From the Research Desk

Collaboration and diversity essential

By Dave Lehman, Connections Executive Editor and NSRF National Facilitator in Wisconsin

Part of the NSRF Mission Statement are the following phrases—*"empowering educators to create meaningful learning experiences **for all**, by **collaborating** effectively…."* note, ***for all*** by ***collaborating***! Thus, I found it particularly supportive to see this concept reflected in the special section of the October issue of the ***Scientific American*** magazine devoted to "The State of the World's Science 2014." In the opening article of nine in this special section, "The Inclusion Equation," Executive Editor Fred Guteri states:

"Collaboration has been a recurring theme in science and technology in recent years. The life of the mind is increasingly transnational. It roams centers of excellence from every continent, linked by communications of great speed and breadth."

The spring 2013 issue of YES! magazine was devoted to the theme, "How Cooperatives Are Driving the New Economy." In this issue, Eric Michael Johnson, graduate student in the history of science at the University of British Columbia,wrote about a "New Theory of Evolution: Survival of the Nicest." Citing the recent extensive research of Michael Tomasello of the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology at Leipzig, Germany, Johnson developed a "comprehensive evolutionary theory of human cooperation." Here is an account of human evolution which has predisposed us to work collaboratively, with cooperation favoring survival. (Also see Tomasello's 2008 book, ***Why We Cooperate***.)

I would add that this is not a "new" theory of evolution, even in 2008, but goes back at least to the turn of the 19th century with the writings of Petr Kropotkin (Russian geographer, economist, activist, philologist, zoologist, evolutionary theorist, philosopher, writer and prominent anarchist) and his seminal book, ***Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution***. Kropotkin's work first appeared as a series of articles in the magazine, "The Nineteenth Century" in 1890, then as a book in 1902. In summary, drawing on an extensive analysis of animal behavior as well as human societies, the medieval cities, and modern villages, Kropotkin said, *"In the practice of mutual aid, which we can retrace to the earliest beginnings of evolution, we thus find the positive and undoubted origin of our ethical conceptions; and we can affirm that in the ethical progress of man, mutual support—not mutual struggle—has had the leading part."*

More recently, in the 1960s we had the neo-Social Darwinism of Robert Ardrey's books ***African Genesis*** (1961) and ***The Territorial Imperative*** (1966) and Konrad Lorenz's ***On Aggression*** (1966). Together, Ardrey and Lorenz claimed that human evolution was determined by competition and a violent "killer instinct," an "aggressive drive" in the human species.

In response, Ashley Montagu (British-American anthropologist who popularized topics such as race and gender and their relation to politics and development) wrote and

WHAT ARE YOU READING?

We're all voracious readers in the office of the National School Reform Faculty, and we always have a few books in progress. Here are just a few of the titles queued up for us right now (not counting books on Dave's desk and Michele's Kindle!). Some of these came to us after attending the National Association of Independent Schools' People of Color Conference.

So, what are YOU reading these days that's really lighting you up with enthusiasm or wonder ... or both? If you have suggestions for us to review and maybe sell on our website, email us!

Creative Confidence: Unleashing the Creative Potential Within Us All, *by Tom Kelley & David Kelley*
Waking Up White: and Finding Myself in the Story of Race, *by Debby Irving*
Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Race, Gender, and Sexual Orientation, *by Derald Wing Sue*
The Power of the Social Brain: Teaching, Learning, and Interdependent Thinking, *by Arthur Costa and Pat Wilson O'Leary*
The Science of Trust: Emotional Attunement for Couples, *by John M. Gottman, PhD*

edited ***Man and Aggression*** (1968), ***The Nature of Human Aggression*** (1976), and ***Learning Non-Aggression: The Experience of Non-Literate Societies*** (1978). Throughout, Montagu cites extensive evidence supporting the cooperative, collaborative nature of human beings as the determining factors in our evolutionary survival, including evidence from numerous "primitive" societies and their child rearing practices in which this kind of cooperation is actively taught to the young.

Thus, given the extensive work of Kroptkin and Montagu and others, I would argue with Johnson's claim of a "new theory of evolution," and would suggest educators consider doing something that all the high school seniors do each year at the Lehman Alternative Community School, a public middle-high school in Ithaca, New York. The "Senior Team Interdisciplinary Graduation Project" at LACS requires seniors, in teams of three or more, to select a current issue or topic on which they do research, including the intercultural impact of their project. The teams then take a public stance or position, presenting it orally and in writing, to the School Board, the Common Council, or a local Town Board. Often the teams produce a booklet to be distributed throughout the community. With these projects, the students actively demonstrate that they have learned—throughout their secondary school career, culminating in this Senior Project—that they can work collaboratively.

In a subsequent article in the October ***Scientific American***, "How Diversity Works," Katherine Phillips, professor of leadership and ethics and Senior Vice Dean at Columbia Business School, states:

"The fact is that if you want to build teams or organizations capable of innovating, you need diversity. Diversity enhances creativity. It encourages the search for novel information and perspectives, leading to better decision making and problem solving. Diversity can improve the bottom line of companies and lead to unfettered discoveries and breakthroughs."

Here I am reminded of my first literary encounter with the writing of the African-American environmentalist, Jennifer Oladipo. Her brief essay, "Global Warming Is Colorblind," appeared in the November/December 2007 issue of Orion magazine. As a young volunteer working in an urban nature preserve in Louisville, Kentucky she was struck with the absence of other persons of color. With a bit of research, she realized that the nature preserve did not publicize its programs in the predominantly minority areas of town. The title of her article was reinforced by her plea, "Nobody benefits from the perception that enjoying and caring for the environment is an exclusively white lifestyle." I again encountered Oladipo in my review of her book ***Colors of Nature*** (2011) for the November 2012 issue of Connections. By that writing, Oladipo was an award-winning writer and journalist, having been named Kentucky's first African American state-certified environmental educator.

The articles in ***Scientific American*** recognize the increasing diversity of professional scientists, while calling for an even more diverse population to enter scientific fields. Here "diversity" refers not only to race, but to ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and differences in income levels. The enormous value of increased diversity has been clearly shown over recent decades of research by organizational scientists, psychologists, sociologists, economists, and demographers—diverse groups are more innovative than homogeneous groups. As pointed out by Katherine Phillips in her article, this is not only because people with different backgrounds bring new information. Simply interacting with different people forces everyone to prepare more thoroughly, to anticipate alternative viewpoints, and to expect that reaching consensus will take effort.

Turning then to the topic of gender diversity, the work of female animal behaviorists, particularly primatologists, is instructive. This field classically has been dominated by male researchers studying predominately male primates to the exclusion of female primates. This unrecognized gap in research led to erroneous conclusions about violence and aggression as the key factors in social hierarchy, ascribing the same aggression and domination of males to the early evolution of humans.

Enter Shirley Strum and her fifteen year, close-up study of olive baboons in Kenya from the early 1970s to the mid 1980s resulting in her book, ***Almost Human: A Journey into the World of Baboons*** (1987). She learned that baboons live basically in a peaceful society where friendship trumps violence and aggression in achieving desired results, discovering the "almost human" exchange of favors as the basis of baboons' social and sexual activities in which aggression was simply mal-adaptive.

Here, too, is the work of Carol Gilligan, a professor at New York University, and previously a graduate student of Lawrence Kohlberg at Harvard University while he was developing his famous "theory of moral development" (***Essays on Moral Development***, vol. 1, 1981 and vol. 2, 1984). Gilligan became an outspoken critic of Kohlberg (***In A Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development***, 1982), based on two things. First, Kohlberg only studied privileged, white men and boys, leading to a biased opinion against women. Second, in his stage theory of moral development, the male view of individual rights and rules was considered a higher stage than women's development in terms of its caring effect on human relationships.

Building on the work of Carol Gilligan, we subsequently have the writings of other feminists, including Nel Noddings (professor emeritus at Stanford University), as in her book, ***Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education*** (1984). She argues for an ethics based on a natural caring, a feminine view rooted in receptivity, relatedness, and responsiveness in contrast to the classical view of male development based on principles and propositions, cognition, logic and reasoning rather than caring. [Here I should quickly add that, as a male, my own education has been greatly enhanced by my five daughters, all professional educators!]

In closing, I'll return again to the Lehman Alternative

Community School, and its "Graduation by Exhibition," and suggest high school educators consider it as a model. These seniors demonstrate that they are "critical thinkers and problem solvers who understand bias and take action to eliminate it" (Essential III.A. of "The Seven Essential Skills, Knowledge, and Attitudes of a Global Citizen"). To complete this graduation requirement, students show how they have taken action to understand and eliminate a personal and/or societal bias, and have reflected on the personal impact of oppression and the impact of their own actions.

Additionally, these seniors must demonstrate proficiency in Essential V. B., "researchers with an historical perspective who understand global studies and multiculturalism." This involves several things: the in-depth study of at least two cultures different from their own, including knowledge of historic, economic, social, religious, geographical, and /or political roots of those cultures; and participation in group work to learn and teach effectively about global studies.

How do your students demonstrate their knowledge, skills and attitudes related to issues of collaboration and diversity? We at NSRF and Connections would love to hear from you! Email us your thoughts and experiences, especially if we can share them with readers of future issues of ***Connections***!

Dave Lehman is the former founding principal/teacher of the Lehman Alternative Comunity School in Ithaca,NY. This public middle-high school was named for Dave and his wife Judy by the Ithaca, New York Board of Education upon their retirement after 30 years. Dave was a member of the very first "Principals Seminar" leadership group at the beginning of the NSRF, under the umbrella for the Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University. Soon thereafter he was trained as a CFG coach and then an NSRF National Facilitator. His email is davelehman@mac.com

Why do some protocols call for the presenter to "scoot back and turn away" from the group?

Some protocols include a step after presenting and clarifying questions in which the presenter separates themselves from the group so the group may discuss the topic while the presenter listens and takes notes.

If you haven't experienced this for yourself, it may seem an extraordinarily strange request. Years of protocol testing and refinement have proven that nonverbal cues from a presenter can stifle open discussion, reducing the ease and expansiveness of a discussion.

For example, see these photos from a recent open training: each group is engaged, attentive to the work at hand, while the presenter leans in to listen and take notes, not interrupting the flow.

Thanks, attendees of the October Open Training, for letting us use your photos! These groups were practicing the Consultancy and Dilemma Analysis Protocols.

Check out the schedule of upcoming open trainings for this spring and summer!

Is it time for you to take the plunge and be trained as a CFG coach?

Or maybe you've been coaching for a long time and want to become a national facilitator?