unable to figure out a mathematical problem. Then, one day, he was stepping off a bus, and the solution suddenly came.

We are hardwired for Curiosity, but it appears that the kind of Curiosity that matters, the kind that will be instrumental in guiding us through the turbid waters of change that we are now entering, has been short-circuited.

Pragmatic and Existential Curiosity

I have been using the term "curiosity" loosely, and it will be helpful to be a bit more specific now. As we have seen, one can identify many types of Curiosity. But for our purposes here, let us create a simple dichotomy: Two categories which, when taken together, encompass all forms of Curiosity. Let us call them "Pragmatic" Curiosity and "Existential" Curiosity. Pragmatic Curiosity includes everything derived from the scientific method, mathematics, and any system of inquiry characterized by definitions and rules and pursues a specific solution—the correct answer.

Existential Curiosity would include exploring ideas that do not yet have established rules or methodology. It is characterized by meanderings about possibilities that have not yet been actualized. This includes Curiosity, driven by a sense of wonder and awe: The wordless contemplation of one's awareness when struck by a deeply moving passage of music, a majestic sunset, or the simple realization of how amazing it is to be "conscious." Without this kind of Curiosity, we will not be able to meet the challenges we face as Artificial Intelligence gradually insinuates into every aspect of our daily lives.

What Is Machine Consciousness? The Turing Test

Alan Turing (1912-1954) was a British mathematician and computer scientist who broke Enigma, the German encryption system in World War II. (An excellent film entitled *The Imitation Game* very effectively tells the story). In 1950, he published a paper, "Computing Machinery and Intelligence," in which he set forth a set of criteria to be applied to determine if a machine is "intelligent." In the experiment, someone communicates with a person and a computer. If the person cannot distinguish the computer from the human, it is justifiable to characterize it as "intelligent." We have now reached the point where interactive AI can easily pass the Turing Test.

Let us test some possible futures. And the best media for that are books and films that pursue the question "What if?", i.e., Science/Speculative Fiction.

In 2013, Spike Jones directed a provocative film entitled *Her*. In the story, a lonely Theodore Twombly installs an advanced AI program designed to learn, evolve, mimic human emotions, and interact humanly. Its feminine voice (excellently portrayed by Scarlett Johanson) is rich with charm, Curiosity, and concern with a touch of the sultry. No spoilers here. In 2013, the film was a fascinating exploration of what could be. It is now a kind of documentary of what is actually happening.

A generally optimistic view of the association of humans with robots is found in Isaac Asimov's 1950s series of nine thought-provoking short stories entitled *I Robot* (as for the movie, any resemblance to the book is purely coincidental). The plots all have the Three Laws of Robotics as a backdrop, testing and probing to see how these laws would work in extraordinary situations:

> First, A robot may not injure a human being or, through inaction, allow a human being to come to harm.

> Second: A robot must obey the orders given it by human beings, except where such orders would conflict with the First Law.

> Third: A robot must protect its own existence as long as such protection does not conflict with the First or Second Law.

The robots have highly sophisticated and complex positronic brains subject to difficulties. Robo-psychologist Susan Calvin is there to help, playing fascinating roles in several stories.

Another positive vision is found in the sleeper movie, inspired by one of Asimov's short stories and with a profoundly moving performance by Robin Williams entitled *Bicentennial Man*. It explores the possibilities of an android becoming acknowledged as a full member of human society.

We get a little darker with Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep*—along with Ridley Scotts' visually stunning interpretation in his 1982 *Bladerunner*. (The 2017 remake is more esoteric and goes further afield of the book).

In these stories, humans have retained their humanity. However, other stories explore the possibility that humans have completely succumbed to AI, preferring to exchange creativity and freedom for stasis and security. As far back as 1909, the author of *A Room with a View*, E.M. Foster, wrote a book entitled *The Machine Stops* in which humans are isolated in hexagonal cells and entirely dependent on "The Machine" providing everything: education, conversation, entertainment: No exploration outside the cell, no contact with other humans. The machine is their god. Stasis is Paradise. Progress is decay. Similar themes are found in *City* by Clifford D. Simak, the film and book *Logan's Run,* and in the original *Star Trek* Series, "For the World is Hollow and I Touched the Sky" (Season 3, Episode 8). Also, George Lucas's first film, *THX1138,* brings an interesting twist to the Adam and Eve story - the protagonists, THX1138 and LUH3417 (whose names are modeled after the California license plate sequence), are guilty of "criminal drug evasion."

So much science fiction has been predictive. Asimov, along with Jules Verne, William Gibson, George Orwell, Philip K. Dick, and H.G. Wells, to name a few, have been prescient in their understanding of what the future holds. It would be a mistake to dismiss the stories as mere fiction. Without changing the course of our limited binary thinking, we will eventually become indistinguishable from the computer's binary language. Instead of becoming our own gods, we will become our own robots.

Shall we be open to a new understanding of consciousness that can work synergistically and productively with computer intelligence, or will we be overcome with fear and dogma? Now is the time we must move courageously forward and utilize the powers of abstraction that liberated us from our bicameral origins to open new realms of thought, re-energize the Curiosity deeply wired in our brains, and go where no human has gone before!

Postscript - The Elephant in the Classroom

The only real hope we have to be adequately prepared to adapt to the AI revolution is to provide our children with essential preparation by creating a new education system paradigm that radically changes goals and methodologies. AI itself can be a powerful tool in this educational paradigm shift. It has already reached a level of sophistication that, interactively, can easily pass the Turing Test. We already see self-driving taxis on the street, with many more coming within the following year. Intelligent robots capable of intricate chores are just around the corner.

Properly harnessed AI allows us to provide every child with a highly educated personal tutor entirely attuned to the individual's psychological and pedagogical needs. Such a tutor can draw on unlimited pedagogical methodologies and educational resources to provide an exciting, invigorating, thought-provoking, tailor-made curriculum. Also, a tutor brings to bear humor, entertainment, and other tools to stimulate learning and foster interest. In 1979, Sheila Ostrander and Lynn Schroeder published a book entitled "Superlearning," dealing with simple techniques that enhance brain function and memory. There is a lot more science now available regarding techniques for accelerated learning. No human teacher can come close to this capability.

In this new paradigm, human teachers take on the role of facilitators. They would provide students with essential human contact, conversation, interaction, encouragement, and direction. They will be an integral part of the entire educational dynamic.

These are revolutionary methods required for revolutionary times. Many will be uncomfortable, if not scandalized, by such a proposal, especially those with a vested interest in maintaining the status quo. It will be essential to see AI as a necessary component in the progress of human consciousness. To do this, we need to break down the present pedagogical institutions that are evolutionary dead ends that spell disaster for our future.

At the center of the resistance will be the teacher unions, which will spend millions to counter any attempt to make a transition. All institutions place the perpetuation of themselves as their highest priority. First and foremost, these are

labor unions that place the vested interest of their members above supporting quality education. The disintegration of the preparation of our students over the last few decades is a clear manifestation of that. If there were real concerns, it would never happen. The idea of a "labor union" being responsible for quality education is a non-sequitur. The education of our children is not a labor issue. It is an issue of uncompromising, selfless commitment. We now need Educational Unions made up of truly devoted individuals from all areas who can contribute to excellence in education and focus on bringing joy and excitement to the learning experience. Education that truly "leads the student out" (e-ducere). Teachers and others truly devoted to education will be open to facilitating the transition.

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The Politics of Curiosity
A Rant

Tyson E. Lewis

If Paulo Freire once said that "I am the most curious person," then we can contrast this with Donald Trump who is, without a doubt, the most incurious person in the world. In fact, this might very well be the decisive difference between leftists and fascists. Leftists, like Freire, are open to that which is unknown to them. They are receptive to difference, and to the possibility that their knowledge is incomplete. They admit that there is something that they have yet to learn, which might place them in a position of vulnerability. For Freire, this meant entering into communities with a certain amount of epistemological curiosity *and* epistemological humility. Trump and his MAGA supporters lack both of these constitutive aspects of curiosity. Instead of opening themselves up to difference and to the possibility that they might not know something, they close themselves off, retreating from encounters that could be challenging to their beliefs.

In the classic text *Prophets of Deceit: A Study of the Techniques of the American Agitator* (1949/2021), Leo Löwenthal and Norbert Guterman unpacked the forms of media manipulation used by American proto-fascist radio personalities. A key feature of their technique was "agitation." Agitation starts with a low-grade sense of general unease or social malaise and then intensifies it. Agitation is a heightening and exaggeration of rather vague affects, drumming them up so that they become inflamed. The American agitator then projects these affects outward onto an opponent who is coded as a threat, traitor, or parasite undermining American values and ways of life. The result is a paranoid, hyper-alertness in which one must always be on-guard, policing the boundaries and borders for trespassers and infiltrators. Everyone becomes a suspect.

Paranoia is thus the fascist version of curiosity—it is an inverted/poisoned form of curiosity, or curiosity turning against itself. It is indeed concerned with

the other, but the other is overcoded with reductive and negative stereotypes. There is little concern for the other *as other*. Nothing can be learned from the other except confirmation of existing stereotypes. Paranoia is incapable of listening (and thus learning) from others. Instead of epistemological curiosity, the paranoid individual has a sense of epistemological superiority. They always know the secret conspiracies that others fail to see. The assumption is that everyone else is a dupe, and that only they see clearly. But what they see is only the projection of their own internal contradictions out onto the other. Their internal lack becomes an intolerable presence that must be externalized so as to substantiate their belief in their own ethical and political righteousness as saviors of civilization or guardians of purity.

The paranoid fascist cannot critically-self reflect. The conspiracy theories they hold are absolute, infallible, non-falsifiable stories. No evidence can be provided that could possibly cause the fascist to critically reflect on the epistemological assumptions underlying conspiratorial claims. Indeed, agitation is so all consuming that there is no space or time for reflection of any kind. In a constant state of heightened alertness, one cannot step back and question motives or assumptions. Agitation creates a state of non-thinking coupled with hyper-reactive actions. Curiosity, on the other hand, is not only curious and open to others but also critically self-reflexive about its own *internal* otherness. Critical consciousness raising, for Freire, concerns not only external social, political, and economic contradictions, but also how individuals internalize and live these contradictions. Thus the epistemological humility of curiosity involves self-awareness. This stands in complete contrast to the epistemological superiority of the agitated and paranoid fascist personality. Fascists are overwhelmed by and absorbed into agitation which consumes their critical faculties. Critique becomes hostility. Self-reflection becomes self-denial. The result is an incapacity to engage in meta-cognitive reflection on the quality (or lack thereof) of their own thinking.

The curious person is a joyful person. They are empowered by the adventure of being drawn into the unknown. Curiosity is a joyful expression of the incompleteness of the self and a willingness to take the plunge into a world full of uncertainty. The agitated person is too stressed to be curious about anything. They are too paranoid about others to take any joy from being in dialogue and from listening. Indeed, Freire once said that his pedagogy is a "bohemian pedagogy of happiness…. This will be a pedagogy of laughter, of questioning, of curiosity..." (Gadotti 1994, p. 160). The laughter here is a *curious* laughter, meaning it is a laughter that is also a question, or rather poses a question. "Why did I laugh at that?" "What is funny here?" Laughter as a manifestation of joy lends itself to critical consciousness raising. It is a tentative, uneasy laugh that questions itself. This form of laughter can be contrasted to the paranoid, fascist laugh, which is *resentful*. It is a laugh that excludes critical reflection on the self and instead embodies a laugh directed outward toward the other. Curious laughter (Lewis, 2014) is always laughing at the self and its follies. It is full of humility toward itself and the world.

Resentful laughter is always laughing at the other and its presumed inferiority. While curious laughter crosses boundaries (allowing Freire to laugh alongside the oppressed), resentful laughter of the paranoid fascist maintains boundaries. It is a racist, sexist, homophobic, classist laugh that revels in abusing others. It therefore manifests agitation rather than joy. The resentful laugh is actually full of dread, a last, desperate attempt to *perform* joy without joy.

Curiosity is democratic. It traverses boundaries by asking questions. It undoes power by looking where it is not supposed to look. It produces new forms of embodied and affective solidarity centered on joy rather than resentfulness. It asks questions where others would simply follow orders. The affective, sensorial, collective, and epistemological dimensions of curiosity make curiosity deeply democratic, offering an educational disruption of a given social order. Fascist agitation, paranoia, and resentment stratify society, creating a clearly demarked inside and outside. Fascism undermines democracy by insisting on hierarchies of inclusion and exclusion. There is an "us" and a "them." This division is not neutral. There is an implicit (and sometimes explicit!) inequality between "us" and "them." "They" must be humiliated by being laughed at. Laughter here is a violent weapon—it is tactical and deployed in the name of border security. But democratically curious laughter is a non-violent gesture of joy in which "we" no longer "know" who "we" are or where "we" are going. And since the "we" is uncertain of itself, there is no definitive boundary between inside and outside. The "we" that joyfully laughs is an open community, or is a collective that questions itself, that finds its own contradictions, its own gaps and internal inconsistencies, funny. Such a community of and in joyful laughter cannot hold its boundaries together, gives itself away, and thus embodies equality. The fascist laugh takes itself seriously whereas the curious, democratic laugh does not take itself seriously. It knows that it does not know, and this is the precondition for learning from and with others.

In sum, the fascist's lack of curiosity is a threat to democracy. When a fascist laughs, it is a sign of agitation, a resentful spasm that betrays an underlying dread. To fight fascism is to embrace the joys of curiosity. Curiosity is an epistemological and affective break with agitation, and is an innervation of a different kind of collective: an uncertain community that embraces the r(u/a)pture of a joy equally shared by all those who prefer to question.

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Aphrodites of the World
A Brief Overview of the Feminine in the Patriarchal Order

Lejla Panjeta

Abstract

Female deities around the world personify the same energy of love, fertility, passion, and birth. The Greek Aphrodite, Roman Venus, the Phoenician Astarte, the Egyptian Isis and Hathor, the Babylonian Ishtar or the Sumerian Inana, the pre-Islamic Arab goddess Al Uzzi, the Nordic Freya, the Aztec Xochiquetzal are comparable goddesses that ruled the prehistoric civilizations. A brief overview of Aphrodite's stories offers a glimpse into feminine phenomenology. From planet Venus to vailing and covering women, it is evident that the patriarchal testosterone order feel threated by this enormous life-giving energy. The female principles and the myth of beauty are very present in today's cultures around the world. The archetype of female passion, love and beauty went through many vile persecutions through cultures and societies dominated by patriarchal order in our history. What did predecessors of Aphrodites personified energy in ordinary women around the world do to survive the order?

The Adventures of Aphrodite

Aphrodite, Greek goddess of love and beauty, was born from the foam of the sea, when Cronus castrates his father Uranus, and throws his severed genitals into the sea. According to some less bizarre and cruel myths, she was the daughter of Zeus and Dione. Desirable and beautiful, she restores youth, fertility, and beauty to those who respect her. She was married to Hephaestus, but was constantly unfaithful to him, kidnapping lovers, starting wars because of her arrogance, and disrupting the love affairs of those who disrespected her.

The goddess of discord, Erida, during one divine feast of the Olympus gods, threw an apple with the writing "to the most beautiful". Hera, Athens and Aphrodite began to argue over the apple. It was decided that Paris from Troy would rule the

verdict on the most beautiful goddess. He takes the apple and gives it to Aphrodite, who in turn promises him the love of a mortal. Aphrodite was named the most beautiful goddess; Paris fell in love with Helena and so the Trojan War began.

Psyche was a very beautiful mortal admired so much that because of her, people forgot about Aphrodite. Aphrodite became angry and asked her son Eros to make Psycho fall in love with some disgusting monster. Eros shot his arrow away, but accidentally hit himself and fell in love with Psyche. This narrative is the origin of the story of Beauty and the Beast. Psyche prayed to Aphrodite to help her search for Eros, who had disappeared. The psyche asked to see him, but he was not to reveal himself to her, because she was a mortal. Aphrodite assigned three tasks to Psyche, the last of which killed her. She opened a box that Persephone had given to her that contained an eternal dream of death. Eros took Psyche to Aphrodite, who eventually calmed down, forgave her and gave her the nectar of the gods, so Psyche became immortal.

These are only some of the stories about this cruel but also merciful goddess, that was the mistress of Ares, Dionysus, Anhis and Adonis, to whom she bore two mortal children and a third - the ugly immortal Priapus. With Ares, the god of war, she had four children: Deimos (horror), Phobos (fear), Harmony (clade), and Eros (love). She also had the power to breathe life into an inanimate thing. Pygmalion sculpted a statue of a woman and fell in love with her. Aphrodite took pity on him and turned her into a real woman under the name Galatea.

During one sexual encounter with Ares, her husband Hephaestus covered them with metal wire, so that all the gods would laugh at their adultery. Aphrodite promised to be faithful from then on to Hephaestus, but this act of two lovers saw Hermes and fell madly in love with her. From this next adultery of hers, Hermaphrodite, a young man with female breasts and long hair, was born. He was an androgynous or bearded woman. Hermaphrodite arises as an idea in society's transition from matriarchy to patriarchy. The bearded goddesses actually represent transitional social forms, as Robert Graves argues in an iconic analysis of Greek myths. Aphrodite constantly created problems but also solved them. She helped establish patriarchy; our society that James Brown describes accurately like this:

> This is a man's, man's, man's world.
> But it wouldn't be nothing, nothing without a woman or a girl.

Through the centuries that followed in this man's world, Aphrodite suffered oppression, and persecution, and her followers went through metamorphosis. However, the love, fertility, and beauty she represents is found in other shapes and forms in different cultures during patriarchy. The women-guardians of the patriarchy of the Mediterranean culture are maybe best illustrated by the line of the "Mother Goddess" Maria Portokalos in the movie "My Big Fat Greek Wedding":

> Let me tell you something. The man is the head, but the woman is the neck. And she can turn the head any way she wants.

Aphrodites all over the world know how to turn heads, and at the same time maintain the *paterfamilias* order, pretending that they are only the neck and not the head of the house. Famous sentences of the baby boomer generation: "Now I'm going to call your father" or „Just wait till your dad comes home" simulate the power of the male principle in society, while showing in fact the true power of the goddess; the guardian of the order who controls and gives birth to life and love.

Planet Venus—Goddess of Beauty

Venus in Roman pantheon is Greek Aphrodite. We are under a constant watch by these pagan gods and goddesses from the starry night. Our Solar system planets bare the names of the Roman gods. For example, Hesper (Morning star) is the evening star of Venus. The same star in the morning is called Phosphorus or Lucifer, which later became one of the names for Satan. In many cultures the passion archetype has been demonized through conservative religious dogmas, which become explicit in patriarchal and warrior societies. Thus, the goddess of love is identified with the demon.

The ancient peoples observed the sky and gave names to constellations, stars, and planets according to their deities. They had no internet and TV, and the atmosphere was not polluted. Their only evening entertainment was astronomy in accordance with their polytheistic beliefs. The geocentric system was modern then, and the Earth was a flat plate on which the gods played their own version of the chess. They often mistook stars for planets, and referred to constellations by the names of animals or gods they had visual similarity with. Venus reminded the Romans of the goddess of beauty, love, and fertility.

The planet Venus is the brightest celestial body in our sky and that's why they thought it was a star. It's big, closer to the Sun, and because it's covered in clouds of sulfur it reflects more light. Due to its brightness and beauty visible to the naked eye, it proudly presents the goddess of love in the night sky. However, reality is very different. On Venus the temperature is so high that lead can melt, and the pressure is equivalent to the greatest depth though which submarines sail. It is packed with poisonous gases: sulfur, carbon dioxide and hydrochloric acid. On this beautiful celestial body, in sterile volcanic soil, acid rain falls and sulfur fog resembles scenes from the artistic representations of hell. In the systematic Christian demonization of pagan traditions over the centuries, Aphrodite or Venus, are personified with Satan and Hell.

Archetype of Aphrodite in Other Cultures

Joseph Campbell said that the deity is the personification of energy. Mythology is something that is woven into our reality but is not a fact *per se*, but a metaphor or a symbol. Female deities around the world personify the same energy of love, fertility, passion, and birth. The Greek Aphrodite, the Phoenician Astarte, the

Egyptian Isis and Hathor, the Babylonian Ishtar or the Sumerian Inana, the pre-Islamic Arab goddess Al Uzzi, the Nordic Freya, the Aztec Xochiquetzal ruled the cultures of the first agricultural cities. These goddesses mixed their cults during Hellenism, which brought cultural diversity to the Mediterranean. However, the enemy of lust in the form of Christian teachings appeared in the Middle East and soon spread throughout Europe. Aphrodite or Venus became assimilated as the Mother of God in the new popular religion, where she remains partly until the Renaissance and partly today. One of the first life-size paintings of a nude woman in medieval Western culture was Botticelli's *Birth of Venus*, which is parodied and recycled even today. The model from classical and Renaissance statues and paintings becomes a marketing myth about beauty, which is still exploited and used against women today.

The Sanskrit etymology of Venus stands for desire and longing. The Hindu counterpart to these female deities is Saraswati, the goddess of art, beauty, and knowledge. She is represented as a woman with long hair and four arms. In each hand she carries a symbol: Lotus - purity, Sira - art, Veda Devanta - the holy book of knowledge of the entire universe, and Japa - the continuous cycle of culture. The Indian name for the Being of all beings is Brahman. It's a neutral name. There is neither male nor female gender. The Indian name for a woman is Maya-Shakti-Devi, which means: "Goddess who gives life and mother of all forms."

Aphrodite's Personae

These rulers of all forms, through the flexibility of the cervical vertebrae with which they turn the governing structures, show a great power of adaptation and metamorphosis throughout history. Sometimes the forms they take are not even understandable to themselves. Such forms were astutely defined by Elif Safak in the book "Black Milk," through the story of the main character in her middle age. Through the archetypal names of Jungian personas, shadows animus, and anima, which appear as enlightenment about the multiple faces and roles of women, the main character gets to know herself. Thus, in one woman there are the following goddesses: Miss Highbrowed Cynic, Milady Ambitious Chekhovian, Little Miss Practical, Dame Dervish, the spiritual Sufi; Blue Belle Bovary, the seductress; and Mama Rice Pudding.

These archetypes of goddesses survived violations over the centuries. They became archetypes of cleaning, cooking, and giving birth. They were forbidden to display emotions or show their faces. For those who were considered wild there were made up stories about witches. Women who have cats did not get sick during the plague epidemic. Cats eat mice. Mice carry the plague. So those women cooperated with the Black Death and with Satan, which means they had to be burned at the stake. Even today we represent witches in fairy tales as proud owners of black cats.

Marie-Louise Von Franz, Europe's leading Jungian theorist on fairy tales,

myths and stories, states that Arabs have a tradition of never approaching women living alone near the desert, as they are overcome with jinn. She elaborates this custom with the Jungian principle of anime and animus (female/male principle). Women living alone fall under the influence of their animus (male principle), as it is very difficult to be alone and resist the bursts of subconscious. He who lives alone must be very strong mentally. In order not to be alone, women agree to clean up after others and not to laugh if not alone.

"What's weird about cleaning up... there's no end to it. The perfect way to stop a woman... it's not a ladylike to laugh in that way.. Inhaling leads to emotion, so when we want to feel something, we hold our breath. As she laughs, the woman breathes with her full lungs, and while she does, she could feel illicit things," analyzes Clarissa Pinkola Estes in her book about the wild woman *Women Running with the Wolves*. There's a saying and a social convention in Bosnia (which doesn't just apply to women only): "Don't laugh, you'll later mourn it." The talents and gifts of the goddess of love and beauty, through feelings that provoke joy or happiness, have their origins in demonizing goddesses. When exactly did the oppression of the female principle of birth and fertility begin, and how did it spread from the ancient world to other cultures later?

Vailing Laws

Joseph Campbell in "Power of Myth" says:

> The Semites are herders of goats and sheep, and the Indo-Europeans of cattle. They were formerly the hunters. They translate a hunting mythology into a herding mythology, but it's animal oriented. And when you have hunters you have killers, and when you have herders, you have killers, because they're always in movement, nomadic, coming into conflict with other people and they must conquer the area they move into. This comes into the Near East, and this brings in the warrior gods, like Zeus, like Yahweh. They really wipe out the goddess. The term for the goddess, the Canaanite goddess, that is used in the Old Testament, is 'the abomination.' And there was a very strong accent against the goddess in the Hebrew, which you do not find in the Indo-European. There you have Zeus marrying the goddess and then the two play together. I think it is an extreme case that we have in the Bible, and our own Western subjugation of the female is really, I think, a function of biblical thinking. (p. 169)

Semitic people invaded a world ruled by the religious systems of the Mother Goddess. Other gods from the mythological repertoire are later removed by a monotheistic system of believes. Our own Western subjugation of a woman is only one function of biblical opinion. Joseph Campbell suggests in interviews that there are "three possible situations. Initially, a female deity ruled and during this period a man almost had no significance at all. Then the situation is reversed and the role of the goddess is taken over by the male deity. Finally, the classical degree: male and female interact—such as in India. This stems from the under-

standing of Indo-Europeans who did not completely devalue the female principle." In ancient Sumer, the principle of equality of man and woman still reigns. At that time, the first letter, a cuneiform letter, records accounting data essential to the survival of the first cities. We take this invention of writing as the beginning of history and civilization. With the advent of the Acadians, who tear down the principle of independent cities and create an empire in the Mesopotamia area, testosterone enters the social order. Hammurabi's law occurs, and ruling the empire assumes strong legal and warrior structure of state and social arrangement. "Eye for an eye, tooth for tooth," Hammurabi's famous contribution to legal science, in this social system leaves little room for philosophy about love.

But before this way of thinking, and even 2000 years before the advent of Islam, the Assyrians in Mesopotamia established 112 laws, one of which is the Law on Covering. In Law number 40, married, widowed, and Assyrian women must go out into the street covered. Daughters from the upper classes must be covered with an abaya. Prostitutes do not have to cover themselves. The penalty for not wearing the veil is fifty lashes. This law divides women into 5 categories: wives and daughters of the upper class, concubines, temple prostitutes, harlots, and slaves. The law certainly restricts women, but gives them the freedom and protection to walk down the street alone covered with a veil.

This tradition spread to Greece, Rome, Byzantium, Islamic culture, the Renaissance, and even the dress code of nuns. Half-nude sculptures of Aphrodite, in no way reflect the social costume design of these ancient cultures, whose mythology is full of debauchery and bizarre plots and twists. A symbol of covering and the veil is a status symbol in Ancient Greece as well. The evil of the female body needs to be hidden or mitigated. Athena, the goddess of wisdom, and Aphrodite were revered goddesses, but ordinary living human women were supposed to be silent, not to laugh, and to be bound to the *oikos*—house, home, hearth.

A contemporary of Homer, the Greek poet Hesiod in the 7th century BC. writes about Pandora, as the first woman, the counterpart of the biblical Eve. Hesiod states that she is of a different kind, coming not with a box but with a jug of evil. The shape of this jug, the *pithos*, is the shape of the womb, and through sexual intercourse, all evil comes out. This jug needs to be closed, and the womb is identified with hysteria and everything that is not appropriate for civilized people. The philosopher who influenced the entire Western thought, Aristotle, in the 4th century B.C. says that women are "submen." "imperfect men" because they do not have the seed to create a man and that they must control themselves because they are made without reason. In the motherland of democracy, the model of civil society, in the *polis*, women did not have citizenship, while even earlier in Egypt, women had the conditions to obtain a passport. Controlling and regulating the affairs of these unreasonable beings was of great importance in the civilized ancient world (The Ascent of Women, BBC, E1, 23min).

The issue of veiling continued through the Middle Ages, right up to the Vic-

torian era when women wore veils over or around their faces and were still considered as "the stuff" to be set up for a marriage. Somewhere with the victory of the suffragettes in USA for the right to vote, women have won a similar status to men. But under the condition that the *oikos* is still waiting for them in the afternoon: giving birth, having children, washing, cleaning, and cooking (and not laughing). Women were granted equal rights in New Zealand for the first time in 1893. In the US in 1920, in the UK 8 years later, and in France in 1944. In the U.S, black people were granted the right to vote in 1870, and women in 1919. The fight for women's equality is still ongoing, but parallel to this battle, Aphrodite's son Hermaphroditus, is working on his fight for equality and acceptance. The nonbinary or LGBTQU may carry some new wave of social order and understanding the difference, as brought by Aphrodite's androgynous son during the transition from matriarchy to patriarchy. But, until the guardians of the order see it as a threat to their own survival, the wind of change will remain vailed in most cultures.

Beauty Myth

However, on the other side of the veil, patriarchy skillfully imposed ideals of beauty by comparing women to goddesses in terms of external appearance. Another factor of repression of the female principle—beauty myth—arises. Naomi Wolf, in her book *The Beauty Myth*, says that this myth is not based on evolution, sex, gender, or God's aesthetics. This myth pretends to be a myth about sex, intimacy, life, and the celebration of women. The beauty myth is constricted from emotional distance, politics, finance, and sexual repression. The purpose of the beauty myth, which we are exposed to daily through the media, is to earn and increase profits in the advertising and marketing industries, which actually funds the media. In this symbiosis, the media creates ideals modelled on images about classical goddesses they themselves invented and repetitively promote them. All of this has the ultimate goal, which is political and ideological in nature: distraction from real social problems and stopping progressive and critical thinking.

If today a woman must have the perfect haircut, nails, clothes, go to the gym, spread something that convincingly states that is the nectar of the gods themselves and the elixir of eternal youth, all of this to please her media-manipulated subconscious, managed by the beauty myth; when does she have time to think about the progress of society? Women are weakened to such an extent that they may be better off covering themselves completely—head to toe. They are either too thick, or too thin, or ugly, or too beautiful, or lesbian, or non-native, or incapable of satisfying a man... All of this leads to mental disorders of nutrition, sleep, surgical intervention on the face and body. The fashion, pharmaceutical and media industries market this myth on the foundations of the baby boom generation doctrine: "You can have both! "One thinks, of course, of career and family at the same time. The baby boom ideal consists of the following archetypes: a successful career-woman,

great cook, the house is always clean; she knits, sews, engages in some hobby, is physically active, fantastic in bed, she does sports, always wears make up smiling, does homework with kids and understands every course better than a teacher, and generally looks great

The marketing industry's multibillion-dollar profits rely on beauty, versatile ubiquity and omnipotence mythology. And the woman/goddess makes up her little archetypes during this time, as the protagonist from Shafak's book. That is how little heroines, women, girls, and mothers survive this media-imposed modern myth of the beauty of the guardians of patriarchy. Tenet of survival: goddess can do anything for love. As Campbell puts it:

> Mother loves all her children: stupid, clear rogue, good. It doesn't matter what kind of character they have. Female in a way represents an unconditional love for offspring. Father is someone who keeps order. He is being linked to social order and social character to a much greater extent. The mother gives life to the nature of the child, and the father gives to his social character. Returning to nature will certainly re-actualize the maternal principle.

Guardians of the Patriarchy

The question of covering and hiding beauty, ugliness, or something different than the rest, is a question of denying individuality in a society that wants to rule on conservative principles, which often do not stand on fair or realistic grounds of what people in that society need. Just as in state systems, where oligarchies, autocracies, or dictatorships make rules, so in social systems, not tied to any particular monotheistic god, the rules for morality, behavior, and appearance in public were imposed on women. Since the adaptable goddesses skillfully turned their necks and adapted to different forms of demonization, always knowing that survival and the source of all life was within them, they were patient, because:

> Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. (*Bible*: 1 Corinthians 13:4)

The return to the patient Mother Earth and feminine principles in the context of morality and social arrangements will certainly have a significant place in our society, which is on the verge of a global war. The patriarchal-warrior and profitable industrial concept of our society has already made Mother Earth, old Tiamat, very angry. Global warming, apocalyptic weather changes, meaningless patriarchal laws and rules, production of henchmen-warriors and obedient workers in our education systems, greed, corruption, destruction of nature, wars, and tensions raging among nuclear powers, are not the product of Aphrodite's whims, but of the gods of thunder and warriors, who think that by erecting fences and drawing borders, the land they conquered belongs to them.

Aphrodite, no matter how capricious, forgives and grants wishes. Goddesses

give, not take, life. Their purpose is to give birth, not to conquer. They have many faces and names and have suffered much in turning men's hot heads. Aphrodite's gift is one of the most important gifts of all the pagan gods. Unconditional love and the birth of life. It is necessary to respect this through the understanding of the gift of life that we have, through love and unity in the desire for beauty and good, as well as through the preservation of nature and the respect of the Earth Goddess, which should be given unharmed as a legacy to the next generations.

Note

The mythological phenomenology of the deities mentioned in this text must be understood in a metaphorical and symbolic context, and never in a factually religious one.

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Unsettling Curiosity

Indigenizing a PWI in the Midwest

Dee Sherwood, Julian Vasquez Heilig,
Frank Waln, & Skyler Wolverton

Abstract

Myths, stereotypes, and a pervasive sense of invisibility limit curiosity about Native American and Indigenous (NAI) communities and perspectives. The practices of critical reflection, cultural humility, community-engagement, and consultation with tribal nations expand opportunities for teaching and learning in the context of higher education. The Native American Student Organization (NASO) and the Native American Affairs Council (NAAC) at a predominantly white public university in the Midwest region of the U.S. work together to challenge NAI invisibility through experiential learning, transdisciplinary collaboration, and consultation with tribal nations in the region. Moving beyond symbolic inclusion, NASO and NAAC promote a culture of intellectual curiosity and direct engagement in relationships—embracing NAI pedagogies, traditional and digital storytelling, and intergenerational models for education, healing, and resistance. Drawing from critical NAI scholarship, we review recent initiatives—including, *Empowering Indigenous Futures* digital storytelling, *Truth and Healing: Boarding School Survivor Panel*, Indigenous Peoples' Day film screening, *Sage and Sweetgrass Harvest Teachings*, and an *Indigenous Music, Healing & Activism* course. This paper explores how curiosity functions not only as an educational imperative, but also as a mechanism for restorative justice. We contend that these efforts disrupt coloniality, foster connections across conceptual and cultural boundaries, advance innovation, and expand the intellectual horizons of the university and local community.

Introduction

In the context of higher education, curiosity is influenced by a range of factors within the learning environment, including: taken-for-granted assumptions, the degree of psychological safety, the presence, absence, and accessibility of

information, and opportunities for dialogue and expression of views that challenge prevailing forms of knowledge. Across academic disciplines and programs, curiosity about Native American and Indigenous (NAI) communities, cultures, arts, science, spirituality, and systems of thought may be constrained, particularly among non-NAI scholars; fears of being offensive, even unintentionally, concerns about appropriation or misinterpretation of information, or the lack of relational or practical connections to the topic may limit engagement (Kovach, 2009). Moreover, curricula often relegate NAI representation to the past, thereby obscuring the present, and by extension, future achievements of NAI scholars across a variety of disciples (Dei, 2006; Wall Kimmerer & Artelle, 2024).

NAI faculty, scholars, and students bring unique knowledge, values, and life experiences to the learning environment. NAI cultural and linguistic competencies, traditional teachings, and connections with community and tribal governance structures may go unrecognized within educational settings (Shotton, Lowe, & Waterman, 2013). Yet, NAI thought systems and lifeways can challenge, compliment, or enhance, traditional Western scientific knowledge and creative activities in a variety of disciplines. In a world where the logic of Western civilization and individualism are not serving our planet well, the thought systems, practices, values of NAI cultures and communities are being reassessed for their transformative potential (Wall Kimmerer, 2013; Wall Kimmerer & Artelle, 2024). The traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) of NAI communities is being sought to address complex, global challenges such as climate change, food insecurity, and access to clean water. Universities in the U.S., New Zealand, and Australia are moving beyond the inclusion of NAI people and perspectives in order to transform research methodologies, organizational practices, values, and spaces (Center for Braiding Indigenous Knowledges and Science [CBIKS], 2024). Transformation at this scale must necessarily disrupt the dynamics of narrow, stereotypical, past-tense representations of NAI people and thought systems, through colonizing narratives in curricula, public schools, and universities (see Tuck & Yang, 2012).

Curiosity, when viewed through a critical lens, must contend with default assumptions, awkwardness, and avoidance in order to reckon with what is obscured, missing, or unspeakable. NAI counternarratives, resistance, and resilience unsettles curiosity. In this paper we consider the ways in which curiosity about NAI cultures, communities, and systems of thought can be expanded through consultive processes that prioritize respect, reciprocity, and relationships. We describe our present and future-oriented efforts toward organizational transformation at Western Michigan University (WMU), a Midwest university in the U.S. in consultation with tribal nations in the region, NAI students, scholars, and community members through our collective efforts.

Reckoning with Contradictions
and Profound Failures of Curiosity

Curiosity is foundational for human development. Social, emotional, moral, and intellectual growth depend on curiosity. Common understandings of curiosity tend to focus on an individual's eager desire to learn or know something. Curiosity may also manifest in co-creation of knowledge through the dynamic exchange of ideas. Relationships between U.S. federal government and NAI nations in North America are marked by a profound lack of curiosity, cultural hegemony, and projection on the part of colonizers (see Freire, 1970; López et al., 2013). The civilizing and settling efforts of colonizers included uneven combat, biological warfare, seizure of land, forced relocation and removal, and aggressive assimilation of NAI children in residential schools. Likewise, the U.S. was founded on the ideals of freedom of expression and religion. However, expressions of NAI spirituality were outlawed (Indian Offense Policies) as early as the 1600's (Sherwood and VanDeusen, 2022). Calling out to creator through singing, drumming, and dancing as spiritual practice, prompted the massacre of men, women and children at Wounded Knee. NAI religious freedom was not codified into law until 1978, nearly two hundred years later. Most are familiar with the statement from the Declaration of Independence, "We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal"—yet, few recall that a few lines later, NAI people are referred to as "merciless Indian Savages, whose known rule of warfare, is undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes and conditions". Such contradictions in American history are rarely explored. As observed by a NAI student in a personal conversation, "they took our land, and then gave us a book that says, *thou shall not steal*."

One need not look far to observe similar dynamics within higher education and its relationships with NAI people. Every university in the U.S. is built upon NAI lands. Yet, institutions of higher education frequently fail to provide any physical space, let alone intellectual, cultural, temporal spaces within learning and built environments to recognize and support NAI students, scholars, and communities. Most higher education institutions have no formal relationships with the sovereign nations to whom the land rightfully belongs. This is especially true for land-grant universities, the majority of which were established through the sale of NAI land seized under the Morrill Act of 1862. These lands were often taken without consent or through exploitative treaties, and their sale directly funded the creation and endowment of public universities across the United States. According to High Country News, nearly 11 million acres of land from 250 tribal nations were expropriated to fund land-grant institutions, including many of the most prominent public universities today (Lee & Ahtone, 2020).

Myths about the absence or extinction of NAI people continue to challenge NAI students, staff, and faculty. The insidious narrative that NAI peoples no longer exist or have no claims to land, echoes the settler colonial "empty lands" myth

(Wolfe, 2006). The existence of sovereign NAI nations (over 570 in the U.S.), tribal governments, cultural values, lifeways, languages, ecological practices are too frequently rendered invisible or irrelevant (Lomawaima & McCarty, 2006). For example, in our experience in Michigan, non-NAI students often struggle to correctly name even one of the twelve federally recognized tribes in the state. Too often, universities claim a commitment to NAI inclusion while failing to involve tribal nations in decision-making or planning processes (Poitra et al., 2021). It is especially common for institutions to exclude these voices from key areas of influence, such as search committees, boards of trustees, and other governance structures. Extractive research practices have long benefitted universities exclusively, without respect for NAI thought systems, values, and expectations for reciprocity. Universities must abandon the deficit mindset that sees NAI students, staff, and faculty as an afterthought, an asterisk, or a statistic, and instead recognize that Indigenous knowledge and lifeways are essential to intellectual and social progress (Shotton et al., 2013).

Tuck and Yang (2012) describe *settler moves to innocence* as the practices whereby people and institutions absolve themselves of responsibility for restorative justice by adapting superficial language of decolonization, while occupying land and benefiting from ongoing practices of dominance and dispossession. NAI presence, sovereignty, and achievements in contemporary academic life are often rendered invisible through what scholars such as Brady (1999) refer to as "percepticide"—a deliberate erasure of what is in plain sight. For example, a long-serving white male administrator in the WMU provost's office once questioned in a private conversation the need to focus on NAI students on campus, claiming there were "only four or five Indian students" on campus—a dismissive remark that ignored the presence of hundreds of NAI students and reinforced a stance of percepticide. *Counting the Indians* itself reflects a preoccupation with population control. Systemic failures of curiosity to recognize NAI existence, sovereignty, and intellectual and material contributions are pervasive in education (Shotton, Lowe, & Waterman, 2013).

Moreover, systemic inequities ingrained in the structures of our colleges and universities often suppress diverse and meaningful inquiry—particularly when it comes to NAI people and perspectives. Western systems of education have historically prioritized Eurocentric learning paradigms—frameworks rooted in Western European worldviews that position European knowledge, values, and histories as universal norms—while dismissing NAI thought systems and epistemologies as irrelevant, inferior, or simply to be ignored in the name of "progress" (Smith, 2021; Grande, 2015). Neoliberal education discourages a broader based curiosity and direct engagement by privileging efficiency, productivity, and high-volume, low-cost programs (Vasquez Heilig, et al., 2019). Within this construct, curiosity can be reframed as including decolonial and relational practice—one that challenges revisionist histories and institutional erasure, and fosters accountability to NAI communities and tribal nations.

Land, Organizational Structures, and Continuity

WMU is located on the lands of the Three Fires Confederacy, the Bodéwad-mi, Ojibwe, and Odawa nations. These lands were ceded under duress in coercive treaties; the Treaty of Chicago 1821 and the Treaty of St. Joseph 1827. Chief Match-E-Be-Nash-She-Wish signed the Treaty of Chicago in 1821, reserving three square miles within our land, *Gzigmezgé,* meaning the boiling water place, which today is known as Kalamazoo. This history informs the present and future. With this acknowledgement of land, comes a responsibility to engage with NAI communities, to name injustices where they exist, and to commit to work together to advance restorative justice. WMU is a predominantly white, public university with approximately 20,000 students. The university's Native American Student Organization (NASO) and the Native American Affairs Council (NAAC) are instrumental in facilitating how curiosity is transformed into action. NAAC is university-level council situated in the Provost's Office and comprised of Tribal Education directors in the region, NAI community representatives, faculty, staff, and students. NAAC was developed in 2021 to engage in ongoing *consultation* with Tribes in the region to (1) empower NAI students and elevate their voices and achievements, (2) build relationships with Tribal nations and communities in the region; (3) develop Indigenous-led programming, curricula, research, and activities; and (4) engage in action to advance restorative justice and acknowledgment of the Indigenous land that the university occupies.

Frequently, on university campuses, the work of consultation with tribal nations and engagement with NAI students is carried out by one employee, if it is done at all. Budget cuts, retirements, and attrition undermine efforts toward continuity. Establishing an organizational structure within the university, comprised on Tribal Education directors and community leaders, as well as faculty, staff, and students, provides a forum for leveraging resources and relational networks and ensures sustainability (Brayboy et al. , 2012). NAAC provides support and advocacy for NAI perspectives, methodologies, and practices across academic and administrative spheres, while NASO brings student visibility, voices, and energy to the forefront. Working together, NAAC and NASO develop curricula and co-curricular events, partnerships, and initiatives that challenge settler colonial narratives—those systems of power rooted in the ongoing occupation and erasure of NAI— to advance restorative justice in higher education (See Tuck & Yang, 2012). As a result, the WMU community benefits from programming that directly centers NAI achievements and invites the broader campus and surrounding community into meaningful dialogue and action. Public gatherings, workshops, courses, and experiences afford students, staff and faculty opportunities to confront legacies of state-sanctioned violence and cultural erasure, recognizing that settler colonialism is not an event of the past, but rather, a construct that continues to shape contemporary relationships and institutions.

NAI Pedagogies:
Fostering Curiosity Through Direct Engagement

NASO and NAAC work in consultation with NAI communities in the region to offer a variety of Indigenous-led educational experiences throughout the academic year that are intellectually inspiring, emotionally resonant, and culturally relevant. For example, in Fall 2024, Frank Waln, a visiting faculty member at WMU and award-winning Lakota nation hip-hop artist, offered a transformative course and public performance on *Indigenous Music, Healing & Activism*, blending creative expression with social and political action. *The Truth and Healing: Indian Boarding School Survivor* panel discussion provided a space for intergenerational testimony and historical reckoning, prompting campus-wide reflection on the legacies of colonization, resistance, and resilience. In collaboration with the Kalamazoo Nature Center, NASO and NAAC brought internationally renowned NAI botanist, Dr. Robin Wall Kimmerer to WMU, where her teachings on reciprocity and plant kinship re-centered Indigenous ecological knowledge for a wide audience. The Indigenous Peoples' Day film screening of a documentary produced by a local tribal nation, the Pokagon Band of the Pottawatomi Indians further underscores the boundary spanning, interdisciplinary scope of Indigenous knowledge, connecting the arts, sciences, public health, and environmental studies.

The work of NASO and NAAC also features experience-driven learning rooted in NAI thought systems and practices, fostering curiosity across the university through hands-on, interdisciplinary, spiritually and culturally informed engagement. Initiatives such as the *Empowering Indigenous Futures* digital story-telling series and the *Sage and Sweetgrass Harvest Teachings*, exemplify NAI-based pedagogy. Intergenerational learning extends beyond lecture halls into spaces where NAI ways of knowing—multisensory, holistic, and kinship-oriented—are honored (Simpson, 2014; Kimmerer, 2013). Within these immersive programs participants are extended permission and access to experience cultural teachings in context, cultivating deeper respect and accountability to NAI communities and the land. The following sections explore each of these events, demonstrating how curiosity, when rooted in Indigenous knowledge systems, can seek to transform both academic inquiry and institutional culture.

Empowering Indigenous Futures—
Multi-Modal Digital Storytelling

An Indigenous story may be referred to as a teaching; a series of stories are teachings. For example, the Seven Grandfathers Teaching conveys a story of seven grandfathers and a child; the story relates the importance of community values: love, respect, bravery, truth, honesty, humility, and wisdom (NHBP, 2023). This teaching provides guidance for action within relationships among community members and Mother Earth. Indigenous storytelling may include the use of hu-

mor, especially when relating a difficult truth or sensitive topic. More broadly considered, storytelling is essential in centering marginalized voices, challenging dominant narratives, documenting community stories, building trust, and developing a sense of identity and community. Digital storytelling utilizes various media formats such as video, audio, photography, music, and text to construct, communicate, and share narratives (La Rose & Detlor, 2021; Robin, & McNeil, 2012). The multimodality of digital storytelling makes visible the complex and abstract facets of participants' lives and identity, particularly as they relate to difficult parts of their lives (Johnson & Kendrick, 2017).

In an era marked by technological advancements, including the ubiquitous use of social media as a mode of communication, NAI communities recognize the powerful potential of multimodal digital storytelling as a conduit for empowering NAI voices in higher education. The project, *Empowering Indigenous Futures* at WMU, transcends mere documentation to build an accessible archive of dynamic, vitally important stories from seven NAI students at WMU. Their multimodal narratives function as a catalyst for community building, resilience, and creativity. Representing the breadth of diverse experiences, identities, talents, and aspirations of current NAI students, the initiative disrupts stereotypes that continue to limit opportunities for NAI students and communities in the 21st century. Using WMU supported digital storytelling platform, Scalar, *Empowering Indigenous Futures* braids together oral histories, time-based media, digitized photos/ephemera, and digital resources key to the stories being shared. While currently in post-production, these dynamic, interactive student narratives will be openly accessible online, serving as the spark to forge further intergenerational digital storytelling collaborations with local tribes, and creating much needed visibility, inclusion, and advancement of NAI students in higher education.

The *Empowering Indigenous Futures* project aligns with the emergence of community-driven digital story telling in NAI communities, nationally and internationally (Beltrán, & Begun, 2014; Dion, & Salamanca, 2018; Eglinton et al., 2017). Expanding upon traditional methods of storytelling, the project leverages technology to engage a broader audience, fostering a more inclusive and informed community that values and understands the unique perspectives of NAI students. Traditional storytelling, in its various forms is central to NAI communities to impart knowledge, values, and wisdom. Indigenous storytelling has been described as a practice with great emancipatory potential to promote participatory action research to advance social, environmental, economic, and racial justice (Cajax, 2015). In recent years, Indigenous storytelling has been used across the fields of art, science, and education to promote: physical and mental health (Baskin, 2016; Cajax, 2015: O'Keefe, 2022), community empowerment and healing (Corntassel et al., 2009) innovations in teaching methods (Kinch et al., 2022), allyship, collaboration, and more inclusive academic environments (Posca, 2023), leadership and well-being among athletes (Hapeta et al., 2019), land conservation, environmental

justice, and climate action (Estes, 2019; Fernández Llamazares, & Cabeza, 2018; Jarratt-Snider, & Nielson, 2020); arts-inspired inquiry that explores "identity making," "aesthetics," and "voice" (Eglinton et al.,, 2017, p. 2) and culturally relevant representations of NAI people in television, film, and graphic narratives (Bladow, 2019; Hearne, 2017).

Truth and Healing:
Indian Boarding School Survivor Panel Discussion

The *Truth and Healing: Indian Boarding School Survivor* panel discussion provided a vital platform for NAI elders and survivors of Indian boarding schools to share their lived experiences. WMU NASO graduate student, Robin Greymountain worked with a NAI faculty member to secure grant funding from a local community foundation in fulfillment of a course assignment. Held at WMU's College of Health and Human Services, the event was a collaborative effort between NAAC, NASO, the Kalamazoo Community Foundation, the Vine Neighborhood Association, and all three tribal nations in our region: the Nottawaseppi Huron Band of the Potawatomi, the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians, and the Match-E-Be-Nash-She-Wish Band of Pottawatomi Indians (Gun Lake Tribe).

NAI boarding schools, which proliferated across North America, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand from 1879 to 1983 the were designed to "kill the Indian, save the man within," or forcibly assimilate NAI children into Euro-American culture (NABS, 2021b; Sherwood and VanDeusen, 2022). Survivors who served on the panel discussion recounted experiences of cruel physical punishment, cultural erasure, and familial separation—accounts that have been silenced or marginalized in educational curriculum, public discourse, and historical narratives. The emotional power of the testimonies delivered during the panel brought a profound sense of immediacy and truth. Survivors described losing their languages, being prohibited from practicing cultural traditions, and enduring systematic abuse—all of which have been identified by researchers as having profound impacts on NAI communities today (NABS 2021a; NABS 2021b; Sherwood and VanDeusen, 2022). The intergenerational trauma that emerged from these schools continues to impact mental health, cultural continuity, and community cohesion. This aligns with recent findings by the U.S. Department of the Interior's Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative (2022), which documents over 500 such institutions and their roles in perpetuating violence on NAI families.

By bringing the lived experiences of NAI communities to WMU, NASO and NAAC not only honored the resilience of survivors but also urged students and faculty to reckon with and bear witness to this deeply troubling chapter of not-so-distant American history. The panel exemplified the importance of truth-telling and listening as a step toward healing and justice. It offered an educational space where difficult conversations about colonization, systemic racism, and attempts at

cultural genocide could begin. Furthermore, the panel aligned with broader academic frameworks of historical trauma and decolonization. Scholars such as Bryan Brayboy (2005) and Sandy Grande (2015) have emphasized that engagement directly with Indigenous narratives fosters critical consciousness and counters dominant historical myths in universities and communities. Events like the *Truth and Healing* discussion not only educate but also challenge academic communities to be more aware and inclusive of NAI voices, histories, and ways of knowing.

Kalamazoo Nature Center Collaboration
with Robin Wall Kimmerer

NASO and NAAC collaborated with the Kalamazoo Nature Center to host an event featuring Dr. Robin Wall Kimmerer, a Potawatomi botanist and author of the widely acclaimed book, *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants*. Kimmerer's visit offered both an onsite walking in nature lecture and academic presentation, rooted in TEK and the practice of reciprocity between humans and the natural world. Her teachings emphasize that plants are not merely resources but living relatives deserving of respect and gratitude. Through storytelling and ecological observation, Kimmerer encouraged participants to rethink their relationships with the environment. Rather than viewing nature through the lens of domination and extraction, she proposed a framework of mutual respect and caretaking—a concept deeply embedded in many NAI worldviews. TEK complements and challenges Western scientific paradigms. It recognizes the spiritual, cultural, and relational aspects of nature that are often overlooked in conventional environmental discourse.

From conversations with participants, it became apparent that many had never encountered NAI perspectives on ecology before this event, and the experience left a lasting impression. The blend of academic insight, spiritual reflection, and experiential learning offered a holistic view of environmental stewardship. Attendees engaged in guided walks, learned about the sacredness of local plant life, and reflected on how Indigenous teachings might inform more sustainable, ethical land practices. The experience sought to enrich community understandings of ecology, but also, instilled a sense of personal responsibility toward environmental justice. The event demonstrated how intellectual curiosity can be sparked through interdisciplinary and intercultural learning. Kimmerer's presence expanded the educational mission of the university beyond the classroom into the land itself. The experience also underscored the importance of NAI leadership in environmental movements, including the vital role of water protectors, echoing global conversations about Indigenous land rights and ecological protection (CBIKS, 2024). This event represents community-engaged scholarship which is essential for inspiring and educating a generation of learners that are aware and taking action at the intersection of sustainability, equity, and decolonization.

Course with Frank Waln:
Indigenous Music, Healing & Activism

NASO and NAAC played a pivotal role in convincing the sitting provost and president to recruit Frank Waln—a Sicangu Lakota hip-hop artist, activist, and award-winning educator—to WMU as a visiting faculty member. In recognition of their advocacy and commitment, Waln launched a groundbreaking new course titled *Indigenous Music, Healing & Activism*, blending creative expression, political education, and cultural healing in a way that redefined the classroom experience. Waln is widely recognized for his work combining music and storytelling to confront colonialism, advocate for Indigenous rights, and promote emotional healing in NAI communities. The course introduced students to NAI music as both an artistic practice and a form of political and cultural resistance.

Students in the course explored the intersections of art, identity, and sovereignty through a decolonial lens, analyzing how NAI artists like Waln use music to critique systems of oppression and affirm cultural understandings. Course materials included a mix of recorded performances, lyrical analysis, historical context, and readings from NAI scholars and artists. This multidisciplinary approach encouraged students to engage critically and empathetically with complex histories and contemporary struggles. One NAI student, for example, reflected on *To Pimp a Butterfly* by Kendrick Lamar through the lens of "Rez life" [Life on the reservation] and boarding school trauma, drawing parallels between lyrical metaphors and the historical suppression of Indigenous identity. The class offered space to explore how themes of generational pain, cultural survival, and resilience are shared across marginalized communities. These kinds of reflections demonstrated how music—whether Lakota hip-hop or protest anthems from other traditions—can become a vehicle for reclaiming voice, memory, and power. The course offered a transformative educational experience, particularly for students unfamiliar with Indigenous cultural expressions. By foregrounding Indigenous epistemologies and centering NAI voices, the class challenged dominant Eurocentric narratives that often marginalize Indigenous creativity and resilience. Students were invited to reflect on their own positionality and consider how artistic expression can serve as a bridge between cultures and generations.

Frank Waln's personal insights and authenticity as an artist-activist created a classroom atmosphere of trust, inspiration, and inquiry. Ultimately, the course exemplified how academic institutions can support Indigenous self-representation and expand curricula to include underrepresented voices. It reinforced the broader mission of promoting Indigenous knowledge systems within higher education. For many students, this course was their first meaningful exposure to NAI histories, music traditions, activism, and lived experiences. Through his teachings, students gained a deeper understanding of topics like the legacy of NAI boarding schools, the criminalization of Indigenous spiritual practices, and the cultural significance

of music as a form of medicine, resistance, and survival. Students expressed that learning about the oral transmission of songs, the emotional and historical weight behind certain instruments, and the fusion of traditional and contemporary forms helped them rethink the very foundations of music and culture. The course also demonstrates that when students are exposed to culturally relevant content delivered by NAI scholars and artists, their intellectual curiosity is not only sparked—it is transformed into a commitment to respect, transcultural solidarity, and justice.

Sage and Sweetgrass Harvest Teachings

NASO and NAAC hosted the *Sage and Sweetgrass Harvest Teachings*, an experiential learning opportunity that allowed students, faculty, and community members to engage with NAI plant-based traditions in a respectful and educational setting. The harvest took place in the Community Medicine Garden located in front of the College of Engineering and Applied Sciences building at WMU—a space that was planted in consultation with tribal nations in the region, and has been nurtured over the years by students, faculty, and staff. Special appreciation is extended to a dedicated grounds staff member, Laura Moss, now retired, whose care and commitment helped the garden flourish as a site of learning and cultural connection. Both sage and sweetgrass hold sacred significance in many NAI cultures and are used in ceremonies for cleansing, prayer, and healing (e.g. the burning of sage to practice smudging). Unfortunately, these practices are often appropriated or misunderstood in popular culture, reducing them to aesthetic or commercial commodities stripped of their spiritual meaning for NAI communities.

The *Sage and Sweetgrass Harvest Teachings* provided a forum to gather plant medicines, share cultural knowledge, and counteract misrepresentations by providing accurate, culturally grounded education. Participants learned from NAI knowledge keepers about the ecological roles of sage and sweetgrass, their ceremonial importance, and the ethical protocols for harvesting them. The harvest included lessons on offering tobacco, expressing gratitude, asking permission from the plant, and recognizing the relationship between land, spirit, and culture.

NAI people face challenges when burning sage—frequently encountering institutional barriers or even aggressive responses, including at WMU and other universities. The sage and sweetgrass harvest event provided a forum for ceremony in an affirming educational context. The event also advanced visibility and reclamation, helping to create space for Indigenous practices to be understood, respected, and protected. By engaging the senses—smelling the sweetgrass, feeling the soil, offering prayers—participants were offered an opportunity to form more intimate and respectful connection to NAI worldviews. Such experiences are essential for Indigenizing education and promoting relational connections. For many, the event was a turning point in how they understood cultural stewardship and environmental ethics. The harvest also represents a commitment to land-

based pedagogy—an educational approach rooted in Indigenous relationships to place, which emphasizes learning through direct engagement with the land and its ecosystems—and to Indigenous knowledge sovereignty (Simpson, 2014). The harvest also exemplified how curiosity can be cultivated through direct experience and how education can extend beyond textbooks to consider spiritual dimensions and ethical implications. As academic institutions strive to become more inclusive, programs like this challenge higher education to recognize and support the full depth of NAI knowledge traditions—not as artifacts of the past, but as living systems of thought and practice relevant to the present and future.

Indigenous Peoples' Day Film Screening and Panel Discussion

The 2024 Indigenous Peoples' Day film screening and panel discussion hosted by NASO and NAAC marked a significant milestone for our campus community to elevate NAI voices and narratives on campus, with Frank Waln serving as the MC and bringing his powerful presence and perspective to the event. The event centered on *Pokagon Band of Potawatomi: A Song for Everything*, a documentary that celebrates the tribe's cultural resurgence, language revitalization, and the healing power of traditional music. The event drew students, faculty, and local community members to the campus in a collective act of learning and honoring Indigenous perspectives. The screening emphasized the enduring relevance of traditional arts as a vehicle for identity, resistance, and sovereignty.

What made the event especially impactful was the panel discussion that followed, which featured members of the Pokagon Band who were directly involved in the film. The panel included tribal elders, educators, and youth who offered firsthand insights into the film's development and the cultural importance of its themes. They spoke about the revitalization of Bodwéwadmimwen (Potawatomi language), the communal role of powwows and traditional song, and the efforts of the tribe to pass down cultural knowledge through intergenerational mentorship. Students, staff, faculty and community members had the opportunity to ask questions and engage in dialogue, which provide the opportunity to create more understanding of the complexities of Indigenous identity in contemporary society.

This event did more than celebrate NAI heritage on a particular holiday—it demonstrated how storytelling can foster curiosity, empathy, and connection across history and cultural divides. The film screening format created a reflective environment, allowing viewers to witness lived experiences through the emotional and sensory language of cinema. For many attendees, the event offered a first encounter with NAI people who challenged past tense depictions of their lived experience by using media as a pedagogical tool as the film underscored the power of representation in disrupting settler colonial narratives and creating space for local NAI achievements. Furthermore, this Indigenous Peoples' Day event aligned with national calls to replace Columbus Day celebrations with programming that hon-

ors Indigenous resilience and resistance. NAAC and NASO's approach—grounded in collaboration with local tribal nations—set a precedent for future observances on campus. It modeled best practices in relationship-building, respectful representation, and critical dialogue.

Dreamcatcher Workshop

The *Dreamcatcher Workshop* hosted by NASO and NAAC offered students, faculty, and community members a culturally immersive opportunity to engage with the Anishinaabe tradition of dreamcatcher crafting. Dreamcatchers, often commodified and co-opted in mainstream popular culture, hold deep spiritual significance in Ojibwe (Anishinaabe) communities. At the workshop, a NAI knowledge keeper selected by NASO students began by sharing the origin story of the dreamcatcher. The Spider Woman, or Asibikaashi, is a protector of children and the web weaver who symbolically filters dreams. By situating the craft in its proper cultural and spiritual context, the experience counteracted stereotypes and invited participants to move beyond surface-level appreciation to a more informed and respectful understanding.

The workshop was intentionally hands-on, grounding participants in the practice of dreamcatcher making using traditional materials such as willow hoops and sinew. The workshop facilitator discussed the symbolic dimensions of the process—how the web is designed to catch harmful dreams while allowing good ones to pass through—a concept rooted in Ojibwe (Anishinaabe) beliefs. Participants were encouraged to choose materials that resonated with them personally, such as feathers, stones, or bear claws, prompting reflection on the natural world and one's relationship to it. This element of intentionality—inviting participants to listen to what materials spoke to them—elevated the workshop beyond craft into a space of spiritual and cultural meaning-making. In a university setting that often prioritizes abstract, disembodied theory, this tactile experience allowed for embodied learning. It engaged the senses, fostered emotional resonance, and prompted introspection. Students who may not have previously interacted with NAI cultures left with more than a physical artifact—they gained a deeper respect for Anishinaabe teachings and a lived encounter with intergenerational knowledge grounded in land, story, and relationality.

Moreover, the workshop included critical dialogue around cultural appropriation, commercialization, and the challenges NAI artisans face in preserving authenticity. The facilitator encouraged attendees to consider the ethics of purchasing mass-produced dreamcatchers and instead support NAI artisans and traditions. These conversations are crucial in an era where Indigenous symbols are frequently misused or stripped of their spiritual meaning. NASO and NAAC's approach offers a model for how universities can cultivate curiosity in culturally grounded and ethically sound ways. The *Dreamcatcher Workshop* also demon-

strated a commitment to community-building. The workshop concluded with reflection; participants discussed what they learned and considered on how they might apply it in their personal or academic lives. These conversations emphasize relational accountability—a core Indigenous value—and created a sense of shared stewardship for the knowledge that's been exchanged. In this way, the *Dreamcatcher Workshop* became not just a cultural experience but a moment of transformation for participants.

Additional Efforts to Indigenize the University

NASO and NAAC continue to Indigenize the university through a range of community-engaged curricular and co-curricular programming that foster direct engagement with NAI people and perspectives. Developed in consultation with Tribal Education departments and Tribal Council members in the region, WMU offers a graduate certificate in Tribal Governance, which includes culturally relevant leadership development teachings, and comprehensive content on the political, legal and cultural dimensions of sovereignty and self-determination. The graduate certificate prepares students to work for and in partnership with tribal governments. These curricular developments demonstrate NAI consultation is not supplementary—it is essential. Similarly, in Fall 2024, NASO and NAAC partnered with the University Center for the Humanities to host a presentation on *Indigenous Thought Systems* by Dr. Bernard Perley (First Nations), offering critical insights into Indigenous epistemologies and ways of knowing. NASO and NAAC hosted a *Traditional Hand Drum Making Workshop*, led by a local Anishinaabe Culture Keeper. The workshop was free, open to all, and provided students, faculty, alumni, and community members with the opportunity for direct hands-on engagement. Held at the WMU Office of Sustainability, the workshop guided participants through the process of constructing their own traditional hand drums while learning about the spiritual and communal significance of drumming in NAI cultures. Drumming has long been a vital part of Indigenous traditions, serving as a connection between the physical and spiritual worlds. During the workshop, attendees learned about the sacred role of drumming, particularly in Anishinaabe teachings, where the drum represents the heartbeat of Mother Earth

NASO and NAAC leaders also played important roles in two major regional summits in 2024: the Tribal Healthcare Workforce Development Summit, which brought together tribal nations and leaders, State government officials, healthcare educators, and students to advance workforce development in alignment with emerging Tribal health system priorities; and the Great Lakes Tribal Economic Development Summit, which centered economic sovereignty, highlighted successful tribal enterprises, and inspired student engagement through the framework of Indigenomics. NAAC and NASO also partnered with the School of Environment, Sustainability, and Geography to host environmental scientist Dr. Evan Larson for a series of presentations and community consultations on Indigenous envi-

ronmental science, reinforcing the importance of TEK in addressing contemporary environmental challenges. Furthering its commitment to holistic Indigenous education, NAAC and NASO collaborated with the WMU Homer Stryker M.D. School of Medicine for a *Traditional Medicine Teaching* event, creating an opportunity for students and faculty to learn about NAI healing practices. NASO has actively advocated for the establishment of an Elder-in-Residence program, a proposal currently under review, which would expand NAI models of intergenerational learning and mentorship into the university's academic and cultural landscape.

Through these initiatives, NASO and NAAC continue to challenge institutional invisibility and ensure that NAI excellence and achievements remain at the forefront of higher education. NAAC and NASO's impact at WMU demonstrate that fostering curiosity about NAI people and perspectives requires more than symbolic gestures; it necessitates long-term relationship building with tribal nations and communities, demonstrated respect and reciprocity, humility, intentional programming based on community priorities, institutional commitment, financial support, and sustained engagement. These events purposefully challenged dominant narratives, disrupted stereotypes, and created spaces where Indigenous knowledge is centered rather than marginalized. The impact of these initiatives extends beyond the events themselves. By nurturing a culture of inquiry, NASO fosters an academic environment that values NAI achievements in the present, aspirations for the future, while reckoning with the realities of the past. This work aligns with broader movements in higher education advocating for Indigenization of learning environments and restorative justice (Tuck & Yang, 2012; Wall Kimmerer, 2013).

Conclusion

As a form of structural violence, coloniality is deeply tied to the logic of Western civilization—and by extension to institutions of higher education. Broadly conceived, decoloniality is an ontological, epistemic, political, and pedagogical endeavor to dismantle the logic of modernity and Western civilization and its dehumanizing effects (Maldonado-Torres, 2007). Several scholars advocate for decolonization (Alicea-Rodríguez, 2019; Bell et al., 2019; Dutta, 2018). However, Tuck and Yang (2012) emphasize the specific, material aspects of decoloniality related to NAI peoples. Decolonization brings about the repatriation of Indigenous land and life; it is not a metaphor for other things we want to do to improve our societies and schools. The easy adoption of decolonizing discourse by educational advocacy and scholarship, evidenced by the increasing number of calls to "decolonize our schools, adapt "decolonizing methods," or, "decolonize student thinking," turns decolonization into a superficial metaphor (Tuck & Yang, 2021, p. 1).

We began with, and now return to, the provost office administrator's dismissive remark questioning why institutional efforts were necessary for "only four or five Indian students." This statement is not only factually incorrect—it reflects

a pervasive higher education mindset that rationalizes exclusion and justifies inaction (and a perverse preoccupation with population control, e.g., "counting the Indians"). It is emblematic of a logic that has long rendered NAI students, staff and faculty invisible in higher education, reducing their presence to statistical insignificance rather than acknowledging their inherent value and rightful place within the academy (Shotton et al., 2013). More than an anecdote, this moment exposes a deeper hostility toward equity work and a broader institutional resistance to NAI inclusion. It demonstrates why symbolic gestures—such as land acknowledgments or diversity statements—are insufficient when unaccompanied by structural and financial commitments. If academic leaders continue to measure the worth of NAI students primarily by their headcount or revenue implications—such as through the Michigan Indian Tuition Waiver program—rather than honoring their deep connections to land and lifeways, histories of resistance and resilience, present-day achievements, and rightful place in the academy, the structures of exclusion will remain intact. This is why change must be institutional—not situational—and why curiosity, while a meaningful starting point, must be transformed into persistent and direct action.

Indigenous frameworks for action demand that we strive to comprehend and disrupt the dynamics that privilege English, White Euro American, and scientific modes of knowledge production that sustain and normalize violence against a majority of the world's people (Dutta, 2018). NAI- led initiatives described in this paper illustrate what is possible when NAI people and perspectives are directly engaged and supported. These experiences foster critical reflection, deep learning, emotional resonance, and a sense of shared accountability. Indigenizing higher education requires more than mere tweaks—it require a fundamental rethinking of how higher education engages with NAI self-determination and sovereignty (Dei, 2006; Pidgeon, 2008). NASO and NAAC's work has demonstrated that NAI communities, students, staff and faculty are not passive recipients of education; they are leaders, scholars, and changemakers who, drive meaningful transformation on campus.

Yet, the fact that some academic leaders still feel comfortable using phrases like "low on the totem pole" or "too many Indians and not enough chiefs" in casual workplace conversation—without recognizing the cultural appropriation and violence embedded in such language—underscores the depth of the problem. These expressions, casually lifted from NAI cultures to enforce hierarchy or institutional dominance, reflect a troubling lack of understanding and respect for the very communities that university leaders claim to support. Until university leaders confront their complicity in these patterns of exclusion—even at the most basic level of language use—and commit to NAI inclusion as more than a symbolic gesture or the responsibility of a few dedicated individuals, progress will remain superficial at best.

This is particularly evident at WMU, where recent pushback has emerged against revisions to the university's land acknowledgment statement developed

through an extensive, consultative process involving tribal leaders, NAI students, and community members. In contrast, the university's original land 2019 acknowledgment was created within a traditional academic course setting. While tribal nations were consulted in the process, consultation with NAI students did not occur. This tension illustrates the disconnect between performative inclusion and authentic, reciprocal engagement. Meaningful and ongoing consultation with tribal nations, NAI students, and communities must be a permanent institutional priority—not an occasional courtesy or afterthought. The question is no longer whether sovereign tribal nations and NAI students, staff, and faculty should be recognized—it is how much longer universities will continue to act as if they are not there.

In this article we have highlighted the ways in which NASO and NAAC actively disrupt settler colonial narratives by asserting NAI presence, reclaiming physical and intellectual space, and inspiriting collective action. These campus-based organizations are offering a powerful model for cultivating transformative curiosity as their work challenges higher education to rethink who belongs, whose knowledge matters, and what it means to truly engage with NAI communities. Through immersive experiences, interdisciplinary collaborations, and advocacy, NASO and NAAC are not simply creating space for NAI voices—they are seeking to redefine the university itself from the community-up as a site for nation-building, cultural resurgence, relational accountability, and intellectual sovereignty.

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The Question Formulation Technique That Encourages Curiosity

Connie Williams

Abstract

A technique to encourage students to think about asking questions and then learning how to do just that was developed and created by Dan Rothstein and Luz Santana of the Right Question Institute (rightquestion.org). This article shares the process and provides examples of the success of the process.

Introduction

There's no doubt about it—research can be long, tangled and messy. As educators we've all been with students who have just given up—as one student said as he slammed down his paper after a frustrating study session: "I just want to be done. I'm done. Goodbye" and he walked out of the library. And yet, we know that students will spend hours on those things they like: they'll gamify, they'll practice skateboard jumps for hours, they'll hunch over stamp or other collections until they get called in to dinner. They *can* pay attention. We want to teach students the discipline it takes to stick with a challenge, but we can see that to do so requires both a captivating subject and an engaged student. Our job is to help them ask questions that inspire that curiosity and let them run with it. How can we help them create those questions and prioritize them so that they can build a structure for purposeful exploration?

Imagine that you are a school administrator and as you're walking down the hall at the local middle school you hear a classroom that sounds, well, active. Student voices are chattering and it entices you to peek in. You see students in groups gathered around tables with butcher paper in the middle, and one student is writing the questions that the others are throwing at them. The noise level is, indeed, high, and the teacher is walking around the classroom observing, smiling. Every now and then the teacher gives a student a 'thank you' for their effort, but

other than that is mostly a presence that guides students as they complete their task. You're not sure what is going on, but you are intrigued. You head in to see. You see on the white board an image from the 1930s.

Now imagine that you're one of the students. About 5 minutes before the administrator peeks into your classroom, your teacher has posted an image on the white board and given one for your group to look at (see Figure 1).

You've been tasked to look closely at the picture, and with your group, write some questions. There are rules, however, to asking them. They are:

1. Ask as many questions as you can.
2. Do not stop to discuss, judge or answer.
3. Record exactly as stated.
4, Change any statements into questions.

You've never been interested in history and are not sure that this assignment is going to be any more interesting, but as you look at the picture, questions do come up:

Where is this?
What is that big cloud?
Is that a hurricane?
Will it destroy those houses
Are there people there?
When did this happen?
Is this real?

Your group dives into the process, which surprises you (because who knew that a picture like this would even be interesting?) and each new question someone adds to the list seems to bring up more. And, even though you are reminded that now is question building time, you really do think about the possible answers.

Figure 1

http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/archives/collections/franklin/index.php?p=digitallibrary/digitalcontent&id=3054

Question Formulation Technique

This is the start of the Question Formulation Technique (QFT) created by Dan Rothstein and Luz Santana of the Right Question Institute (rightquestion.org). I've used this teaching strategy for many years across the K-12 grade levels, in college classes, and with adult groups. It is a simple and yet powerful way to help participants organize their thoughts about a topic and how they might approach next steps in an assignment, task or problem solving a conundrum. The RQI folks will tell you about how it allows participants to learn—and practice—the skills of divergent, convergent, and metacognitive thinking. And while it definitely does all that, providing educators with a scientific scaffold for the practice, it also brings those skills into active play through teaching by way of practice. Question building becomes the key to helping us organize our curiosity in a way that we can use to begin a process for finding answers.

The QFT strategy has 6 building-block steps:

1. The Question Focus

The question focus (or QFocus) is a prompt that gives a focus for the questions. A Qfocus can be a phrase or quotation, an image or video, a podcast or speech, an equation or data set, or even a hands-on experience or experiment. I've used old-time kitchen utensils as Q-focus prompts.

2. Question-Building

Participants ask questions following the 4 rules above. They are asked to number the questions. (We find out later that often our priority questions are those that we ask well after the first few questions).

3. Improve your questions

Here we look at two kinds of questions: open and closed. Participants are asked to practice turning open into closed – closed into open. This is a marvelously simple exercise in discovering how the questions we ask lead us to the actions we'll take: will we be diving into locating facts or will we be looking at bigger ideas that will need to be discussed and dissected further?

4. Prioritize your questions

This section asks participants to pick a top number of questions (for example 3) that will help them complete the task. Are they going to write a research paper (pick 3 questions that most interest you), are they going to participate in a class discussion, (pick 3 that you think are the most important), or are they going to design an experiment (pick 3 that will best help lead you to the design you'd like to create).

5. Share and Discuss / Next steps

Sharing your questions opens the doors for others to get ideas. Others can add them to their own lists…which may then displace questions thought to be priority. Next steps include the task at hand: time to head out to research.

6. But Not Until They've Had Time to Reflect

Reflecting on the process can be a powerful way for participants to see just how this simple act of creating questions, and identifying which are most important to their task at hand allows them to move forward in their work more gracefully and with intent.

Those 6 steps are all it takes. After participants know how the process works, it can be used in a variety of learning situations. Adult groups can use this process just as easily as elementary students. The QFT began with Dan and Luz working together with a parent group where they discovered that asking questions was a skill that we can learn. Through years of study and practice, the QFT was introduced through their book "Make Just one Change." Many years later they have included instruction in the process of decision-making, legal empowerment and voter engagement.

So, what does this have to do with curiosity? If we go back to the beginning and take a look at our students who do indeed focus deeply on something that interests them, we can discover that what interests us can vary. Sometimes it just takes a small opening to pique that inch of curiosity. Once that nudge hits, we always want to know more. I am reminded of this whenever I attend an adult event such as a 'cars and coffee' where car aficionados meet and greet to talk about cars. Their depth of knowledge on automobile history is immense. Attend an art gallery opening, a local history event or other community activity and you will find the same deep level of interest. Walk into a comic convention, or a video game store and chat awhile with the young folks. Talk about curiosity! The desire to want to learn more is always present where there is interest. Where there is interest… there are questions.

We research to a question. Why is the '54 Ford over there in such tip top condition? How can I make my next birthday cake better? Where did my family live in the 1960s? How might we take a new approach to solving climate change? Students are the same. Many students came to me in the library bemoaning the fact that they 'hate history.' I reckon that they didn't hate history… they disliked history class. Making just this one change—create activities that require research by creating interest—and motivation will follow.

Back in the classroom above…while looking at that image of the dust bowl piqued the interest of students, a savvy teacher could add this information to the mix by handing this statement from the image data to each of the table groups

with the instruction to read through and add any questions to their list that may come up, such as:

> DATE: April 14, 1935
> Original caption reads: "Rolla Kansas, May 6-35. Mr. Franklin D. Roosevelt. Washington DC. Dear Mr. Roosevelt, we are mailing you a picture of the dust storm which came April 14-35. This was a northeast wind and darkness came. When this hit us the sun was shining bright and darkness was coming on at 3 o'clock in the evening. Taken from the water tower one hundred feet high. Yours truly, Chas. P. Williams. Rolla Kansas.

This answers some of the questions already posited on many of the lists: is this real, when did this happen, etc. But now this new information sparks questions that open us other, bigger ideas, as well as some language we can use to search: dust bowl, Franklin D. Roosevelt, 1935, etc. They are now ready with some ideas on what questions invite them to head in what direction to explore. Whether their assignment for this unit is to pick a topic of interest for writing a report, participating on a discussion, or creating a segment of a mural to put on display, they have a good start to their search.

Using a strategy like the QFT can help teachers assist their students in identifying their real interest in any given topic and design a path to research. In academia, the research question is front and center to any substantial work. Getting to that question can take some time and reflection. Centering on the Q-focus prompt can jumpstart thinking that takes that divergent path towards creative questioning by opening doors to 'what if' pondering.

These are the real questions that can spark the curiosity that builds a scaffold for creating knowledge by using the closed ended questions to store facts and build on them in light of the open ended questions that take us into the 'why,' 'how,' and 'what if' of handling that knowledge.

Do you want students who are engaged? Who want to dig deeply into a subject they love? It truly all starts with the question.

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Contributing Authors

Richard K. Gordon: I always enjoyed school—my professional experience in education reflects that enjoyment. My degrees are in Elementary Education, Teaching and the Philosophy of Education. At this career stage I understand that Teaching is the grandest profession because when done correctly the teacher touches the souls of students in unimaginable and unintended ways and if done correctly the teachers work leads to beauty. Thus, teaching is an art and the teacher is an artist. I trained to be an artist at Cheyney University, Antioch Graduate School and UCLA. I taught kindergarten, elementary, secondary, undergraduate, graduate and post graduate students. I taught and gave lectures on four continents.

Julian Vasquez Heilig is a professor of Educational Leadership, Research, and Technology at Western Michigan University. His research focuses on equity-driven K–12 curriculum, policy, and leadership, with over 70 publications and global presentations across 30+ universities and eight countries. He has advised legislative bodies, the United Nations, and U.S. presidential campaigns, and served on the NAACP Executive Committee as Education Chair in multiple states. A recipient of more than 30 honors—including the California Assembly Resolution 1459 and recognition as a Kentucky Colonel—his work is frequently cited by major national media. He holds a Ph.D. and M.A. from Stanford University and degrees from the University of Michigan. His full CV is available at bit.ly/ProfJVHcv. He blogs at Cloaking Inequity.

Alfie Kohn is the author of 14 books on education, parenting, and human behavior, including *Punished by Rewards* (1993/2018), *Beyond Discipline* (1996), *The Schools Our Children Deserve* (1999), *Unconditional Parenting* (2005), *The Homework Myth* (2006), and *The Myth of the Spoiled Child* (2014). He has written

for most of the leading education periodicals and has appeared twice on "Oprah." *Time* magazine described him as "perhaps the country's most outspoken critic of education's fixation on grades [and] test scores." Kohn works with educators and parents across the country and speaks regularly at national conferences. He lives (actually) in the Boston area and (virtually) at www.alfiekohn.org.

John J. LaCorte, Ph.D. is a Professor Emeritus at the Department of Philosophy, California State University, Dominguez Hills

Dr. **Tyson E. Lewis** is professor of Art Education in the College of Visual Arts and Design at the University of North Texas where he teaches classes in critical phenomenology, critical theory, aesthetic, philosophy for children, and posthumanism. Most recently, he is author of *Educational Potentialities: Collected Talks on Revolutionary Education, Aesthetics, and Organization* and *Studious Drift: Movements and Protocol for a Postdigital Education* (co-authored with Peter Hyland).

J. Cynthia McDermott began her teaching career as a high school English teacher and has been a teacher and teacher educator for 50 plus years, including service as a university faculty member working with preservice teachers. She recently retired as the department chair of education at Antioch University Los Angeles. McDermott is a co-editor of *Taboo*. Email address: mcdprof@hotmail.com

Dr. **Lejla Panjeta** is a full professor of Film Studies and Visual Communications. She has been teaching at international and regional universities, and worked in film and theatre productions. She is also the author of documentary films. Her work experience extends to public, government and private institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina. For publications, film work and academic engagement she received awards and recognition. She is the author of articles and books on film, art and media. Her research interests are in the fields of aesthetics, art, mythology, cultural, media and film studies. She resides in Sarajevo, BiH. Email Address: lejla.panjeta@ssst.edu.ba

Dr. **Dee Sherwood** is a professor of Social Work at Western Michigan University. She serves as the advisor to the university's Native American Student Organization and the director of the Native American Affairs Council. Sherwood's research, teaching, and practice are focused on organizational and leadership development, intercultural competence, intergenerational trauma, and critical pedagogy in social work education. Sherwood received the university's *Innovative Teaching Award* in 2015, *Distinguished Teaching Award* in 2024, and the Lewis Walker Institute's *Faculty Diversity Award* in 2025. Over the past two decades, Sherwood has conducted organizational, community, statewide, and regional evaluations for organizations such as the Michigan Indian Legal Services, Sutter Health System, and Spectrum Health System. Sherwood has authored/co-authored numerous articles, curriculum guides,

and book chapters and presented at national and international conferences.

Frank Waln is an award winning Sicangu Lakota multi-genre music artist, public speaker and educator from the Rosebud Reservation in South Dakota. He holds a Bachelor of Arts in Audio Arts & Acoustics from Columbia College Chicago, where he is recognized as a notable alumnus and was given the Chicago Mayor's Award for Civic Engagement upon graduating. Frank Waln has appeared on MTV, CNN, NPR, ESPN and The History Channel for his work and has won numerous awards including multiple Native American Music Awards.

His impactful work has been showcased at prominent venues such as the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian, the Linden Museum in Germany, the Kennedy Center and the Field Museum in Chicago. Frank Waln's writing has been published in academic journals including the School Library Journal and he was a contributing author to America Ferrera's New York Times Best Selling book *American Like Me*. Frank Waln has had a successful career as a public speaker having given keynote addresses for various organizations including the antmakers in the Arts, the American Evaluation Association and the National Education Association.

Frank Waln's influence extends to education and for the last decade, he has presented and performed at schools from elementary up to colleges and universities around the world. He was commissioned by Harvard University's Committee on the Arts to curate programming on campus and create new music paying tribute to his great grandmother's resilience as a survivor of Indian boarding schools. Frank Waln is currently an Artist-in-Residence and professor at Western Michigan University where he teaches about music production and Indigenous music and history. Frank Waln's self-produced, self-published music is available on all streaming platforms.

Connie Williams, MLS, National Board Certified Teacher (2004-2024) has worked in all kinds of libraries over a 35+ year career. She writes & presents on library advocacy, question-building, inquiry, primary sources, and government info She is the author of the book: Understanding Government Information: a teaching strategies toolkit for grades 7-12 (2016); author of chapter "National Park Service: the Importance of Place" in *What Can U.S. Government Information Do for Me?* McFarland Publishing, 2023; and is co-author with Blanche Woolls of *Teaching Life Skills in the Library: Career, Finance, and Civics in a Changing World*. Libraries Unlimited, 2019.

After reading Warren Berger's book: A More Beautiful Question in 2016, she contacted the Right Question Institute to learn more and has been using QFT ever since with students from grades 3 through college and beyond.

Skyler Wolverton is a citizen of the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi. Wolverton completed his Master of Science in Geography in 2025 and his Bachelor of

Science in Urban, Regional, and Environmental Planning in 2024, from Western Michigan University. Wolverton's graduate thesis explored site specific geospatial mapping and suitability of wild river rice (manoomin), an essential medicine to the Great Lakes region and its people. Wolverton's research emphasized how scholars should learn from and collaborate with Indigenous nations when conducting scientific work, with full authority as co-researchers and data sovereignty. Throughout Wolverton's tenure at WMU, he participated in a numerous organizations and groups, most notably, the Native American Student Organization (NASO) and Native American Affairs Council (NAAC). Beginning in early 2021 Wolverton served as president and other leadership roles within NASO. With the help of students, faculty, and community members, Wolverton brought the student organization back to full capacity, after participation in NASO dwindled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. His efforts elevated NASO to the attention of university administration and fostered campus wide awareness on the importance of Indigenous science, knowledge, values, and lifeways.

Taboo: The Journal of Culture and Education
Guidelines for Authors

Editors

J. Cynthia McDermott, Antioch University Los Angeles
Shirley R. Steinberg, University of Calgary
Adam F. C. Fletcher, SoundOut.org

Founding and Managing Editor:
Shirley R. Steinberg, University of Calgary

Vision

Taboo: The Journal of Culture and Education is an academic forum for the transdisciplinary study of the critical pedagogical implications and relationships within education. ***Taboo*** was founded on the notion of radical contextualization, encouraging students and scholars to draw from a variety of theoretical and methodological perspectives to question current approaches in schools, systems, and in higher education. Drawing upon a variety of contextualizing disciplines and critical theoretical ways of knowing including cultural studies, curriculum theorizing, critical race theory, political economy, feminist studies, the social foundations of education, critical pedagogy, interculturalism, queer theory, historiography, symbolic inter-actionism, literary theory, as examples. Beyond simply articulating critical perspectives we seek contributions willing to speak the unspoken and/or the irreconcilable. We hope to foster discussions across and through different disciplines including explorations into how dialogue and discourse operate throughout and within different educational times/spaces/places. The journal encourages a wide range of contributions from who work within these general areas, expanding methodological practices. ***Taboo*** seeks provocative and controversial submissions.

Journal Issues

Thematic Issues: *Taboo* was first published in 1995 and in 2025, we will celebrate its 30th year. To lead up to that milestone, *Taboo* will accept thematic issues as well as traditional issues. This unique model will invite editors to spearhead each issue. Assisted by *Taboo's* editorial collective and assistants, each issue will be a ***deep dive*** within a theme. To suggest a thematic issue please send the name(s) and affiliations of the proposed issue, the topic/theme of the issue, a draft of the call for manuscripts, a tentative timeline, and CVs of the guest editor(s). Editors must ensure that all articles in the special issue go through a blind-peer review process. Editors will be asked to submit final manuscripts with peer reviews to the editors on the negotiated deadline. The entire special issues or specific manuscripts of the special issue may also go through an additional peer-review and/or editorial review process with *Taboo* prior to publication. Authors can expect to receive a decision in one month. Upon approval of the issue, one of the *Taboo* editors will be assigned to work with the thematic issue team.

Articles and Essays: Taboo accepts ***traditional*** academic articles as well as differently conceived submissions. We invite thoughtful, provocative, and well-researched articles, we also encourage authors to play with form and content. Articles will go through a double-blind peer-review process. Articles should be from 3000-7000 words (including references).

Diatribes: *Taboo* accepts opinion pieces. Diatribes are designed to be thoughtful and passionate pieces that utilize research in a provocative manner. They will go through a double-blind peer-review process and should be between 1000-1500 words.

Submitting a Thematic Issue Proposal:
>*We are now actively looking for submissions for these issues*

1. Send a cover-letter with your manuscript and address the following items:
>a. Issue Editor(s) email, addresses, affiliations
>b. Proposed thematic issue and short description.
>c. Justification for issue theme and how it links to *Taboo*'s vision
>d. Indicate desired month and year of proposed issue
>e. Indicate the research will comply with the rules and regulations of the ethics review board of your lead editors' institution (if appropriate)
>f. Indicate that the articles for the issue will be written specifically for the issue
>g. Submissions for *Taboo* thematic issues should be sent to:
>>SubmissionstoTaboo@gmail.com

Preparation for *Taboo*

Style: *Taboo* publishes articles that adhere to the guidelines of the ***American Psychological Association (7th edition)***. However, articles from other style guides may be used for single articles.

Acceptance: Before publication of the issue, author(s) of each article will be asked to transfer copyright of the article to ***Taboo: The Journal of Culture and Education***. The transfer will ensure the widest possible dissemination of information. *Taboo* has an acceptance rate of 15%.

Taboo: The Journal of Culture and Education is published electronically by Caddo Gap Press. The annual subscription rate for individuals is $50 US and for institutions is $100 US; for addresses outside the United States add $30 per year. Single issues are available for $30 each. Subscriptions orders should be addressed and payable to Caddo Gap Press, 3145 Geary Boulevard PMB 275, San Francisco, California 94118, USA.

Taboo
The Journal of Culture and Education

Taboo: The Journal of Culture and Education is an academic forum featuring the critical theoretical and pedagogical constructs that focus on the relationship between education and its sociocultural context. Grounded on the notion of "radical contextualization," Taboo presents compelling and controversial pieces from a wide range of contributors.

Taboo began as a publication of Peter Lang Publishing, with two issues published each year in 1995, 1996, and 1997. *Taboo* has since been acquired by Caddo Gap Press, which renewed publication of the journal with the Spring-Summer 2000 issue.

Taboo is published quarterly in electronic format and posted to the journal's website. For those wishing to receive the PDFs of each issue the annual subscription rate is $50 for individuals and $100 for institutions and libraries. Issues are sent via email or mailed in PDF format on disk. For those who read the journal on the website Caddo Gap Press encourages contributions to assist with the costs of publication.

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