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Living room learning, professionalism, progressivism: bridging fragmented instructional philosophies through everyday aesthetics and flow

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**Living room learning, professionalism, progressivism: bridging fragmented
instructional philosophies through everyday aesthetics and flow**

by

Deanne S. Gute

A dissertation submitted to the graduate faculty
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Major: Education (Adult Education)

Program of Study Committee:
Nancy J. Evans, Major Professor
Margaret Graham
Barbara Licklider
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Iowa State University

Ames, Iowa

2005

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has met the dissertation requirements of Iowa State University

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For the Major Program

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ABSTRACT

Four philosophies of adult education—liberal arts, humanism, progressivism, and performativity (educating for economic production) were used to structure and interpret this study. A body of literature has addressed the growing symbiosis between adult education and the development of productive human capital in knowledge-driven economies, as reflected in the discourse of organizational learning and learning organizations.

Although philosophical and theoretical discourse has become increasingly polarized, adult education approaches are almost always discussed in the context of formalized programs and outcomes. In contrast, the idea of “living room learning,” (Pestalozzi, 1898), that teachable moments occur throughout everyday life, was integral to Victorian-era conventional wisdom and informal instruction explored in the dissertation.

With the 20th-century rise of Modernism, science, and changing beliefs about human nature, the decorative, functional, manual, corporeal, sentimental, and female lost their cultural privilege to theory and design classified as rational, intellectual, and male. With power associated exclusively with the public sphere and “disembodied,” technologized workplaces (Hart, 1992) increasingly the norm, personal aesthetics and bodily engagement with material reality have been disparaged as a topic for research and human endeavor.

The dissertation explores the repression of domesticity that gave way to a revival of interest via self-help media. Narratives from five self-directed learners/informal educators were constructed through phenomenological methodology employing semi-structured interviews and observations. The participants work with and teach about historic artifacts including household objects, buildings, and costume. Their acquisition of expertise; the

settings and materials of instruction they employ; and the philosophical foundations for what they do are described in their narratives and the interpretation of findings.

The high degree of satisfaction the participants expressed about their overlapping learning/work/leisure, exemplifying a state of enjoyment Csikszentmihalyi (1990) labeled *flow*, is contrasted with discourse describing boredom, anxiety, alienation, and isolation commonly created in knowledge age work and instructional settings. The study suggests that domestic spaces and the material objects and structures that define them are significant in both expressing and shaping human subjectivity in cognitive, psychological, political, and economic realms. The concluding chapter uses creativity research from three perspectives to explore the potential of aesthetic-focused education and training approaches

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, 1746-1827 (*The Education of Man; How Gertrude Teaches Her Children*), is identified as an early pioneer in informal education, a pedagogy that will help inform this study. Pestalozzi wrote, “There can be no doubt that within the living room of every household are united the basic elements of all true human education in its whole range” (as cited in Smith, 2001b). This dissertation is a phenomenological examination of “living room pedagogy” and its implications for adult education philosophy and practice.

American education has been driven by often contending philosophies of what education should be. Educational philosophy is important to this study because it asks questions that help define the goals of educational activity, such as Who should be educated? How can education best serve individual interests and abilities? (Noddings, 1995); What “greater good” can education perform for society? Wedemeyer (1981) concisely posed the question most relevant to this study in his description of the various philosophies behind adult education programming: “Education for What?” (p. 194).

The Problem

Literature in adult education has catalogued and defined several prevailing philosophical orientations shaping contemporary adult education purposes and practice: the liberal arts tradition; the humanist tradition; the progressive tradition (Elias & Merriam, 1995; Merriam & Cunningham, 1989); critical–humanist and feminist humanist orientations (Tisdell & Taylor, 1999); and critical-emancipatory approaches (Elias & Merriam, 1995; Merriam & Cunningham, 1989; Tisdell & Taylor, 2000). The progressive and various critical orientations will collectively be referred to as progressive, meaning primarily po-

litical, philosophies. A fifth orientation, based on the human capital theory (Merriam & Cunningham, 1989), focuses on educating for economic productivity. All have in common a core belief about what sort of people education should produce, what kind of society. Typically, built into each orientation is the assumption that only formal programs can achieve the desired result. Although compulsory American schooling dates back only as far as 1918, institutional learning is privileged as the “traditional” form. Wedemeyer (1981) wrote, “Schooling with its standard lock-step, other-directed, and social reward features captured all the prestige . . . only the formal evidences of learning that were accumulated in school were viewed as noteworthy enough to deserve reward and recognition” (p. 75). In fact, adult education approaches are almost always discussed in the context of formalized programs, institutions, and outcomes.

If one judged the importance of a topic by the quantity of educational research devoted to it, education as it was defined by Pestalozzi would appear to be education for nothing. In *Learning at the Back Door: Reflections on Non-traditional Learning in the Lifespan*, Wedemeyer (1981) pointed out an irony in American culture: “In that curiously perverse way in which social customs sometimes grow, society can admire the accomplishments of the self-made man or woman, even though it will not acknowledge the learning each has accomplished” (p. 75). Thus, Wedemeyer argued, the Back Door Learners he referred to in the title of his book “have been a largely unacknowledged source of the vitality, energy, creativity, and survivability of human existence” (p. 19).

With its “survivability” issues largely resolved, Western culture has reached a level of affluence and technological advancement aimed, according to Hart (1992), at achieving freedom from necessity and manual labor. The educational value propelling the shift is belief in the virtue of instrumental reason, whose components Hart defined as rationality,

efficiency, means-to-end planning, skills, control, and individualism. Conventional wisdom views symbolic representations of reality as superior forms of both knowledge and work. Knowledge derived from experience, and work derived from material reality or necessities of living, are relegated to low-value status, forming a dichotomy between work for technology and profit and what Hart called work for life. In her view, society, which thinks itself liberated, is actually divided, stratified, and polarized; is paying a high price in human dignity and recognition of workers' need and feelings; and is experiencing troubling social isolation and workplace instability. Hart's answer to the question Education for what? poses a problem of enormous potential social and economic magnitude: "Adult education supports the formation of an industrialized mind which is incapable of experiencing its own experience, i.e., of organizing the structure of experience in accordance with a reflected upon and understood reality" (p. 12).

The Purpose of the Study

This dissertation is a phenomenological study of adults who educate outside formal academic institutions and conventional workplaces. In their interests and techniques, they reach back to the past to a time when informal learning served civilization's most important instructive functions. *Godey's Ladies Book* echoed the conventional wisdom of the time, advising 19th-century readers that "Everything is education—the trains of thought you are indulging in this hour; the society in which you will spend the evening; the conversations, walks, and incidents of tomorrow" (as cited in Thompson, 1947, p. 24). To the Victorians, this principle made home the most essential schoolhouse.

In Marxist and some critical and feminist retrospectives on the Victorian era, material objects did indeed instruct, inculcating "emotional norms" that enforced oppressive gender roles and capitalist obsession with personal property. From this pointedly un-

sentimental perspective, the Victorians' "psychic investment" in domestic objects mainly signified a class-conscious defense against a sense of social futility and promulgated the white, male, middle class sense of privilege (Merish, 2000, p. 5). The prevailing theme in these social and educational histories of Victorian households is that the story has been told, the book closed.

However, popular 19th-century educators argued that people interacting with objects of the house and garden could learn benevolence, responsibility, and an assortment of other positive virtues; could rehearse their eventual social roles, and that this was a positive and necessary curriculum; and could through collecting things, making things, and using necessary implements of everyday living, refine their taste, their powers of observation, and their mental acuity (Beecher, 1841). The adult, particularly the mother, was the facilitator of childhood education, and therefore a lifelong learner by necessity.

Ban Breathnach (1995), a popular contemporary author who has revived Victorian domestic wisdom, cited a household advisor writing in 1910 who said, "A beautiful home is an education in itself" ("June 7: The Joy of Living Rooms"). Breathnach advised her readers that the living room can also be "a continuing source of personal expression and contentment" (n.p.)—i.e., a source of joy. Thus Breathnach echoed a second significant 19th century cultural theme, that the adult who is a lifelong learner is one not just to fulfill a social responsibility, but also to lead an enjoyable, fulfilled life.

The participants in the present study educate about structures built in the 19th and early 20th centuries; they educate about other material objects; and in some cases, they commit themselves to restoring and reusing other generations' architectural artifacts and household objects. Some revive 19th-century domestic principles for 21st-century contexts,

old traditions and views of private-sphere learning largely cast off in favor of equal access to the public sphere and freedom from physical labor. These educator/participants employ resources such as popular press books, periodicals, Web sites, cable television channels, workshops, and historical reenactments in helping learners visualize and recreate elements of a historic domestic setting.

Research Questions

The philosophical definitions provided by Merriam and Cunningham (1989); Elias and Merriam (1995); Tisdell and Taylor (2000); and Wilson and Hayes (2000) were employed in the construction of the following major research questions.

1. What are the participants' perceptions of their formal educational experiences? Have they found them lacking in humanity and practicality, as Wedemeyer (1981) argued many students of formal education programs do? Has society in any way devalued the practical/experiential knowledge of the participants?
2. Without certification or degrees, without institutionalized times and places for instruction, do 19th- and 21st-century informal educators demonstrate Smith's (1999) contention about the trajectory of informal learning? He wrote, "Gradually, engagement deepens and becomes more complex. They become full participants, and will often take on organizing or facilitative roles." Ultimately, he argued, expert knowledge can be gained via everyday experiences and self-help resources.
3. What instructional settings and resources do the participants employ?
4. The fourth major research question is the most important, because it structures the narrative of findings in Chapters 3 and 6. Through informal education that focuses on the material world rather than symbolic knowledge forms, do participants achieve goals similar to those of practitioners enacting specific philosophies in conventional formal settings?

The question is first applied in Chapter 3 to 19th- century authors and consumers of domestic advice literature, and is then used in Chapter 6 to structure the coded interview data. The philosophical goals are classified as follows, based on a synthesis of sources already cited in this chapter:

Liberal arts goals: becoming a well-rounded person; acquiring broad knowledge; mastering reading, writing, and computation skills; appreciating the arts and humanities; developing aesthetic sensibilities and complex reasoning skills; improving thought processes and cooperation essential to a democratic system of government

Humanist goals: valuing individuality, including gender identity; achieving self-actualization and personal fulfillment; maximizing human potential

Progressive goals: acting on a political or critical/emancipatory agenda; challenging existing social and economic structures; challenging power relationships; solving social problems

Performativity goals: gaining or improving competencies related to specific modes of making a living; functioning in a “lifelong learning” mode; contributing to the growth of the general economy.

These philosophical goals, then, serve as categories to guide both the interpretation of historical data and participant reflections gathered through interviews.

5. What can practitioners in formal programs learn from the “intention and commitment” (Smith, 1999) demonstrated through historical precedent and contemporary individuals’ informal learning projects? By looking at the idiosyncrasies of informal learning, Wedemeyer (1981) suggested, we can better evaluate the effectiveness of the effort expended to create “special learning environments” (p. 29).

Significance of the Study

Elias and Merriam (1995) opened their exploration of adult education philosophies by posing the problem of mindlessness in educational practice, the unquestioned repetition of pedagogical routines. Educational philosophy is offered as a solution: “Philosophy raises questions about what we do and why we do it . . . the power of philosophy lies in its ability to enable individuals to better understand and appreciate the activities of daily life” (p. 5).

Adult education literature suggests additional significance of a study of this nature. Leadbeater (2000), a proponent of informal education in the United Kingdom, argued that for models of education that actually meet practical and philosophical goals, it is necessary to look outside formalized structures because “the most important capability, and the one which traditional education is worst at creating, is the ability and yearning to carry on learning” (p. 227). Csikszentmihalyi (1990), in *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*, observed a specific pattern of human learning in his research that reinforces Leadbeater’s claim. He wrote,

[the] natural connection between growth and enjoyment tends to disappear with time. Perhaps because “learning” becomes an external imposition when schooling starts, the excitement of mastering new skills gradually wears out. It becomes all too easy to settle down within the narrow boundaries of the self developed in adolescence. . . . If one gets to be too complacent, feeling that psychic energy invested in new directions is wasted unless there is a good chance of reaping extrinsic rewards for it, one may end up no longer enjoying life. (p. 47)

This study offers a close-up view of adults absorbed in learning situations of their own choosing —acting on the yearning to learn. Examining conditions in which motivation to

learn thrives is important for anyone interested in more fully realizing the potential of the knowledge age.

The *knowledge age* is a phrase used frequently in literature on organizational learning and learning organizations (synonymous, according to Hart, with the age of instrumental reason). Leadbeater (2000) also positioned his argument in the context of a rapidly changing 21st-century economy. He concluded that “More learning needs to be done at home, in offices and kitchens, in the contexts where knowledge is deployed to solve problems and add value to people’s lives” (p. 227). Expanding that kind of learning is presented as a step toward strengthening school and university ties with communities, while a more radical path is also proposed: partially “deschooling” society to help free education from the institutional paralysis and inertia Leadbeater argued is blocking creativity and radical innovation, both required to transform Western economic and social institutions.

Many authors have explored the issue of workplace transformation from various angles. Throughout the 1990s, even though adult education practitioners’ attention was already trained primarily on business applications, authors created a sense of urgency about the American workforce’s preparation for the knowledge revolution. The answer they offered was transforming traditional workplaces into learning organizations (Argyris, 1993a; 1993b; Garvin, 2000; Kline & Saunders, 1993; Marquardt, 1996; Senge, 1990). Marquardt (1996) warned that “survival of the fittest is quickly becoming the survival of the fittest-to-learn” (p. 1). In 2001, in conference proceedings published in *The Gerontologist*, Hamil-Luker and Uhlenberg reported findings from a study that used regression analysis to track older adults’ participation in formal and informal education by age, race, ethnicity, and social class. They concluded that “although politicians, the media, and scholars have her-

alded the age of 'lifelong learning,' the US has not yet achieved the long-term and ongoing education of its entire population.”

Published critiques of organizational learning (Apps, 1996; Bierema, 2000; Hart, 1992; Lyotard, 1984; Rose, 1998) have expressed concern about not just its failures, but also its potential for success. They have argued that performativity, Lyotard's term, comes with costs to creativity and humanity itself, an emphasis on efficiency over human values. Some see adult education as now virtually synonymous with organizational learning, educating for improved workplace functionality. In fact, the majority of the literature on learning organizations and organizational learning makes little mention of life outside the organization.

In the 1800s, self-help literature taught women how they could make their homes a refuge for neurasthenic men worn out from the world of commerce. A century later, journalists were reporting on the desire for refuge as a unisex cultural trend. The trend was characterized by a revived market for self-help domestic resources. Talbot (1996) explored the proliferation of “shelter experts” teaching how to “nest,” “cocoon,” and “center.” Self-help educators continue to offer solutions to performativity challenges of domestic life, and many speak of private and public selves out of balance. The study will help illuminate this broader cultural phenomenon, how it manifests itself, and why it has occurred, as well as offering insight into the appeal of reviving specifically Victorian building and decorating styles.

Perhaps most important is the study's focus on knowledge and work directed toward material rather than symbolic structures. In the context of education, Hart (1992) looked more closely at the devaluation of experience- and material-based knowledge as

accompanied by a loss of certain experiences, and of vital human competencies

The move from a direct, physical involvement in the material underside of production to a manipulation of its symbolic representation is not a simple or neutral process of change, or an exchange of one set of skills with another (invariably presented as higher or more advanced). This change involves a loss of knowledge and competence which cannot simply be considered obsolete or dysfunctional. (p. 14)

The study helps illuminate exactly what can be lost, and gained, as various types of learning dominate individuals and cultures.

Organization of the Study

This dissertation, with its participants at the margins of both traditional workplaces and academia, holds a mirror up to particular educational philosophies and describes their lived consequences. The phenomenological method, detailed in Chapter 2, goes hand in hand with these topics: “The value of phenomenology . . . lies in its effort to recover humanity itself, beneath any objectivist schema” (Lyotard, 1991, p. 136). Merleau-Pony (1962/1969b) offered a reflection on phenomenological methodology that helps form a rationale for the dissertation’s structure and multidisciplinary focus:

Should the starting-point for the understanding of history be ideology, or politics, or religion, or economics? . . . We must seek an understanding from all these angles simultaneously. Everything has meaning, and we shall find this same structure of being underlying all relationships. All these views are true provided that they are not isolated, that we delve deeply into history and reach the unique core of existential meaning which emerges in each perspective. (p. 40)

A significant portion of Chapter 3, the literature review, places “living room education” in historical context. Because it functions as part of the phenomenology, the literature re-

view follows the methodology chapter rather than conventional dissertation order. The chapter describes ways 19th-century men and women used everyday domestic objects to expand their intellects and imaginations and learn their social roles. Second, it suggests the complexity of 19th-century domestic symbolism and beliefs about education. During the Victorian Era (1837-1901), women were invested with much of the responsibility for the vitality and morality of human existence. At the same time, much more so than men, they were confined to learning and exercising their instructive influence in the domestic sphere. While home was the center of cultural constraint, it was also perceived to be a locus of power, the center of education for good character. Catherine Beecher's *Treatise on Domestic Economy* (1841) called this the "greatest work . . . ever committed to human responsibility" (p. 14), and advice periodicals contributed to educating the whole person via lessons about every aspect of the private sphere. Primary sources demonstrate that domestic objects were believed to play a core role in moral and intellectual development, and that they had a strong political (progressive) dimension as well.

The idea that "Victorian" and "Progressive" are not mutually exclusive concepts may be substantiated by the ironic fact that constrictive domestic teachings ignited a zeal for learning, which in turn sowed the seeds of social change. Access to the public sphere opened; the culture evolved; Victorian ideals of womanhood were largely discredited and discarded. Chapter 3 addresses art, design, and other disciplines' participation in demonizing domestic life and decoration from the late 19th century to the present. As the literature review shows, ultimately, full integration into and greater equality in the masculine sphere (commercial and educational institutions) required detachment from traditionally "feminine" domestic activities and aesthetics—the devaluation of "women's work" that is a

central part of Hart's (1992) research. This development may be the most significant factor in the lack of attention paid to informal—"living room"—learning experiences.

Throughout Chapter 3, empirical views relevant to the study are presented. Among the most important will be Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton's (1981/1989) study of the meanings people assign to household things, along with works that analyze the role of domestic objects in developing intellect and constructing identity. Chapter 3 concludes by describing some ways the present study is relevant to contemporary publications on informal education.

Chapter 4 explores systematically and in depth five interview participants' experiences as learners in both formal and informal settings, which for them involve historic architecture and domestic traditions, restoration of historic artifacts, and self-help instructional resources. Chapter 5 places the coded interview responses into the philosophical categories outlined in the fourth research question and begins to explore some connections between the contemporary participants' thinking and that of their historical predecessors. Chapter 6 presents a description of my observations of the participants as they delivered instructional presentations or demonstrations. In Chapter 7, I conclude the dissertation by reflecting on the findings from various theoretical viewpoints, comparing historical informal education practices with the participants' contemporary ones, and considering some practical implications for educators. The dissertation does not argue how educators should act; it can, however, initiate reactions, inquiries, and inspirations. Ultimately, studies such as this could help unify the fragmented domains of school, workplace, and household knowledge toward an integrated culture of support for lifelong learning.

CHAPTER 2

METHODOLOGY

Van Manen (2001) asked, “Aren’t the most captivating stories exactly those which help us to understand better what is most common, most taken-for-granted, and what concerns us most ordinarily and directly?” (p. 19). It is this interest in the ordinary, the everyday, that accounts for both the selection of this study’s participants and the methods used to conduct the inquiry.

Although feminist methodology does not serve as the primary mode of inquiry, it is clearly a significant influence. Warhol (1999) wrote that for her, “feminism carves out a space in the academy where I can speak seriously about subjects the academy cannot or does not take seriously” (p. 341). Gere Lewis (1993) elaborated:

What distinguishes feminism as a method and a practice is the way in which it insists on making explicit our historical and social place as a concretely lived reality that touches us, like the wind, imperceptibly and yet unmistakably. Conversely, it is also the belief that theoretical discourses that cannot or will not do this are profoundly impoverished even as they are passed off as objective and beyond collective self-interest. (p. 54)

Throughout history, moreover, all the cultural elements related to this study—domestic life, work, education, even architectural design—have been inseparable from gender.

To explore participants’ perceptions systematically and in depth, I have chosen a phenomenological approach, which has been called a philosophy or theory of the unique (Van Manen, 2001), a concentration on everyday lived experience (Clucas, 2000; Seidman, 1998; Van Manen, 1996), a reduction of presuppositions to reach “the unique core of existential meaning which emerges in each perspective” (Merleau-Ponty, 1962/1969b, p. 40).

Phenomenological Philosophy of Perception

Taylor and Bogdan (1998) used the term phenomenology to refer to all qualitative methodologies, all approaches that lie outside the positivist paradigm and attempt to inductively understand people's perceptions of their own experiences. Defining phenomenology more specifically is complicated by the fact that, as Lyotard (1991) pointed out, there are "many phenomenologists, . . . and . . . its meaning is still 'in process'" (p. 34). Lyotard referred to varieties of phenomenology as different "accents" of the same language (p. 34). Certain "founding" philosophers can be identified, however; among them are Husserl, Heidegger, and Merleau-Ponty. The historical significance of the movement can be fixed to a degree (the purpose Lyotard expressed for his book *Phenomenology*); and common elements of phenomenological style can be described using the vocabulary of most phenomenological discourse, the "special terminology" attributed primarily to Husserl (Moustakas, 1994; Sokolowski, 2000, p. 57). These concepts include *intentionality*, *bracketing*, and *reduction*.

From Heidegger came a discussion of the origin of the word phenomenology itself in *Being and Time* (1927/1992). The word originates from the Greek verb *phainesthai*, "to show itself," from a root signifying "to bring into daylight, to place in brightness." From these roots the noun *phainomenon* was derived: "what shows itself . . . the manifest" (p. 73). Heidegger preferred to concentrate on the verb, not as a point of grammar but as a core philosophical principle, arguing that phenomenology should be understood as a *how*, a process, not a standpoint determining how we look at the *what*. Moustakas (1994) summarized the process of phenomenological reduction as one of making meaning by negotiating the relationship between "what exists in conscious awareness and what exists in the world" (p. 27). It is this relationship and interaction between philosopher/researcher and object of contemplation/research on which the rest of this section focuses. As Merleau-

Ponty (1962/1969b) argued in adapting, critiquing, and extending the thinking of Husserl and Heidegger, “Man is in the world, and only in the world does he know himself” (p. 31).

Intentionality is the Aristotelian term adopted by phenomenology to define the perceptual relationship between the perceived and the perceiver (Moustakas, 1994), an intellectual stance toward things both absent and present (Sokolowski, 2000). To understand intentionality, more vocabulary is required. Intentionality, another name for the more commonly-used concept of bracketing, comprises *noema* and *noesis*, two additional concepts discussed in this section. Bracketing, according to the simplified definition often applied in overviews of qualitative methodology, refers to setting aside preconceptions (Byrne, 2001). Sokolowski complicated, but helped complete the definition of intentionality/bracketing, by explaining that suspension of belief is only part of the process. Bracketing freezes a participant’s perspective so that the description “retains exactly the modality and the mode of manifestation that the object has for the subject in the natural attitude” (p. 50). Applied to contemporary methodological procedures, bracketing enables a researcher to “see the text from a phenomenological perspective without predefining participants’ experiences in terms of the interpretive framework” (Thompson, Locander, & Pollio, 1990). In other words, as recommended in *The Handbook of Qualitative Research*, researchers “focus on ways in which members of the life world themselves interpretively produce the recognizable, intelligible forms they treat as real” (Holstein & Gubrium, 1994, p. 263). Bracketing is evidenced in a research writeup by its “emic” quality, i.e., the rendering of experience as much as possible in participants’ own terms. Thompson, Locander, and Pollio (1990) identified researchers’ submission of evolving description to an “interpretive group” for critique as a specific method of ensuring the bracketing of the researched subject.

Noema, then, is the person, object, picture, word, or anything “bracketed” by an observer in a philosophical reduction. The phenomenon has a stable, unchanging nature that permits it to be distinguished from other things and enables perceptions from a given vantage point to be repeated or replicated, but perception is influenced by object and viewer position and perceiver’s prior experience. Noema makes distinct what is in someone’s consciousness or the reality of an object; it is the thing to be uncovered; the “perceived as such;” the *what* (Moustakas, 1994, p. 68). As Merleau-Ponty (1962/1969b) put it, there is a fundamental unity of things within the things, which can be brought to light by phenomenological reflection because the world exists before knowledge and perception.

Noesis refers to perceptual processes; how the consciousness constructs what it constructs and why; the act of reduction itself (Moustakas, 1994; Sokolowski, 2000). Phenomenological philosophy, then, can be understood as a stance that rejects the idea of truth as solely constructed within individual consciousness: “The real is a closely woven fabric. It does not await our judgement before incorporating the most surprising phenomena, or before rejecting the most plausible figments of our imagination” (Merleau-Ponty, 1962/1969b, p. 31). Yet, phenomenology is not phenomenology *without* the element of noesis that places primacy on the perceptual construction of reality.

Van Manen (2001) strongly echoed Merleau-Ponty (1962/1969b), for whom a major contribution to phenomenological thought was his doctrine of the primacy of perception (Ihde, 1986) and his simultaneous rejection of certain interpretive extremes. The two complementary strains of thought are reflected in Merleau-Ponty’s writing:

Probably the chief gain from phenomenology is to have united extreme subjectivism and extreme objectivism in its notion of the world of rationality . . . To say that there exists rationality is to say that perspectives blend, perceptions confirm each other, a

meaning emerges . . . The phenomenological world is not pure being, but the sense which is revealed where the paths of my various experiences intersect, and also where my own and other people's intersect and engage each other like gears. It is thus inseparable from subjectivity and intersubjectivity, which find their unity when I either take up my past experiences in those of the present, or other people's in my own. (p. 41)

To exploit the full powers of philosophical states of mind, phenomenology confronts the existence of the irrational and the illusory, as illustrated in Heidegger's (1927/1992) discussion of *seeming*, which tried to account for the fact that "Beings . . . can show themselves as they are not" (p. 73). The world also consists of camouflage, concealment, vagueness, and error, which should not, Sokolowski (2000) argued, "discredit everything" (p. 56). The phenomenological perspective accepts them all as real in their own way, "possibilities of being [that] call for their own analysis" (Sokolowski, p. 15). Sokolowski also presented an analogy useful in illustrating this point in an actual act of perception, in his example of examining the various sides of a cube (an example that also borrows from Merleau-Ponty (1962/1969a), who used a cube and a lamp in *The Primacy of Perception and its Philosophical Consequences*):

If . . . identity presents itself now in one way, it also holds in reserve other ways of being given and reappearing as the same thing again, to ourselves and to others; it always both reveals and conceals itself. The thing can always be given again, perhaps in ways we ourselves cannot anticipate. What we try to do in our philosophical analysis is to secure the reality of such identities, to bring out the fact that they are different from the manifolds of presentation. (Sokolowski, p. 31)

Sokolowski's explanation is another way of saying, as Merleau-Ponty (1962/1969a) put it, that what we perceive is a "totality open to a horizon of an indefinite number of perspectival views which blend with one another according to a given style" (p. 51).

A Phenomenology of Reduction

A brief phenomenology of the reduction experience itself may help illuminate the relationship between perceiver and perceived and what occurs when someone undertakes a phenomenological inquiry. Merleau-Ponty (1962/1969b) helped advance the notion of the phenomenological researcher as "perpetual beginner" (p. 29) able to advance to the "core of primary meaning" (p. 29) (achieve direct and primitive contact with the world) by putting presuppositions out of play. Merleau-Ponty identified science as one of the constructs that can obstruct the process, when it is taken as the sole means of constructing "true" accounts of the world. Merleau-Ponty argued that a better way to understand science is as a useful construct once removed from the phenomenon, a second-order expression that can only describe the world in "abstract and derivative sign language . . . in relation to the countryside in which we have learnt beforehand what a forest, a prairie or a river is" (p. 29).

Language itself is another second-order way of knowing, though phenomenology addresses language *as* a way of knowing; the way we name and express enables glimpses of a core meaning that is also *shaped* by the way we name and express things (Holstein & Gubrium, 1994; Merleau-Ponty, 1962/1969a; Van Manen, 2001). All the "presupposed bases of thought we take for granted" (Merleau-Ponty, 1962/1969b, p. 35) are targets for reduction. All such structures or coverings may conceal aspects of the phenomenon and prevent them from being brought to light. Sokolowski (2000) used a spatial metaphor to convey a sense of the process of reduction:

When we enter into the phenomenological attitude, we crawl out of the natural attitude, rise above it, theorize it, and distinguish and describe both the subjective and the objective correlates that make it up. From our philosophical perch, we describe the various intentionalities and their various objects as well as the self and the world. We distinguish between a thing and its appearances. (p. 50)

Merleau-Ponty (1962/1969b) provided a vivid description of the outcome of reduction. The process is akin to stripping layers to get down to the phenomenon's original surface. When that surface is revealed, he wrote, the perceiver "steps back to watch the forms of transcendence fly up like sparks from a fire; it slackens the intentional threads which attach us to the world and thus brings them to our notice; it alone is consciousness of the world because it reveals the world as strange and paradoxical" (p. 35). In a state of reduction, the world is "all freshness and openness, unfettered by customs, beliefs, and prejudices of normal science" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 41).

There are several ways in which contemporary phenomenologists qualify the philosophical jargon and bring the idea of reduction down to earth. The world is always understood as the setting or background for the transcendental perception, always forming the horizon for what can be perceived (Merleau-Ponty, 1962/1969b; Sokolowski, 2000). As perceptions and objects interact, natural attitudes and philosophical states of mind also overlap. Sokolowski considered the relationship between the two states of mind a matter of naturally shifting focus in everyday life, and in research, of deliberately transcending the natural attitude. Deliberately intending is necessary because, as Merleau-Ponty (1962/1969a) wrote, "left to itself, perception forgets itself and is ignorant of its own accomplishments" (p. 55).

Sokolowski (1994) argued that phenomenology should not be equated with “mind-bending conundrums that try to make us obsessively introspective, or puzzles about whether we can get out of ourselves into the ‘extramental’ world . . . we do not try to open up an absolutely new and unanticipated dimension” (p. 52). Merleau-Ponty (1962/1969a) cautioned that we don’t even get to that dimension very directly, and never completely. Reduction is a route, an experience that gradually clarifies and corrects itself in dialogue with itself and with others; it is a process that must always be kept in the context of nature and culture, which reduction is supposed to express.

Built into the word phenomenology itself is a principle suggesting what is “appropriate” material for phenomenological inquiry. From *phainomena* we should understand that virtually anything—“the totality of what lies in the light of day or can be brought to light” (Heidegger, 1927/1992, p. 73)—is researchable. Phrased even more directly, “every object is an object for an intending mind” (Merleau-Ponty, 1962/1969b, p. 27). Moustakas (1994), speaking in the first person as a phenomenological researcher indebted to Descartes and Heidegger, wrote, “There is within me a realm of virtually infinite access to other human beings” (p. 37). Sokolowski (2000) addressed the concept of intentionality itself as a uniquely differentiated process of understanding perception, a safeguard against reductionary mindsets. Because it recognizes different ways of intending correlated with different types of objects—perceptual (material objects), pictorial, remembered, imagined, etc.—it helps us to “understand human knowing in all its forms” (p. 31).

The word “reduction” might lead to additional misunderstandings about phenomenological approaches. One major rationale for selecting phenomenology for this study was its rejection of more intellectually reductive stances. As already established, while cutting to the core of a phenomenon, the philosopher or researcher must understand the impossibility

of complete reduction; as Merleau-Ponty (1962/1969b) expressed it, “there is no thought that embraces all our thought” (p. 35). Van Manen (2001), focusing on practical applications, asserted the significance of this stance to the final written report: “Full or final descriptions are unattainable” (p. 18).

Taking the position that lived human experience is always more complex than any one description of it, Van Manen (2001) asserted that there is “always an element of the ineffable to life. . . . to believe in the power of thinking is also to acknowledge that it is the complexity and mystery of life that calls for thinking in the first place It is naïve rationalism that believes that the phenomena of life can be made intellectually crystal clear or theoretically perfectly transparent” (pp. 16-17). Further discussion of a simple perceptual act, such as the observation of the cube, can serve as a metaphor for this process: what happens, exactly, when a researcher tries to understand the perspective of a participant, or for that matter, when we read a work of qualitative or quantitative research?

At a given moment, only certain sides of the cube are presented to me, and the others are absent. But I know that I can either walk around the cube or turn the cube around and the absent sides will come into view, while the present sides go out of view. My perception is dynamic, not static; even if I just look at one side of the cube, the saccadic motion of my eyes introduces a kind of searching mobility that I am not even aware of. (Sokolowski, 2000, p. 18)

Focus on Lived Experience

Van Manen (1996) distinguished certain “scientific” approaches from his own, expressing a preference for Heidegger and Sartre over Husserl and any other philosophers “too abstracted from the concrete lives of real human beings.” Post-structuralist movements

have opposed phenomenology, but have also influenced it from within and moved it toward greater abstraction. Ihde (1986) wrote of this late-twentieth century trend,

Phenomenology . . .—whether it is called that or not—has had a more and more non-foundationalist trajectory. Both the explicit transcendentalism of Husserl and the vestigial foundationalism of an early Heidegger have given way to the now dominant strains of hermeneutics and post-structuralist enterprises of the present. (p. 194)

Phenomenology's trending away from lived experience has in turn prompted a counter-rebellion of sorts. Connor (2000) introduced the Spring 2000 issue of *Critical Quarterly* by attempting to rouse academic interest in a "new" approach he called cultural phenomenology. The phrase *cultural* phenomenology would have seemed redundant if practiced as described by Merleau-Ponty (1962/1969a; 1962/1969b) and more recently by Sokoloswki (2000), Van Manen (1996; 2001), and others. Authors like Connor have expressed skepticism that self-proclaimed radical methodologies are particularly radical or that they can, simply because they say they can, achieve the transformation of anything if they work only at the level of intellectualizing human subjects. Connor wrote that he had found himself "wondering where it was that we anti-empiricists and constructionists got our confidence that the evidence of those practices of representation and regulation of experience in which we were so interested led any more directly and perspicuously to the practices themselves than the evidence of experience led to experience itself" (p. 4).

Connor (2000) isn't the only author who has complained of burnout brought on by post-structuralist abstraction. Van Manen (2001) suggested that empirical and postmodern writing styles can create similar experiences:

A human science that tries to do justice to the full range of human experience cannot operate with a concept of rationality that is restricted to formal intellectualist inter-

pretation of human reason. Likewise, the language of thinking cannot be censured to permit only a form of discourse that tries to capture human existence in deadening abstract concepts . . . that flatten rather than deepen our understanding of human life . . . that congeal the living meaning out of human living—until life itself has become unrecognizable to itself. (pp. 16-17)

Connor mentioned some specific buzzwords of contemporary scholarly writing that create “out-of-body experiences” rather than illuminating descriptions of lived experience, ironically “numbed and masked as these are by our ubiquitous, compulsory talk of the ‘body’” (p. 3). Sokolowski (2000) proposed treating phenomenology as something different, as liberating, an activity that “gets us out of doors and restores the world that was lost by philosophies that locked us into our egocentric predicament” (p. 14). Connor went so far as to model a phenomenological reduction that strips away ubiquitous research language to find something alive underneath, in his description of his own self-help program he called lexical detoxification. To counter current trends, Connor wrote that he would have to commit his writing to the following principles:

[To] keep well stoked its irritability about academic language . . . cultural phenomenologists would have to promise themselves not to write in such boring and bullying ways. . . . Out would go all my favourite poisons and performance-enhancers: difference, transgression and radical undecidability, along with all their friends and relations. I hoped, not for a regime of discursive clean living, but for muckier writing, more mauled by doubt and discovery. (p. 5)

Van Manen (2001) argued that through phenomenological methods, we can encounter things that escape notice in the midst of everyday routines. Wedemeyer (1981) suggested that much of importance to adult learners escapes the attention of academics caught up in

the conventions of research. Van Manen's and Connor's (2000) versions of phenomenology represent a bridge between the polarized approaches to educational research Wedemeyer argued largely constitute research routines. This project, then, employed a methodology that assumes that what is ignored in the space between epistemological and methodological polarities may not be insignificant at all, but simply unnoticed.

Research Procedures

Phenomenology calls for openness to directions, procedures, and sources that are "not always foreseeable at the outset of a research project" (Van Manen, 2001, p. 21). In this way researchers can better meet the challenge advanced by Seidman (1998): planning and structuring a project just well enough to maintain a "delicate balance between the sometimes competing claims of the relevant literature and the experience of the interview participants" (p. 32). Phenomenologists, then, must go to the people (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998), to "meet human beings . . . where they are naturally engaged in their worlds" (Van Manen, p. 18). "Meeting human beings where they are" (Van Manen, p. 18) is a particularly important principle in a study concerned with participants' sense of place. Not only do the participants in this research offer instruction through informal means; in addition, most of them have rejected traditional workplaces in order to combine their domestic lives with their work.

Participants included a married couple who restore historic properties through a restoration corporation and teach preservation topics through workshops, books, magazine articles, home shows, and a PBS home improvement program; a same-sex couple who combine old-house restoration with education via old house events and activism in neighborhood associations; and a woman who has built a log home in the West and serves as the creative force behind an educational reenactment group called The Shady Ladies. Besides

a program called “On the Home Front” (focusing on the domestic experiences of women during World War II), the group offers tours and presentations in a 19th century “Parlor House” of prostitution and a roster of speakers called “Unconventional Women of the West.” Two additional participants were not available for interview, but are central figures in the revival of interest in domestic topics, homecaring, and history. For this reason, brief textual analysis of popular press works by Sara Ban Breathnach and Martha Stewart have been incorporated into the study in Chapter 6.

My personal involvement in historic preservation and museum fundraising activities led to acquaintances with some of the interview participants selected for the study. My involvement with the topic made it impossible to call myself presuppositionless, as some phenomenological discourse calls for (Moustakas, 1994). Whether or not human beings can ever free themselves from presupposition is arguable. However, the result of the inquiry was in no way predetermined; this project presented an opportunity to investigate systematically what was before only casual observation and intuition. Participants were invited to construct detailed depictions of their experiences and interpretations. Three broad questions structured the interviews:

1. In what way do participants, like other educators, answer the “Educating for What?” question in their own minds?
2. What types of instructional design and resources are employed by the participants in their informal instruction?
3. What meanings have the participants, who have chosen to center their work and classrooms around home environments, assigned to “traditional” workplace and classroom spaces?

These broad areas of inquiry generated specific interview questions relevant for each participant, with follow-up and additional questions generated during the interviews themselves.

In situations where two members of a couple are equally involved in relevant activities, the participants were interviewed individually, but with both members of each couple present. One couple engaged in some usually lighthearted bickering about questions (whether or not a response was relevant) and answers (whether or not a response was accurate/complete). The arrangement was beneficial overall, however, in that interviewees could look to their partners to fill in gaps in memory, and partners frequently expanded on the other person's remarks without being prompted to do so.

The following research procedures were utilized in order to keep the study consistent with a phenomenological orientation:

1. Interviews were conducted in the homes and educational spaces participants themselves have created.
2. Participants decided how they would be identified in the final report, either by alias, by initials, or by full given name.
3. Open-ended, flexible questions guided layered researcher-participant conversations (Seidman, 1998) to maximize the detail and texture of the final report.
4. Participants were invited them to perform a member check of drafts of Chapters 4, 5, and 6. By serving as reviewers of text they helped generate, participants can help researchers transcend the limits of their observation and powers of description.
5. Written documents and photographs were utilized as additional instruments for revealing what is meaningful to participants (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). I reviewed instructional and promotional material, which all the participants willingly shared; I also incorporated

observations of lived experience: participants working on structures, teaching, and engaging in other activities relevant to the focus of the study.

In addition to the selection and conduct of interviews, another area in which phenomenologists resist premature closure is the review of literature. Seidman (1998) warned against over-absorption in literature to the point that the interviews themselves are more or less perfunctory, or force-fit to the researcher's own world view. Taylor and Bogdan (1998) expressed the phenomenological pre-research ideal as "minimal commitment to a priori assumptions and theory" (p. 146). However, Seidman's guide supported an *informed* approach—one in which the researcher reads enough to understand relevant history and approach the topic thoughtfully, one of the goals reflected in the selection of literature for Chapter 3. Considerable literature was reviewed to construct Chapter 3, but its purpose was to build an understanding of history and to locate any empirical literature relevant to the study. Additional sources were reviewed after patterns were identified in interview transcripts. To meet the goal of maintaining the balance between structure and openness, some additional decisions were made about project procedures.

In-depth Interviewing

Phenomenological interviewing is influenced by phenomenological philosophy and conceptions about the situation of participants in relation to others. Sokolowski (2000) argued that this relationship is often misinterpreted as a non-relationship, stemming from a solipsistic, ego-confined approach to perception (see Iannone, 1997). Others consider phenomenology to be a philosophy with much to say about human community (Iannone, 1997; Sokolowski, 2000). Phenomenology seeks to know others without assuming we can know completely. It assumes that we can know others because we share physical bodies, and bodies are vehicles for expressing states of mind. Bodies "embody other transcendental

egos. I perceive them as the bodies of selves like myself, but in doing so I perceive them precisely as enclosing and expressing a conscious life that will always remain absent to me, a stream of temporality irreducibly different from my own” (Sokolowski, p. 154). Sokolowski explained that to know others is to know something of both actual and potential realities, knowledge that is expanded as it is elaborated and contradicted by others. The more others we know, the more possibilities we see.

Regarding the choice of interviews as a primary means of gathering data, Seidman (1998), drawing from Vygotsky’s thinking, claimed, “Every word that people use in telling their stories is a microcosm of their consciousness . . . Individuals’ consciousness gives access to the most complicated social and educational issues, because social and educational issues are abstractions based on the concrete experience of people” (p. 1). From the phenomenological perspective, interviewing offers the best access to participants’ experience. Because asking people to tell stories about their experiences invites them to engage in sense-making about experiences, interviewing also offers the best access to people’s own interpretations of what they live. Van Manen (1996) argued an additional advantage of phenomenology over case studies and ethnographies: interviews best reflect the reality of the world in flux and therefore better capture the here-and-now.

During the interviews, the participants were first asked to *reconstruct*, to tell about their pasts: parents, houses, jobs; and then to describe the experiences that are the focus of this study and *reflect* on them (to consider the meanings and implications of their experiences). Within each interview phase, questions were kept open-ended, and the list of specific questions kept flexible to leave participants room to set conversational directions. In some cases, the interviewing involved multiple visits/conversations or email follow-ups.

In phenomenological practice, the relationship between interviewer (knowledge gatherer) and participant is predicated upon a leveling of interest and expertise. Van Manen's (2001) metaphor for the interview is "talking together like friends" (p. 98). An important difference is that unlike what happens in friend-to-friend chat, the presence and questioning of the interviewer keeps the conversation oriented toward "the substance of the thing being questioned" (p. 98). Although this means that a form of control is inevitably exercised by one of the conversationalists, the idea is to maintain maximum autonomy on the part of the participant who has volunteered to be researched. From the phenomenological perspective, participants are not artificially labeled "co-investigators," but naturally become so when the interviewer enters the conversation from a "we" point of view rather than approaching it as an I-Thou transaction (Seidman, 1998). The distinction is important, according to Seidman, because the former implies fellowship and the other potentially signifies domination. Co-investigation becomes a reality as participants describe experiences, begin to reflect on them, and then begin to feel a sense of investment in the project. The study involved participants at another level, the construction of the final description, if they chose to accept the invitation to participate in draft review. Joan, Bob, and Pat accepted and read Chapters 4-6 in advance of the dissertation defense.

Taylor and Bogdan (1998) suggested several additional means of revealing what is meaningful to participants. Photographs were used in several ways in the study, in which place is so significant; participants were asked if they would allow me to take photos of their favorite spaces within their homes. I also asked participants to describe their reactions to photographs of structures to establish some ways in which they "feel" different types of design, to reveal how their expressed preferences for specific architectural and interior styles are experienced. In addition, all the participants were willing to share instruc-

tional and promotional material, which I reviewed for possible incorporation into the study. Because this study is about not just spaces in which people live and educate themselves but also lived *experience*, when possible, I incorporated observations of participants' activities: working on a structure, delivering a presentation at a museum-sponsored Old House Fair, and doing a historical performance/presentation at a festival in a Western town were some of the opportunities that presented themselves during the research.

Phenomenology offers a *dialogic* form of research in Van Manen's (1996; 2001) conception, in that the participants' voices are heard in equal or greater measure to the researcher's. In addition, although some phenomenologists resist the incorporation of theory or any texts extraneous to interview transcripts, there is an argument to be made that the text becomes dialogic only when the researcher incorporates multiple descriptive voices and competing theories. Van Manen (2001) argued that researchers need to "come face to face with texts that challenge and stretch our own descriptive or interpretive sensibilities . . . sooner or later one must test one's insights against those who belong to the tradition of one's subject of study. And it is then that a researcher becomes aware of as yet unformulated or unsuspected specifications and dimensions of meaning" (p. 76). This occurred when the interview findings were viewed in conjunction with the review of literature and new sources were consulted to lend support to emerging conclusions. By extension, this may happen for the reader caught up in the dialogue as well.

Data Analysis and Reporting

Chapter 3's review of literature ranged beyond a summary of secondary sources to examine primary texts such as the self-help literature of the 19th century. A significant portion of the Chapter 3 literature review was devoted to placing "living room education" in historical context by letting these documents speak for themselves. History has made an

important contribution to the study for another reason. Van Manen (2001) referred to the objects of phenomenological interest as the “existentials” (p. 101) that transcend social situatedness: spatiality, lived space; corporeality, lived body; temporality, time; and communality, human relationships. Situatedness, the notion that meanings people assign to existentials are grounded in social practices and individual experience, has become conventional wisdom in educational theory as well as history (Gee, 1999). This project invites readers to enter, to the extent that any textual description can make possible, into lived examples of ways that elements of the same existentials can be re-situated in different educational, social, and historical contexts.

Gee (1999) provided a framework well-suited to a close reading of the historical and contemporary discourse of domestic self-education and their connection to domestic artifacts. Gee asserted that whenever a text is written or spoken, six areas of reality are described/constructed. One can read/question a text to examine cues/clues that help construct or trigger specific situated meanings through which the six text-building elements are revealed. The reader can then consider how each of the six elements reflects discourses and institutions stabilized, transformed, or both. Gee argued that the materials of textual construction, as well as their situation, activate certain cultural models more readily than other ones. He suggested the following points of textual analysis:

1. The meaning and value aspect of the material world (meanings and values attached to places, times, bodies, artifacts, and institutions);
2. Descriptions of activities;
3. Semiotics (what and how different symbol systems and forms of knowledge “count;” sign systems present in the text: speech, writing, images, gestures, social languages);

4. Relationships (identities, roles, w/concomitant personal, social, and cultural knowledge and beliefs);
5. Politics (the distribution of social goods; the perception of “social good;” reflections of power; race, class and degrees to which they are relevant in the text);
6. Connections (within and across utterances, to narratives past and outside the text; how connections constitute coherence, and what kind).

The goals of education defined in Chapter 1—liberal arts, humanist, progressive, and performativity—served as the organizing principle for the review of literature. Because a central research question was whether or not these interests are reflected in the participants’ informal education, they also served as a preliminary sorting mechanism for the interview data. My assumption that the participants’ responses would cluster around those themes to some degree proved to be correct.

Phenomenological researchers aim to keep their sights set on the question investigated. As the research becomes writing, a design should emerge that makes evident the significance of each essential part in relation to the whole. In phenomenology, this sense of design or order begins with the location of themes, which Van Manen (2001) defined metaphorically: themes are “like knots in the webs of our experiences, around which certain lived experiences are spun and thus lived through as meaningful wholes” (p. 90). To identify a theme is to “point at, to allude to, or to hint at” (p. 92) some aspect of a phenomenon.

Seidman (2000), Van Manen (2001), and Taylor and Bogdan (1998) were used as the primary guides to analysis and coding for this project, coding that was based on complete transcripts of audiotaped interviews. As suggested in these sources, coding included keeping track of the placement of excerpts in the original transcript and the contributor of each excerpt. A word processing program was used to facilitate coding, but no data analysis

software was used. In the project, transcripts were coded to isolate patterns with simple Microsoft Word text highlighting and an alphabetical labeling system (related information, such as two participant comments reflecting a liberal arts interest, were marked with the same color and labeled with the same letter of the alphabet). Transcripts were reviewed again several times to refine thematic categories and select the material that best represented them. During the process of revising Chapters 4 and 6, it was necessary to return to the transcripts yet again as needed to double-check accuracy and locate additional supporting material. While researchers are reviewing data for essential features with thematic significance, phenomenology advises them to remain attentive to information that is idiosyncratic or even contradictory to particular patterns. An effort was made to call attention to such material in Chapters 4 and 6.

My preference to avoid using computer software for any interpretive activity was in keeping with preferences expressed in the literature about the nature of the finished written product. Phenomenologists do not generally aim to evacuate themselves from their writing. Sokolowski (2000) described researchers as “datives of disclosure” who “think the thing given in experience” (p. 4). Because we are able to “understand ourselves as thinking them” (p. 4), we should make plain not only the objects of perception but also the processes. Van Manen (2001) helped elaborate on some ways researchers might accomplish this, arguing the desirability of using first-person perspective and showing that “human knowledge is not the work of an agent intellect separate from human beings, but the achievement and possession of someone who can say ‘I’ and who can take responsibility for what he says” (p. 203).

Phenomenological research guides make use of the old composition credo “show, don’t tell.” Van Manen (2001) went the farthest in drawing analogies with literature and poetry,

using Walt Whitmanesque descriptions of phenomenology as writing that “sings the world” in a “primal incantation” (p. 13). Although not all sources favor a literary approach like this, phenomenologists are generally compatible in their emphasis on richness of detail (Seidman, 1998; Sokolowski, 2000; Van Manen, 1996; 2001). In his 1996 article, Van Manen described what I hope I have achieved in this study: resonant writing that “intrigues and fascinates,” that comes across as “feelingly understanding” while seeking “cognitive meaning in logical, conceptual, and ethical dimensions.”

Coming to Conclusions

While feminist researchers typically express objectives such as speaking out for others, asserting power, and engineering radical social and political change (Reinharz, 1992), Van Manen (2001) warned us even to resist seeking the “summary” or “punchline” in a phenomenological study (p. 13). Phenomenology attempts to construct no theories (Seidman, 1998). Heidegger (1927/1992), whose philosophical treatises played a key role in shaping phenomenological thought, proposed the guiding maxim “To the things themselves!” (p. 72). By constructing a qualitative text to bring to light the meanings research participants assign to their own experiences and their own material reality, one can achieve, simply, some “plausible insights” (Van Manen, 2001, p. 9). Some phenomenologists invite researchers to “intrude” into the study insofar as making interpretations, links to other traditions or personal experience (Lester, 1999; Seidman, 1998), “or even to common sense opinions” (Lester, 1999). In this study, I did not resist sharing implications, connections, and insights as they emerged, but did resist making conclusions that try to posit any indefensible suggestion of “finality and surety” (Lester, 1999).

If phenomenology claims no generalizability to large populations, creates no new theory, and resists using the research for the primary purpose of advancing an ideology or a

model of cultural transformation, what good are a few new insights? I argue that the study has the potential to achieve several purposes.

In light of what has already been said about what phenomenological research does not do, it is important to describe what *is* accomplished in the analysis of data. Data are not simply left unprocessed in the interest of capturing raw experience. Van Manen (2001) described phenomenological analysis as the process of working toward an effect (p. 33), which establishes a purpose and a boundary that keep narcissism or “aimless wandering” from consuming the writing. Sokolowski (2000) applied principles of classical phenomenology to postmodern times, a world “flooded by fragments without any wholes” (p. 3) to explain the necessity of imposing form on the data. Phenomenology posits that “parts are only understood against the background of appropriate wholes, that manifolds of appearance harbor identities, and that absences make no sense except as played off against the presences that can be achieved through them” (Sokolowski, pp. 3-4).

Connor (2000) argued, in addition, the importance of researchers simply acting consciously. Acting consciously is posed as the opposite of what he succinctly called “wholehogger” (p. 6), the elevation of any research methodology to a matter of “lifestyle or religion” (p. 6). To illustrate how he has drawn a line for himself, he cautioned, “You would be mad to think you could do cultural phenomenology all the time” (p. 6). Presumably, Connor was suggesting that methodologies aren’t inherently innocent or guilty of anything, but that researchers can be guilty of too much “precomprehending” (p. 6). He argued that all such constructs create “ordering and containing” effects, including constructs with the greatest currency and acceptance as the noble opposition to empirical excesses: “power, identity, ideology, gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, the body, postmodernism” (p. 5). Kincheloe and McLaren (1994), in an article aligned with resistance postmodernism, agreed:

“The choice is not one between modernism and postmodernism but one of whether or not to challenge the presuppositions that inform the normalizing judgments one makes as a researcher” (p. 152). Presuppositions limit one’s view of the cube, to extend the phenomenological metaphor. Kincheloe and McLaren suggested that once researchers are caught up in unexamined presuppositions, it becomes too easy to don the “Orphic lyre” (p. 152) or the “crown of thorns” (p. 152).

Phenomenologists argue that in the end, phenomenology has a quieter goal than those that announce themselves to be radical and liberatory, but it also has a potentially transformative one. Van Manen (2001) wrote, “A strong and rigorous human science text distinguishes itself by its courage and resolve to stand up for the uniqueness and significance of the notion to which it has dedicated itself” (p. 18). Phenomenological pedagogy, the particular school of phenomenological thought favored by Van Manen (1996), has been tied to educational research in a way that creates a more overt action orientation. Van Manen identified closely with Heidegger and Langeveld (1979), who argued that “pedagogical inquiry always has an inherent practical intent because sooner or later this knowledge figures in how one must act” (as cited in Van Manen, 1996). In this way, description has a moral dimension in that we inevitably choose to say “this is the way or not the way to be” (Van Manen, 2001, p. 12). As an additional answer to the perception that phenomenology does little else other than to help one know more, to waste time in acts of passive intellectual consumption, Van Manen wrote, “Free human beings who have acquired a deepened understanding of the meaning of certain human experiences or phenomena may in fact be less susceptible to the effective management or control of others” (Van Manen, 2001, p. 21).

CHAPTER 3

THE INSTRUCTIONAL POWER OF MATERIAL OBJECTS:
REVIEW OF HISTORICAL AND EMPIRICAL LITERATURE

Although the instructive power of material things past and present has been interpreted in vastly different ways, one fact is unequivocal: in the past 30 years, fields as diverse as museum studies, art history, anthropology, archaeology, and social psychology have become increasingly interested in reading objects “to understand the people and times that created them, used them, and discarded them” (Lubar & Kingery, 1993, p. viii; Miller, 1998). This dissertation merges the study of material objects with educational philosophy by focusing on contemporary informal educators/revivalists of history who are passionate about material objects and architecture. Because one of the purposes of the study is to illuminate parallels between the past and present, the literature review is not a conventional chapter limited to secondary empirical studies. Instead, it will begin with a look into the living room learning of the 19th century as described by the learners and teachers of the time. At that time, the conventional wisdom that everyday objects served a crucial instructional function permeated every self-help resource. The phenomenology thus begins in this chapter with a review of historical primary sources. The historical data will join with contemporary empirical sources to follow a line of inquiry suggested by one of the studies most central to the dissertation, Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton’s *The Meaning of Things* (1981/1989). Csikszentmihalyi (1993) suggested a four-part principle of human relationships with objects: that people “want and need things to objectify the self, organize the mind, demonstrate power, and symbolize their place in society” (as cited in Lubar & Kingery, p. xii).

Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton's (1981/1989) findings echo the educational philosophies and purposes described in Chapter 1, and therefore help shape this chapter's section headings: Domestic Things and Liberal Arts Learning: Organizing the Mind; Domestic Things and Humanist Learning: Objectifying the Self; Domestic Things and Progressive Learning: Demonstrating Social Position/Organizing for Social Change; and Domestic Things and the Workplace. The table below recaps the core components of each philosophical orientation as they are synthesized in this dissertation.

Table 1

Major Philosophies of Education and their Primary Purposes

	<i>Liberal Arts Education</i>	<i>Humanist Education</i>	<i>Progressive Education</i>	<i>Education for Improved Performativity</i>
<i>Primary Activities/ Purposes</i>	Developing "well-rounded" persons with sound basic skills & broad knowledge; Exercising reason; Balancing mental & physical capacities; Appreciating the fine arts & humanities; Preparing for effective citizenship	Filling the "Blank Slate;" Discovering & valuing individuality (including gender identity); Achieving self-actualization; Maximizing human potential; Perfecting civilization	Understanding Self as a social construction; Solving social problems; Critiquing power relationships; Enacting a political / transformative social agenda	Improving workplace competencies; Developing lifelong learners for changing economic conditions; Perfecting technologies and contributing to the nation's economic vigor

A slice of Victorian social history and popular press in each section will construct a case study in learning and building mind, body, and identity at home; dealing with the public

sphere and the issue of making a living; and forming political beliefs that defined individuals' relationship with the larger community. In addition, each section offers contemporary empirical and theoretical reflections on these ideas. Finally, one more thread woven into the chapter is Western culture's intellectual history, which helps illuminate the relevance of material objects to a study of education and demonstrates ways in which educational philosophies contend for dominance of public opinion, educational institutions, and personal lifestyles.

Domestic Things and Liberal Arts Learning:

Organizing the Mind

One fundamental concern of education is developing intellectual capacity, defined simply by Evans, Forney, and Guido-DiBrito (1998) as meaning-making processes (p. 129). In the liberal arts tradition, *the* fundamental concern is "training of the mind," the development of rational processes and intellectual discipline (Elias & Merriam, 1995, p. 18). The first step in developing these processes, which transform information into wisdom, is feeding the mind with information about the world in the broadest possible sense. Students of the Liberal Arts take up topics of nature, history, the arts, architecture, all the products of human creativity. Because educational research focuses primarily on educational institutions, professional educators, and student development experts, these facts are well known. Much less obvious is how the objects used in everyday life outside educational institutions may participate in training the mind.

Clashing Perspectives of Things: Intellectual vs. Useful

Contemporary American culture is shaped both by Victorian and Modernist sensibilities. Both traditions are relevant to the participants in the phenomenology in terms of the principles they revive and others they rebel against. Both have influenced educa-

tional philosophy, shaping various answers to the question “Why educate?” and causing the liberal arts orientation to wax and wane; both have shaped dramatically different visible products of human creativity and human relationships with material objects. To illustrate the truth of these claims, it is necessary to look to the past as divisions between the philosophies began to take shape.

Brolin (1985) suggested the inseparability of Western culture’s organization of the mind and its design and classification of material objects. For centuries, “all manual, or ‘mechanical’ arts were decorative; even painting and sculpture were seen as embellishment. Ornament was not thought of as something separate. Along with stairs, lids, windows, handles, walls, spouts, and so on, it was an indivisible part of buildings and objects” (pp. 78-79). Eventually, however, Western culture’s understanding of material objects split into two distinct categories, ultimately reflecting a significant cultural dichotomy: Beauty vs. Utility. Brolin cited an 1835 novel called *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, by Théophile Gautier, to illustrate how far the polarization would eventually go: “Nothing is really beautiful unless it is useless; everything useful is ugly, for it expresses a need, and the needs of man are ignoble and disgusting, like his poor weak nature” (p. 72).

The separation has roots in the culture of classical Greece. As Brolin (1985) noted, although no special classification of objects as “art” existed yet, Greek taste created some value distinctions between “liberal (*contemplative*) arts” and manual ones, including painting, sculpture, carving, and weaving (p. 72). As Western culture reorganized its mind, so to speak, it also reshaped its view of everyday objects and created harder boundaries between contemplative and manual, beautiful and useful.

During the Renaissance, for example, art was believed to be the companion of higher intellect, one that should avoid the company of money and manufacture. Ironically, some artists achieved lasting prestige and wealth thanks to Renaissance patrons seeking to enhance their own prestige and pleasure, and artists inched toward greater respect and social status.

Brolin (1985) identified Kant's *Critique of Judgment* (1790) as responsible for the greatest leap forward of art and artists as singular classes in the late 1700s. By this time, "fine art" (painting and sculpture) and decorative art were categorized as opposites:

Knowledge of "fine" art made artists aware of decoration just as the knowledge brought by the apple had made Adam sense his nakedness. . . . the implication for later decades was profound, for once it had been made "visible" in this way—once it had been isolated intellectually—ornament became vulnerable. (Brolin, p. 79)

Brolin (1985) argued that the new caché ascribed to art and artists could not have happened without the popularization of two ideas, genius and originality (the opposite of conventionality and marketability). These ideas eventually saturated Western philosophy, literature, criticism, and cultural mythology, "catapulting them into the sacred realm of pure intellect, from which they were to instruct—rather than pander to—conventional taste" (p. 74). The implications for the visual world would become much more obvious in the 20th century, but the more important fact is that material objects and their makers—artists, decorative artists, and architects—were positioned to educate and shape culture and were aligned with cultural dichotomies old and new: abstraction vs. reality, intellect vs. body, rationality vs. sentimentality, masculine vs. feminine, public vs. private, art vs. manufacture, and class vs. class. The following sec-

tion describes the view that prevailed throughout much of the 19th century: that intellect and beauty were nothing if not companions with practicality.

Victorian Living Room Education: Clipping and Collecting to Preserve Knowledge

Capezzi (2000) collected and coded 19th century American domestic scrapbooks, excerpts from domestic advice manuals, and clippings from Harper's magazine. Victorians' accumulations of paper included clippings from advice manuals and popular magazines like Harper's and Good Housekeeping, as well as advertising cards, chromolithographed scrap, and other "ephemera," the name contemporary collectors have assigned to antique paper items accumulated for both aesthetic and profit motives. In their day, these decorative paper scraps typically promoted the consumption of practical and luxury goods for the household. In light of the effort and expense to which collectors go to attain Victorian ephemera, the name is ironic; it is more so, however, when examined in the context of this research. Capezzi's collection and other sources demonstrate the Victorian impulse to make their "scrap" anything but ephemeral—to translate bits and pieces of information into coherent or at least permanent texts and long-term memory. This aspect of informal Victorian domestic education demonstrates how learners tried to overcome constraints of time, memory, and social convention and how they attached meaning, purpose, and pleasure to their "living room" learning.

In 1888, Sallie Joy White wrote in *Housekeepers and Home-Makers*,

One can't expect to be up in every thing, but one may know intelligently a great deal if she only goes to work in the right way. I know one woman who pins her paper or magazine up before her as she irons her clothes; and although she cannot read as steadily as she could if she sat right down to it, yet she gets hold of many

thoughts that would have escaped her if she did not pick it up in the odd minutes this way. (as cited in Capezzi, 2000)

Capezzi's (2000) collected excerpts described specific methods women used to gather information into hand-made textbooks, and reflected an underlying sense of urgency to remember and preserve "thoughts [that] would have escaped" otherwise. Early 20th century readers' letters to *Harper's* included, from the August 1908 issue, a reader's suggestion for clipping and using an index card system: "It has done away with a frequent knitting of my brows in a wild and generally unsuccessful endeavor to remember" (A.L.O., "A Card Index at Home"). "K.C.M.," in "Educated through Clippings," September 1908, similarly expressed frustration at the possibility of information passing her by. Her reflections indicated that her scrapbook texts preserved more than just recipes, cures, and other information women could put to practical household use: "In the few minutes daily which is all the time I can give to the papers, I manage to keep up with the news pretty well, but there are often long articles concerning matters of national or international importance, of art or literature, at which I can only glance longingly." The writer indicated that the dilemma was solved when clipping and saving became a service her family performed for her—a small but interesting variation on the "mother as educator" theme:

So I have fallen into the habit of marking such articles, and after all have read the paper one of the children cuts them out for me. . . . Now that my husband and children know my taste, they keep on the lookout for me and bring me articles which I should not otherwise have seen, sometimes reading them to me as I sew.

The same writer expressed the intellectual function of her continuing education through clippings, which she further tied to the moral and emotional dimensions of

learning: "I gain a great deal of information without any noticeable expenditure of time, and I always have something interesting to think about"; it "takes my mind off household cares and perplexities, makes me familiar with some of the best verse"; it "keeps me from getting too sordid and material"; "I thoroughly enjoy them."

Several Victorian fads stimulated and reflected the desire to save and organize informal learning in a combined decorative/informative format. A scrapbook from the 1880s offers a glimpse into the interests of one collector. Inside the front cover are small chromo scraps reflecting the owner's Christian faith, the only religious items in the collection. Each page on the interior follows the same design: a large chromolithographed scrap or colorful square picture, most of them ladies in colorful costume, women with children, or cards depicting international costumes and flags. Around the edge of each page in various configurations are small pieces of scrap cut out around the shapes: florals, birds, animal heads (particularly cats), ladies, and children. The configuration and content of four pages from the album are shown in Figure 1 on page 47. All of the remaining space on each page, approximately 12" x 14", holds columns of text from unidentified newspapers or possibly *Harper's*. The articles the collector chose reflect eclectic interests falling into the categories listed below, with example titles.

World Events and Foreign Customs ("Amazon Women Warriors," "English-Egyptian Politics," "Manners and Customs of the Burmese," "Theatricals in China")

Science ("Wonders of the Microscope," "Why We Should Know the Stars," "The Number of Known Asteroids in the Solar System")

Animals/Nature ("Pulse in Animals," "A Shark's Mouth," "Wolves and Coyotes," "Alligators' Nests")

Historical Events (“The Surrender of Cornwallis,” “Ben Franklin’s Travels,” “Lincoln’s Duel with General Shields,” “Washington’s Country Life”)

Current Events (“President Garfield Shot!” Saturday, July 2, 1881 Telegraphic News; related articles throughout the collection)

Practical Information and Lists (“Bushel Measures by Weight,” “Domestic Postage,” “Table of Distances”)

Health (“Walking for Health,” “A ‘Rheumatiz’ Remedy”)

Social Oddities (“A Supposed Woman Marries a Young Lady Employe” [sic.]

Objects (“Self-Winding Clocks,” “Sardines,” “Ivory”)

Keeping a Positive Attitude (“Good Humour Overcoming Difficulties,” “A Hint to Grumblers,” “Wishing Oneself Dead”)

Aphorisms and Funny Anecdotes (tiny untitled clippings pasted vertically along the side margins and around center art)

One of the clippings, expressing advice for living, also reflects a rationale for the saving of small scraps of paper and helps explain the importance Victorians placed on everyday objects:

Sir Humphrey Davy is credited with the saying, “life is made up, not of great sacrifices and duties, but of little things, in which smiles and kindness, and small obligations given habitually, are what win and preserve the heart, and secure comfort.”

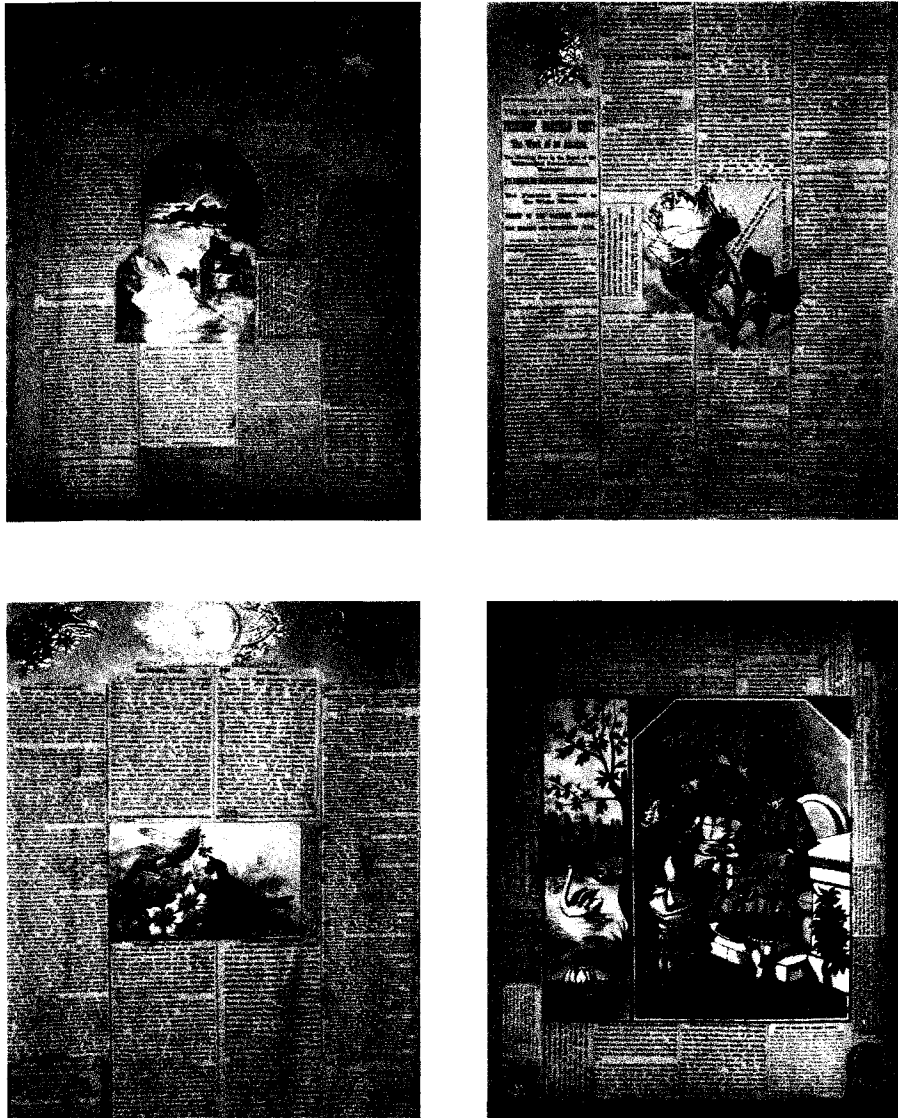


Figure 1. Pages from a Victorian collection of clippings and chromolithographs.

Ockenga (1993) identified and included photographs of several specialized types of albums popular with Victorian women. One was the commonplace book, a collection of poetry, prose, and observations accompanying clippings. Commonplace books were popular throughout the century, but changed in form and tone after the Civil War, ac-

ording to Ockenga, to include fewer contributions by the owner—fewer original works of art, less writing, and a less sentimental tone.

Decorating to Educate

Another medium the Victorians used to construct a home-made learning environment was the interior of the home itself; Victorian decorating and housekeeping practices further demonstrate a devotion to liberal learning. Certain rooms and parts of rooms in Victorian houses contained what contemporary spectators would tend to associate with educational institutions and museums. As Elias and Merriam (1995) noted, liberal arts philosophy entails more than intellectual concerns, because a whole person consists of more than a brain: “The whole person is one who can think rationally and critically, who has refined aesthetic sense, who is of high moral character, and who maintains good physical conditioning” (p. 43). It was typical for books and periodicals to overlap these aspects of the ideal person in making recommendations about home interiors.

Beecher and Stowe’s *The American Woman’s Home* (1869) echoed the common theme that thoughtful decorating choices accompanied by an appreciation for art “contributes much to the education of the entire household in refinement, intellectual development, and moral sensibility” (p. 84). The “Editor’s Portfolio” in *Good Housekeeping Magazine*, November 12, 1887, also reflected on the educational and developmental power of interiors:

A few cents or dollars will go to a surprising length in the purchase of materials for this work of aestheticism The decoration of the home is not only an effect of the growing taste and appreciation of the time, but is also a cause of improving these.

Whoever lives amid beautiful surroundings partakes of the influence that emanates

from them, and his or her life must be moulded considerably by them. They give a tone to life, just as a painting gets a tone from its coloring. The mothers and daughters of the land by means of their home decoration and beautifying, are giving a new coloring to life that makes it more precious than ever before. (“Home Decoration,” p. 21)

Beecher and Stowe (1869) were more specific about how objects educate, for example in their discussions of chromolithographs and statues:

The educating influence of these works of art can hardly be over-estimated. Surrounded by such suggestions of the beautiful, and such reminders of history and art, children are constantly trained to correctness of taste and refinement of thought, and stimulated—sometimes to efforts of artistic imagination, always to the eager and intelligent inquiry about the scenes, the places, the incidents represented. (p. 94)

Beecher and Stowe were proponents of going beyond visual learning to hands-on involvement with decorative objects, recommending that their readers make their own picture frames “because it is at once cheaper and a means of educating the ingenuity and the taste” (p. 91). Crafting decorative objects and displays for art and decoration not only trained the taste and intellect, then, but also instilled another required component of Beecher’s household curriculum, a sense of economy.

In his Medievalist design of decorative objects, publishing, and politics, the British craftsman William Morris constantly critiqued popular taste. However, in one sense, his exhortations illustrate another variation on the philosophy that “education begins at home”—with practical objects—that saturated the American popular press throughout the century, and like Beecher, he argued that the “good life” doesn’t mean getting more,

but having less. According to Morris, simplicity in home design and decoration begets peace, order, freedom, good will, love of truth, and hatred of injustice. Morris (1882/1929) prescribed some desirable particulars of household furnishing:

First a book-case with a great many books in it: next a table that will keep steady when you write or work at it: then several chairs that you can move, and a bench that you can sit or lie upon: next a cupboard with drawers: next, unless either the book-case or the cupboard be very beautiful with painting or carving, you will want pictures or engravings, such as you can afford, only not stopgaps but real works of art on the wall; or else the wall itself must be ornamented with some beautiful and restful pattern: we shall also want a vase or two to put flowers in, which latter you must have sometimes, especially if you live in town . . . we can add very little to these necessities without troubling ourselves, and hindering our work, our thought, and our rest. (“The Beauty of Life,” pp.108-109)

The theme of objects as teachers was still being reinforced after the turn of the century, one particular source connecting intellectual benefits with the act of decorating. Elder-Duncan (1911), in *The House Beautiful and Useful*, described how one may find

another outlet for our mental capabilities in the due consideration of the relative values of the various decorations and articles we employ. A Colour Scheme implies to most of us more or less labour in “matching” things. We settle on a certain admixture of colours; more often than not we come across some colour that is “too lovely for words,” and hunt about for others “to go with it.” We match the tapestries with the carpets, and the upholstery fabrics with the tapestries, and hunt about for contrasts in wall-papers and paint. But beyond this is the effect that these various things may exercise on one another. (p. 23)

Banham, Porter, and MacDonald (1995) focused on the Victorian household library, which household advisors recommended should be used as a “museum of achievements and aspirations” (p. 38). Some advice on furnishing rooms such as the library ran contrary to the “simplify” motto of Morris, Charles Eastlake (*Hints on Household Taste*, 1878/1986), and others. One periodical suggested that the reader make the library “the magnetic gathering place of a thousand tasteful trifles—relics, specimens, objects of art, curiosities, suggestive nothings—which serve to make talk independent of politics, dress, fashion and scandal” (as cited in Banham, Porter, & MacDonald, p. 38).

Some middle-class library clutter served a practical educational purpose while displaying evidence of the homeowners’ hobbies as amateur naturalists. Microscopes were popular library fixtures for male collectors (McD. Wallace, 1996). Wardian cases (similar to terrariums) were standard equipment for displaying living botanical items. Beecher and Stowe (1869) devoted eight pages of *The American Woman’s Home* to “Ward cases,” where one could see “a fragment of the green woods brought in and silently growing,” a household object that could “refresh many a weary hour” (p. 103). Beecher and Stowe provided detailed instructions and illustrations for making cheap (good quality but inexpensive) cases out of old window sashes and glass so that women without husbands could do the project themselves.

Ockenga (1993) cited several instructional books extending opportunities for scientific inquiry/decor to women, including taxidermy projects for home display. Women, because of the comparative limits of their economic and educational spheres, were the most enthusiastic participants in hobbies that “gathered, exchanged, or traded specimens such as bird eggs, fossils, butterflies, seashells, minerals, feathers, flowers, leaves,

ferns, and mosses to display in the library, on the parlor walls, and even in their own room—and in albums” (p. 62).

One of the most popular repositories for household sciences was the herbarium, an album with or without text that provided a place for collectors to arrange dried botanicals systematically. Herbariums became so popular that publishers sold a variety of styles and supplies, including gummed paper to facilitate preservation of fragile plants in a book for the library or parlor. Herbarium how-to guides were also available; Ockenga (1993) offered an excerpt from a manual published in 1859. The author suggested that women should combine botanicals with written reflection:

Write beneath it, the time when and the place where you gathered it Thus in a few years you will have a charming book, especially if you make it a rule to press at least one leaf or flower in every place you visit. Your Herbarium will not only be a beautiful collection of lovely natural objects, but a mute remembrance of all the pleasant people you have seen. (p. 70)

While advice manuals argued the intellectual benefits of studying nature, books like Beecher and Stowe’s (1869) overlapped the topics of nature and the decoration in admonishing readers to improve their minds. Beecher argued that socioeconomic class was not a good excuse for lack of beauty in the home. To those who believed they couldn’t afford art and decoration, Beecher and Stowe recommended using the outdoors as a supplier of home décor:

Are you sure, my friend? If you live in the country, or can get into the country, and have your eyes opened and your wits about you, your house need not be condemned to an absolute bareness. Not so long as the woods are full of beautiful ferns and mosses, while every swamp shakes and nods with tremulous grasses. (p. 103)

The Victorian view of nature as instructional text, not just object of beauty, was expressed in one woman's 1840 botanical album:

A plant, a leaf a blossom, but contains
A folio volume. We may read and read,
And read again, and still find something new,
Something to please, and something to instruct,
Given under my hand and seal,
Collectress of these plants.

(as cited in Ockenga, 1993, p. 66)

Victorian collections can be examined to consider more closely a specific principle of cognitive development. Although contemporary student development theory questions the linearity of some development models, a similarity among models is that ideally, cognitive structures will “change, expand, and become more complex as the person develops” (Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998, p. 124). Victorian women's household texts suggest that learners could, on their own, surpass the entry-level stages proposed in the various theories of cognitive development described by Evans, Forney, and Guido-DiBrito, alternatively described as duality, absolute knowing, or received knowledge. Ockenga (1993), for example, noted that women pursued “nature as teacher” outside their homes at public lectures and educational academies. Excerpts from the texts women added to their specimen collections illustrate how diverse a stimulus nature could be, philosophically, emotionally, and cognitively. Women's observations included minutely-detailed classification systems using Latin names, contemplations of life and death, reflections on beauty, and expressions of the excitement of discovery. They some-

times created original poetry to convey complex responses, as in this excerpt from a herbarium:

Ye bright Mosaics! That with storied beauty
The floor of nature's temple tessellate

With numerous emblems of instructive duty,
Your forms create

(M. Louise Barron, 1856, as cited in Ockenga, 1993, p. 70)

The Victorian Popular Press as Liberal Arts Textbook

Not all 19th century continuing education resources were home-made. Popular periodicals at the time, which supplied some of the material for scrapbooks, specialized in one interest category: self-improvement or home improvement, usually the two combined. Before the Civil War, 100 such periodicals were specifically targeted to women (Baker, 1997). These were the “ladies’ magazines,” most of which were similar in format to *Godey’s Ladies Book*, the most popular and elaborate in production values. The ladies’ magazines—much like the label “household hints” and the word “lady”—are generally referenced as a symbol of women’s confinement and constant indoctrination into household servitude. However, just as scrapbooks, herbaria, and Wardian cases reflect more than just antiquated handicrafts, the content of the periodicals also suggests a more ambitious liberal arts undertaking. The subtitle of *Good Housekeeping* was “A Family Magazine Conducted in the Interests of the Higher Life of the Household.” An anonymous newspaper article, praising the inclusion of both prose and poetry in the magazine, remarked that the magazine “is a splendid specimen of that literature which delights the heart and informs the mind of the intelligent housewife and which exerts a noble and elevating influence in the home circle” (*North Adams Hoosac Valley News*, 1891, p. 109).

An important corollary to the idea that “everything is education,” then, was that adults could be educated in everything. Reviewing women’s periodicals as a genre, Thompson (1947) noted that the magazines regularly promoted education as development of “the whole living being” (p. 26); the “entire capacities from birth onward and upward” (p. 25); the “well-rounded person” (p. 30); the “health of the soul, the production of a sound mind” (p. 30). Victorian household manuals provide many examples of liberal arts philosophy. Isabella Beeton, Catharine Beecher’s British counterpart, provided a general education with every specialized topic or “receipt” in her *Book of Household Management* (1861/1968). Buzard (1997) described the book’s function this way: “Along with her education in the mysteries of the hearth, the housewife will receive a remarkable education in the contemporary sciences of nature and man, without leaving her post or breaching the battlements of the home. The world is in the book; the world makes house calls” (p. 126).

The same could certainly be said about *Godey’s Ladies Book*. Each of the seven volumes of *Godey’s* examined for this research (published 1842 to 1864) averaged close to 300 pages of content in addition to both black and white and hand-colored engravings. *Godey’s* was a repository of hundreds of regular and special features. It was generous with food for thought, publishing original poetry and works of American fiction and non-fiction. Other topics ranged from celestial objects to the “indispensable” objects of earth. The “Celestial Phenomena” column described the constellations and general astronomical facts and offered activities for youth, such as chemistry experiments and crafts to do at home. “Everyday Actualities” explained in intricate detail how common objects, such as paper, were manufactured and how they worked. In an 1854 issue, the household ob-

ject of the month was the piano-forte, dissected in a lengthy feature about piano-fortes as “indispensible article of furniture” and “household companion.”

Godey's was edited by Mrs. Sara Josepha Hale until 1877, most of its long existence (1830 to 1898). It was she who expressed as *Godey's* explicit educational philosophy the belief that “Everything is education” (Hale as cited in Thompson, 1947, p. 24). An extended example from *Godey's* may better illustrate the point. In this “EDITORS' TABLE” from March 1850, an explanation of the Roman calendar becomes a rejoinder to young women, in the name of the Roman goddess of wisdom and the liberal arts, to learn something during the long, cold month of March:

[A]s the fabled goddess of wisdom and the liberal arts has the tutelary care of March, we think no apology is needed for urging on our young lady readers the importance of entering on some grave and profitable studies, or, at least, some one study, at the beginning of this long, cold month . . .

If leisure and opportunity are not allowed for the prosecution of a new study, then commence a systematic course of reading. It is doubtless true, that young ladies generally leave school with the determination to continue their studies . . . But, few are aware of the difficulty of adhering to such a resolution, in the midst of the employments of home and the attractions of society, until the experiment has been made. By a methodical arrangement of time, however, it is possible, in spite of difficulties and discouragements, to accomplish the object in question. Let, then, a systematic course of study or reading be marked out and strictly adhered to, as a part of the duties, or rather pleasures, of every day, and an amount of information quite wonderful, to those who have never computed the value of one hour in the twenty-four employed in one pursuit, during the whole year, would be the result.

Like Isabella Beeton and the editors at *Godey's*, Catharine Beecher (1841; 1869) also offered a general education on every page she wrote, for example discoursing at length about digestive system physiology while teaching about healthful cooking. The following section describes the attention to the body that accompanied most Victorian self-help attempts to build well-rounded minds.

A sound body, companion of a sound mind. In the Victorian popular press, one of the ways the expansion of mind was intertwined with the health of the body was in discussions about housekeeping. An article in *Good Housekeeping* called "Humdrum Work" (1887) reflected on the housekeeping sensibilities of literary women such as George Eliot: "Our best and most popular writers among women furnish examples of the fact that mental capacity does not preclude the understanding of the best ordering of life, and home loving hearts go with strong brains" (p. 39).

The "best ordering of life" included exercise and manual labor. Beecher and many others directly addressed the issue of housework and other forms of physical labor. Beecher's vision of balance between physical and intellectual activity echoes Pestalozzi's views on combining schooling with work (*How Gertrude Teaches her Children*, 1898). In *A Treatise on Domestic Economy* (1841), Beecher proposed a system of self-sufficiency in formal school systems in which students would be responsible for the upkeep of the school, as they eventually would be in their own homes. Thus, hands-on learning of housekeeping skills (sweeping, ironing, cooking healthy food) would promote moderate physical activity and respect for work, creating a view of femininity that was a significant departure from the one constructed in leisure-class education systems, which Beecher scorned. Her argument contrasted her idea of feminine health and productivity with the inert woman of "accomplishment":

A young lady, who will spend two hours a day at the wash-tub, or with a broom, is far more likely to have rosy cheeks, a finely-molded form, and a delicate skin, than one who lolls all day in her parlor or chamber, or only leaves them, girt in tight dresses, to make fashionable calls. It is true, that long-protracted daily labor hardens the hand, and unfits it for delicate employments; but the amount of labor needful for health produces no such effect. (p. 33)

Maintaining a sense of psychic and physical balance entailed attention to the issue of overwork. One facet of the 19th century argument for equalizing formal schooling for women was the incredible difficulty of keeping a house (see Strasser, 1982, *Never Done: A History of American Housework*). In an issue of *Godey's* in 1860, the editor offered cautionary examples of women who “died of overwork . . . combined with anxiety to excel and please their husbands” (as cited in Green, 1983, p. 113). Beecher herself saw that the labor intensive nature of housework made it very hard for women to develop their minds and serve as effective teachers. Beecher gathered observational data as she traveled throughout the states to lecture and learn women’s domestic histories, as she did from pupils in her Institute for Young Ladies. Her observations led her to ask the rhetorical question, what American mother can reach her thirties “unfaded and unworn?” (1841, p. 22).

Attempting to stay true to the ideal of women as domestic experts and educators of the young, Beecher (1841) argued that American women’s moral principles, emotional maturity, and sensitivity made them equal to the task, while acknowledging that no matter how willing the spirit, the human body could only take so much wear (p. 25). Women were dealing with the physical demands of housekeeping, the increasing complexities of the world and growing demands on the intellect, the awesome burden of up-

holding Victorian social customs, and a lack of outdoor exercise that further weakened the constitution, according to Beecher. Therefore, she concluded, women's burdens should inspire sympathy and a national commitment of the nation to solving their unique problems.

Beecher devoted much of her life to finding solutions. For her, the work of the house was as much a part of the liberal arts curriculum as conventional intellectual topics. She wrote that "There is nothing, which so much demands system and regularity, as the affairs of a housekeeper, made up as they are of ten thousand desultory and minute items; and yet, this perpetually fluctuating state of society seems forever to bar any such system and regularity" (1841, p. 18). She dedicated herself to publishing ideas to assist women in developing such a system. Along with her sister, Harriet Beecher Stowe, she set about to lighten women's physical burden with invention and advice-giving; these ideals motivated the publication of *The American Woman's Home* in 1869.

The ladies' magazines contributed as well, promoting the benefits of hands-on activity while trying to improve home-keeping efficiency and ease. Particularly in the volumes after the 1850's, a core part of the content of *Godey's* was the receipts. Receipts, the archaic version of the word "recipe," taught readers how to do much more than cook a particular dish. Household how-to instruction in these volumes included embroidering petticoats, sewing various garments, and making a variety of crafts in a regular column called "The Work Table;" cleaning various textiles and housewares; expelling insects from gardens and households; making soap and facial wash; eliminating warts; practicing preventative health care; transplanting flowers and trees; and preserving fruit. The magazine also offered continuing courses in being an interesting conversationalist and in drawing. (In addition to explaining and diagramming the how-to's of drawing, the

editors argued the necessity of drawing to the readers' lives, and the necessity of citizens with fine aesthetic sense to American art and manufacture.)

Practicality was the ruling principle, and practicality was posed as the preferable opposite of upper class leisure and ostentation. William Morris's credo was "Have nothing in your houses that you do not know to be useful, or believe to be beautiful" ("The Beauty of Life," 1882/1929, p. 108). The ladies' books and periodicals knit together similar ideas, as a review of *Good Housekeeping* from the *Boston Commonwealth* suggested: "The unimpeachable good sense of its editor never loses sight of the fact that . . . the genuine qualities of heart and the riches of mind need to be supplemented or underlaid by the practical skill of the hand" (*Boston Commonwealth*, 1891, p. 109).

One additional theme linking mind and body in the Victorian popular press was identified by Green (1983). From the middle to the end of the century, public health advice in books and magazines increased in quantity and drama. The sheer volume of popular medical education was unprecedented as legitimate science advanced, and thus, so was the amount of quackery and misinformation.

The popular press offered somewhat conflicting advice about the body/mind connection. Some authors in the magazines and books warned that formal education and healthy reproduction were incompatible. Green (1983) cited a writer who argued that a girl's "future womanly usefulness was endangered by steady use of her brain" (p. 116). Many articles written to warn of dangers to reproductive and mental health reinforced stereotypes about women's limitations and obligations. Others critiqued popular fashions as health hazards, even those believed by many to represent the very essence of Victorian womanhood.

One of these icons became to the contemporary mind the ultimate symbol of Victorian femininity, the corset. The ladies' magazines generally worked to teach readers to reject corsets, blaming them for everything from damaged lungs and uteri to excitement of untoward sexual passions because of the way they compressed the "lower regions." Catharine Beecher crusaded against them in her books, arguing this in *Treatise on Domestic Economy* (1841):

All sensible women will never risk their own health, or the health of their daughters, to secure a form at variance with good taste and good health. Such female figures are made, not by the hand of the Author of all grace and beauty, but by the murderous contrivances of the corset shop. (p. 97)

Feminists found an opening in these health arguments to go further, attacking the restrictions on freedom imposed by corsets. In fact, the magazines provided a forum for a broader dress reform movement, which took on not only corsets but also high heels and heavy undergarments. According to Green (1983), when the weight of these garments was added to outer skirts, a woman would have to hold up over 30 pounds of fabric while wearing the undersized shoes necessary to make her feet look fashionably small. *Godey's* contributing physician was a participant in this battle.

Advice about sexuality, the most intimate part of private life, was also offered regularly and in a way more often tied to health than morality alone, though the advice was veiled in euphemism. Popular press instruction on sexuality was consistent in the opinion that "excessive" sexual passion was perverse and dangerous. Typical articles instructed about the consequences of masturbation and too much intercourse for both men and women, associating orgasm with depletion of energy and intellect for both genders (Green, 1983).

In educating about the house and home, many articles described the dangers of the air the readers were breathing, along with other threats such as infection by pernicious germs and early death. *Godey's* offered "Fifteen Rules for the Preservation of Health" in 1860. Along with helping readers identify disease symptoms, the authors provided lists of necessary items to include in every bedroom and kitchen to keep families healthy. In their book, Beecher and Stowe (1869) included a whole chapter about air, explaining that "the most indispensable requisite for health is pure air, both day and night" (p. 43). Keeping the household air pure necessitated detailed lessons in cleaning stoves, furnaces, and chimneys.

In the magazines, an additional source of education was the advertising. Letters to the editor and articles sometimes reinforced advertising sales pitches and offered testimonials to promote the various household products and cures advertised. Particularly in the informal healthy housekeeping curriculum, Green (1983) accused the magazines of serving as "handmaidens of their advertisers, providing their readership with both a frightening specter and a means of salvation" (p. 41).

Educating for a healthy body was complex and sometimes contradictory and commercial. One certainty, however, is that to the Victorians, the physical body was "the house of the soul" (Green, 1983, p. 133). Therefore, sexuality and general health were included in the informal liberal arts curriculum because they were relevant to cleanliness, order, safety in the home, and a generally strong psyche.

Common Household Objects: Empirical Perspectives of Liberal Arts

Learning around the House

Czikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981/1989) concluded from their study of 82 urban families (315 individuals)—who collectively mentioned 1,694 things as signifi-

cant to them—that human interactions with things provide evidence of learning; that things expand the boundaries of the self and the intellect. The study plays a central role in this dissertation because of its scale, application of multiple methodologies, and uniqueness.

The study is unique in its attention to the roles of material objects in shaping human identity and intellect, roles the researchers were able to define as participants talked about freely-chosen things decorating or serving active functions in their households. The researchers gathered a socioeconomically-stratified sample of three-generation families living within close proximity to one another in the Chicago area. Within each extended family, the parents, one child, and a grandparent were interviewed. The study centered on a single open-ended question, what objects in their homes the participants considered “special.” Czikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton’s (1981/1989) rationale for the question’s open-ended phrasing underscores their attempt to encourage maximum latitude in the participants’ responses:

By using the word “special” we mean that the object has some meaning, value, memories, importance, or feelings “attached” to it for the person. We are interested in how the object functions symbolically for the person but we do not want to use the word “symbolically” because it might be misunderstood and because it might limit the person’s answer. The word “special” leaves it up to the person to define the signification of the object. (p. 254)

Participants were also asked to describe any deliberate attempts they had made to create a particular atmosphere or mood anywhere in the household, to tell the story of the acquisition of the objects they identified, and to identify what they thought was special to other family members participating in the interview (Czikszentmihalyi & Ro-

chberg-Halton, 1981/1989). Additional data-gathering techniques supplemented the interviews, including the Jackson Personality Research Form; a “metropolitan” interview pertaining to Chicago places, neighborhoods, and city landmarks; and surveys related to life events, religious and organizational affiliations, activity preferences (shopping, reading, museum-going, etc.), and the specifics of holiday observances. Finally, the team of interviewers took a living room inventory in each household, which “accounted for the presence or absence, as well as stylistic aspects, of various objects” (p. 251). The study’s qualitative analysis was based on category formation, an attempt to “develop an empirical typology or ‘grammar’ by sorting these things into as many distinct categories as would preserve the commonsense, or ‘emic,’ characteristic of the objects” (p. 57).

The typology eventually derived was sorted into a frequency table consisting of two main categories, person-related and non-person related reasons for valuing objects. Non-person related responses included Memories, Associations, Experiences, and Intrinsic Qualities of Objects. One conclusion derived from the study and the authors’ review of literature was that things can be essential facilitators of cognitive growth. At the center of their argument is the finding that things engage people in processes of “actively cultivating” thought (Czikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981/1989, p. xi). Cultivation means paying attention, allocating psychic energy “to create ordered patterns of information and action” (p. 5). The process of allocating attention builds people’s capacity to reflect on their surroundings and adapt their conduct. The authors described this process and the linkage between objects, perception, and meaning-making as follows:

The most complex patterns of emotion and thought can become embodied in and symbolized by concrete things, that is, how things themselves are part of the interpretive sign process that constitutes meaning. Accordingly, the purpose of cultiva-

tion is not to achieve increasing levels of abstraction but, rather, the goal is what Peirce (1931-5) referred to as “concrete reasonableness”— the embodiment, actualization, and growth of the patterns of emotion and thoughts that comprise the self. (Czikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981/1989, p. 99)

Pinker’s (2002) work written from a cognitive science perspective adds to this discussion in its explanation of how the human visual system is hard-wired to take in and classify complex stimuli as “surfaces, colors, motions, and three-dimensional objects It evolved to feed us information about the consequential things out there, like rocks, cliffs, animals, and other people and their intentions” (p. 412). The significance of Pinker’s discussion lies in its argument that because of this innate perceptual system, human beings experience some universal emotions and respond to aesthetic pleasures. It is also a human tendency to make interpretations about visual perceptions, to go beyond simply taking language or material artifacts at face value; to “try to guess why the producers came out with them and what effect they hope to have on us” (p. 412). As later sections will show, assumptions about human perceptions have much to do with beliefs about the nature and purpose of education.

Several authors provided useful discussions to illustrate that universal perceptual traits are *applied* in diverse ways; others have explored the nature of objects themselves as helping determine what the human perceptual responses will be. Geertz (1973) and Turner (1967) have written about the intrinsic qualities of things that *stimulate* different types of insight and expand the range of problems and solutions human beings face. Kahneman’s (1973) experimental/physiological exploration of attention and effort in human cognition made a case that at least in part, human cognitive effort depends on the task—i.e., what someone is looking at or interacting with, not simply observer in-

tentions. An interesting conclusion in Kahneman's research was that "looking at simple figures is governed by simple rules" (p. 56). Conversely, objects that are "novel, complex, and incongruous" (p. 53) command more, and more complicated, cognitive processing.

MacKinnon (1962) contributed additional research that links object style preferences and variation in uses of the intellect. In an address to the American Psychological Association, MacKinnon argued that the task of psychologists and educators is "through our insights or through the use of validated predictors to discover talent when it is still potential and to provide that kind of social climate and intellectual environment which will facilitate its development and expression" (p. 484). To that end, he reported the results of an empirical study at the Institute of Personality Assessment at the University of California at Berkeley that undertook to define creativity by sampling people productive in six fields—architecture, creative writing, mathematics, industrial research, physical science, and engineering—using a variety of assessment methods. Several of the findings are relevant to the present study, beginning with a definition of creativity comprised of broad intellectual capacities, not just novelty of thought. Creativity factors included solving problems, adapting thought to recognizable real-life contexts, sustaining insight, and evaluating and elaborating on ideas. The researchers found that creative people display openness to "richness and complexity of experience" (p. 488), including openness to feeling and emotion, self-awareness, and other interests which "in the American culture are thought of as feminine" (p. 488).

One of the assessment tools utilized in the research was the Welsh Figure Preference Test (1959) and a scale indicating degree of preference for perceptual complexity. MacKinnon (1962) reported that "all creative groups we have studied have shown a clear preference for the complex and asymmetrical, and in general the more creative a

person is the stronger is this preference” (p. 488). MacKinnon provided further elaboration on apparent connections between preferences in object styles and certain aspects of cognition:

It is clear that creative persons are especially disposed to admit complexity and even disorder into their perceptions without being made anxious by the resulting chaos. It is not so much that they like disorder per se, but that they prefer the richness of the disordered to the stark barrenness of the simple. They appear to be challenged by disordered multiplicity which arouses in them a strong need which in them is serviced by a superior capacity to achieve the most difficult and far-reaching ordering of the richness they are willing to experience. (pp. 488-489)

Some of the objects described in Czikszenmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton’s (1981/1989) study were classified as objects of contemplation (things people possess solely to look at). Others were classified as objects of interaction, such as caring for, working on, playing, playing with, or listening to the objects. Hart (1999) described a process of cognitive shaping that occurs in human interaction with things. Her discussion focused on craftspeople’s interaction with the materials of their craft, but her argument raises a question about the cognition-building that may occur in the interaction between people and household things, such as, for example, during house work and house pleasure:

Knowledge of procedures, methods, materials, and processes is accumulated over a period of time, through active, concrete involvement with the materials and requirements of the craft and such knowledge therefore resides in the individual worker . . . In other words, this knowledge is an “embodied” one . . . knowledge that accrues to the laboring body—in hands, fingertips, wrists, feet, nose, eyes, ears,

skin, muscles, shoulders, arms, and legs—as surely as it was inscribed in the brain.

(p.128)

Hart thus further reinforces the conclusion that the design of everyday objects, along with human beings' relationships with objects, matters significantly in shaping the activity and the capacity of human intellect.

Domestic Things and Humanist Learning:

Objectifying the Self

Within their chapter “Purposes and Philosophies of Adult Education,” Merriam and Cunningham (1989) defined the type of education whose aim is to enhance personal growth. Enhancing personal growth is the essence of humanism. In the previous section, liberal arts philosophy served as a framework for a focus on intellectual development. This section explores humanist philosophy and ways it works to “objectify the self” on at least two levels identified by Merriam and Cunningham: the *self-actualization* and *relational* aspects of human personality. Elias and Merriam’s (1995) retrospective on humanist thought from past to present was helpful in identifying the specific composition of the two. Neither curricular track, so to speak, should be considered opposed to the liberal arts; instead, they owe their existence to the whole-person emphasis of the liberal arts tradition. The following discussion, highlighting the strong currents of humanist thinking in Victorian informal education, makes that compatibility clear.

Historically, humanism evolved parallel to the disintegration of belief in heredity, church, and aristocracy, which once served as the ultimate authorities and told people what their limitations and potentials were and what their choices should be. Humanism cannot be understood fully without attention to its core tenet, the idea of human nature as “blank slate.” The Blank Slate is a metaphor that Pinker (2002) explained was a later

interpretation of John Locke's metaphor of the mind as "white paper void of all characters, without any ideas," and his query "how comes it to be furnished?" (as cited in Pinker, p. 5). Over time, according to Pinker, the metaphor has evolved from comparisons of the human brain to silly putty, to sieves, to un-programmed computers, but the principle has strengthened in influence across domains.

Humanism, which in adult education has been most closely associated with the works of Malcolm Knowles, places strong emphasis on valuing and drawing out the uniqueness of individuals, of recognizing individual potential. Realizing one's full potential, according to humanist thought, depends on the formation of a healthy self concept, "a person's subjective evaluation of who he or she is" (Elias & Merriam, 1995, p. 119). With a healthy self-concept, one has the ability to grow, develop, and exercise free choice, which further shapes self-concept. Humanism throughout its history has been a counterargument to various forces perceived to be threats to individuality and humanity at large, including the Industrial Revolution, science, and behaviorism. Pinker noted the irony that the Blank Slate theory, because biology was no longer believed to be relevant in human behavior, had much to do with the eventual pervasiveness of behaviorism. The Blank Slate theory is discussed more fully in Chapter 7 in a consideration of the implications of the study.

Elias and Merriam (1995) noted the harmony between humanist and existentialist philosophy, which argues for "the integrity of the individual in the face of increased bureaucratization in society and its institutions as well as the gamut of human relations" (p. 111). The *relational* element of humanism enters into the definition in that humanists have argued that growth cannot occur for individuals in isolation; cooperation and

support among individuals within a culture is essential, and brings about the fullest realization of a democratic system.

Victorian Beliefs about Self-Actualization and Individuality

Victorian America is generally not a culture associated with individuality and free expression. In analyzing the resurgent popularity of Victorian design, an article in the *New York Times* in 1995 dismissed the original as an era of “Pompous prigs, paternalistic moralizers, fussy architecture . . . sanctimonious imperialists . . . [and] faintly ridiculous prudes” (Kakutani, 1995, p. 1). Tiersten (1996) noted that “modernism [which sought to erase Victorianism in the material and intellectual world] enshrined individual subjectivity” (p. 19). Yet, he also complicated the conventional dichotomy between Victorian and Modern views of the individual by offering another dichotomy to consider: a contrast between two aesthetics, two views of the importance and desirable composition of household material objects, and two different conceptions of the human “soul.” Morris (1882/1929) expressed his view of the difference in “Hopes and Fears for Art” as he reflected on old structures versus new ones:

How we please ourselves with an old building by thinking of all the generations of men that have passed through it! Do we not remember how it has received their joy, and borne their sorrow, and not even their folly has left sourness upon it? It still looks as kind to us as it did to them. . . . And the converse of this we ought to feel when we look at a newly-built house if it were as it should be: we should find pleasure in thinking how he who had built it had left a piece of his soul behind him to greet new-comers one after another long and long after he was gone:—but what sentiment can an ordinary modern house move in us, or what thought—save a hope that we may speedily forget its base ugliness? (pp. 105-106)

With Modernism came a “steel and glass aesthetic” (Reed, 1996, p. 10) antagonistic to “the conventional function of the home as a refuge of privacy and an assertion of individual—or family—identity” (p. 10). The significance of the change is that in the traditional home, the occupants left their “trace.” Citing Walter Benjamin, a cultural historian, Reed (1996) explained the idea of humans leaving their trace on architectural objects by describing contemporary materials that allow no such possibility: “Glass is such a hard and flat material that nothing settles on it . . . It is above all the enemy of secrets. It is the enemy of possessions . . . it is difficult to leave a trace” (p. 10).

While the Victorian taste for ornamentation was still leaving its trace on even the most mundane household objects, the popular press and self-help advisors were equating object selection and decoration with identity formation and individual expression. Tiersten (1996) noted that in the early modern period, the late 1800s, “the message was that the objects of a woman’s choosing were extensions of her inner being, and that without the note of individuality, a room risked ‘banality’” (p. 25). Earlier in the century, Frances Power Cobbe had argued the role of domestic aesthetics in women’s self actualization:

The more womanly a woman is, the more she is sure to throw her personality over the home, and transform it, from a mere eating and sleeping place, or an upholsterer’s showroom, into a sort of outermost garment of her soul, harmonised with her bodily beauty. The arrangement of her room, the light and shade, warmth and coolness, sweet odours, and soft or rich colours, are not like the devices of a well-trained servant or tradesman. They are expressions of the character of the woman. A woman whose home does not bear to her this relation of nest to bird . . . is defi-

cient in the womanly power of thoroughly imposing her personality upon her belongings. (as cited in Banham, Porter, & MacDonald, 1995, p. 27)

Sarah Ban Breathnach's *Simple Abundance* (1995) suggested contemporary ways of utilizing Victorian domestic sensibilities, looking beyond the well-known restrictions on individuality and self-actualization in the original historical context to use of the home as a creative canvas for self-expression.

Denied disposable income, independence, and political power, ordinary middle-class women elevated the pursuit of domestic bliss to an extraordinary art form . . . Women approached the domestic arts—cooking, decorating, gardening, and entertaining—not as burdens but as a form of personal expression and as a means of persuasion. (“May 3,” n.p.)

It is difficult for 21st century readers to separate 19th-century domestic life from repression of individual desires (especially women's) when fulfillment of individual desire is measured in terms of public accomplishment. However, 19th century primary sources reveal genuine ambivalence about the price of progress and public-sphere success in terms of its cost to individuality for both genders. *Godey's Lady's Book* (March 1850) included a translation from an article by Goethe called “The Sphere of Woman.” In it, the reader was asked to consider the cost of men's engagement in the public sphere: a potentially less authentic, whole man.

When a man is harassed by external duties and relations, when anxiously employed in procuring the means of subsistence, and when he even takes part in the government of the state – in all these conditions of life he is dependent on circumstances, and can scarcely be said to govern anything, but is often reduced to the necessity of acting from motives of policy, when he would gladly act from his own rational con-

victions – to conceal his real principles when he would delight to act frankly and openly; and even to act out the suggestions of fallacy and falsehood, when he would gladly act from sincerity and uprightness. To all this the man, in his external life in the world, is subject, and at the same time rarely attains the end for which he labors, but loses that harmony with himself, in which, nevertheless, the true ends and the true enjoyment of life consist.

In 1899, Charles E. Sargent, identified as an MA, with the collaboration of an MD, a PhD, and authors with assorted other degrees, published a book called *Our Home: Emanating Influences of the Hearthstone*. In reflecting on how best to maximize human potential, Sargent mused, “Why have nearly all great men had homes illustrious for their beauty and the purity of their influences? The answer is to be found in the fact that the soil of home contains just those elements required for the growth and development of the child’s body, mind, and soul” (p. 63). Even this late in the century, ambivalence about institutionalized learning was also clear. Reinforcing the importance of mother as teacher metaphorically, he wrote that “the eagle does not send her little ones to school to learn to fly, nor does she employ a governess” (p. 91). He asserted the problem with public education more directly when he wrote, “The public school tends to destroy the individuality of the pupil, to crush out all his originality and force his mind, whatever may be its natural tendency, into the common channel. Civilization tends directly toward physical and mental diversity and individual peculiarities, but the public school does not recognize this fact” (p. 91). Sargent was not suggesting that public education be abolished, only that it be balanced by informal learning at home. This placed the responsibility on parents to be a highly involved “superintendants” of education and to provide for “every peculiarity of talent” (p. 92).

Learning Gender Identity and the Boundaries of Freedom

Tisdell and Taylor (1999) developed a rubric comparing adult education philosophies and updating previous surveys in the field, adding feminist-humanist thought as a subcategory of humanist philosophy. Tisdell (2001) described feminist-humanist concern with individual psychological perspective, as represented by works such as Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarules' *Womens' Ways of Knowing* (1986): "They tended to focus on women's individual empowerment and on helping women see themselves as constructors of knowledge, by emphasizing the importance of relationship and the significance of affectivity and shared story in learning" (Tisdell, 2001, p. 273); further, these works are known for "Giving voice . . . to knowledge in the context of a relational community of support" (Tisdell & Taylor, 1999, p. 273). As described by Tisdell and Taylor, contemporary feminist humanism continues a discussion that actually began much earlier. Throughout the 19th century, a debate raged about women and education and how supportive the community should be if women attempted to apply their knowledge outside the domestic sphere and seek to gain more knowledge through greater access to formal education. The argument was framed by a much broader debate about gender identity. It demonstrated both the restrictions and expansions of democracy women experienced during that era, in conflicting messages about whether or not the blank slate of humanism applied to them.

Concurrent with pride in the century of progress toward perfection was a bleaker vision of an era of social decline (the country just wasn't what it used to be). Home, with a woman as its administrator, became the central symbol of social stability and refuge from an increasingly stressful, dangerous world. The word home came to be invested with "an entire constellation of values and beliefs, a sentimentalized but nevertheless

potent response to the threat to traditional patterns of living imposed by urban industrialism” (Stage & Vincenti, 1997, p. 29). Apprehension that women might start rejecting their domestic roles in droves caused some writers to mobilize powerful fear appeals:

OUR homes—what is their corner-stone but the virtue of a woman, and on what does the social well-being rest but in our homes?

Must we not trace all other blessings of civilized life to the doors of our private dwellings?. . . Let our temples crumble, and capitals of state be levelled with the dust, but spare our homes! (*Godey’s Ladies Book*, 1856, as cited in Woody, 1929, p. 100)

Nevertheless, equally potent rhetoric attempted to sway public opinion in another direction. Thompson (1947) quoted extensively from periodicals engaged in a war of homilies about male/female difference. The rhetoric reflected a humanist drive toward personal and social betterment, with contrary forces attempting to turn back the drive by arguing biology, theology, and other forces outside human control. One myth held that “the Goddess of wisdom sprung from the head of Jove, a proof that she has but few relations on the female side” (as cited in Thompson, p. 38). Some scientists in the 19th century argued the “proof” of old notions of female genetic inferiority, such as that offered in an 1871 manual *Eating and Drinking: A Popular Manual of Food and Diet*. The author, George Beard, asserted that he could quantify women’s capacity to learn as 90% of the cranial capacity of men (as cited in Thompson).

Biological essentialism was also reflected in the classification of diseases, whose symptoms were itemized for readers in the magazines and used as evidence in weighing the comparative features and strengths of the two genders. Neurasthenia, for example, was viewed quite differently when experienced by a woman than it was as the “disease”

resulting from a man's intellectual and economic accomplishments. A woman suffered neurasthenia as a side effect of "listlessness" (Green, 1983, p. 137), which, translated, meant being spoiled and having too much leisure. A good cure was thought to be housework, especially baking and canning.

Hysteria was specifically a middle- to upper class woman's disorder. In 1870, *Godey's* described the symptoms: "A hysterical woman is a pitiful and unfortunate object—full of aches and pains, and imaginary ills, capricious in character, whimsical in conduct, excitable, impatient, obstinate, and frivolous—a regular Gordian knot for friends and physicians to unravel" (as cited in Green, 1983, p. 141). Green, noting that hysteria sometimes involved serious symptoms roughly equivalent to disorders that would later be called paranoia or manic depression, highlighted the interesting symbolism of the name (the root is the Greek *hysteria*, meaning womb). In the medical advice, Green found strong evidence of the contradictions of changing times: women were portrayed as powerful nurturers of civilization, but at the same time as "fragile beings, unable to bear burdens as their noble ancestors had" (p. 143). Women were concurrently being educated to be healthy and strong and to reject binding and torturous fashions, while being told to embrace them and look delicate at the expense of their freedom.

Catharine Beecher's stance fell somewhere short of full equal rights for women. As the editor of a collection of early feminist speeches and essays, *Up from the Pedestal*, pointed out, it was possible to be "feminists on some subjects but not on others" (Kraditor, 1968, p. 82). On grounds relating to both self-actualization and the greater good, Beecher (1841) argued that "it is needful that certain relations be sustained, that involve the duties of subordination" (p. 2) the woman who elevates her personal power necessarily trades in advantages elsewhere. Not surprisingly, then, her notion of the

exemplary public school echoed, rather than seeking to rearrange, the Great Chain of Being. Its administration would be based on traditional models of home and family: “The Principal of the institution . . . takes the position of a father of the family, and responsible head of the whole concern”; but “the whole charge of instruction, and all the responsibilities in regard to health, morals, and manners, rest upon the female teachers” (p. 36). As she teased out her view of social subordination, she argued that in all situations, someone inevitably directs, someone yields, as in employer/ employee, student/pupil, parent/child, and husband/wife relationships, and someone who is the subordinate in one situation becomes the superior in another. Citizens of a democracy choose their superiors, she reasoned. Thus, women were free to choose their mates or to refuse to marry at all; but if they did marry, they entered a relationship in which the role of wife was subordinate. In the larger society, Beecher argued, women had equal *interest* in social concerns; their subordination in political and civil institutions was balanced with deference (treatment as a superior) in matters of “comfort, convenience, and courtesy” (p. 9) and, more important, in their power to mold the nation’s manners and morals.

The American Woman’s Home reflected Beecher and Stowe’s recognition of women’s sufferings and an attempt to alleviate them through better education. She did not aim to open new avenues of career and intellect for women to pursue or to diminish the perception of differences between the genders, but instead, her aim was to promote equality of respect for women’s pursuits and equivalent training for men’s and women’s different occupations: “Women are not trained for these duties as men are trained for their trades and professions, and . . . as the consequence, family labor is poorly done, poorly paid,

and regarded as menial and disgraceful These duties of woman are as sacred and important as any ordained to men” (pp. 13-14).

Victorian beliefs about both genders illustrate the complexities and limitations of the blank slate theory. If women were plagued by delicate constitutions and occasional hysteria, at least they weren't plagued by diseases of character as men were believed to be. The Victorian view of the grave importance of living room education that begins at birth and continues through formal schooling was supported by this conviction about males: that men, left to their own free will, would give in to their baser instincts. According to *Godey's* in 1860, the wife/mother was “the magnet that draws man to the domestic altar, that makes him a civilized being and a social Christian”; thus she is “the light of the home” (as cited in Green, 1983, p. 56). In describing the social functions for which women had to prepare, Catharine Beecher (1841) included this item on her list: “renovate degraded man” (p. 13). *Up from the Pedestal* included the letters of Angelina Grimké (1837/1968), Sarah Moore Grimké's sister, to Catharine Beecher, with whom she disagreed on several issues of gender differentiation. Grimké argued that the blank slate of both genders should be evaluated using the same moral standards, and she suggested that public life posed dangers to the character of both:

Dost thou ask me, if I would wish to see woman engaged in the contention and strife of sectarian controversy, or in the intrigues of political partizans? I say no! never—never. I rejoice that she does not stand on the same platform which man now occupies in these respects: but I mourn, also, that he should thus prostitute his higher nature, and vilely cast away his birthright. I prize the purity of *his* character as highly as I do that of hers. As a moral being, whatever it is morally wrong for her to do, it is morally wrong for him to do. The fallacious doctrine of male and female

virtues has well nigh ruined all that is morally great and lovely in his character.

(pp. 65-66)

Stage and Vincenti (1997) described how the assumption of women's moral superiority was leveraged by Ellen Richards and the proponents of domestic science at the turn of the century to open more opportunities for women in formal education: "Women's moral authority coupled with their domestic skills allowed them to move into a male world and clean it up, as if it were no more than a dirty house" (p. 30).

In the 19th century, then, with the age-old debate about male vs. female intellects and their comparative strengths at full throttle, the culture kept moving ahead. Woody (1929) noted several currents in Victorian thinking on education that eventually helped American culture move away from biological essentialism. One held that female intellect is weaker, but capacity to learn is equal or better. Only lack of educational and occupational opportunity created differences in achievement. These sources cited educators who had had opportunities to compare student groups, some finding women to be more attentive and facile at academic work. Another author, examining the number of "women of note" mentioned in reference works, reframed the question as follows: "is woman innately so inferior to man, or has the attitude of civilization been to close the avenues of eminence against her?" (Castle, as cited in Woody, 1929, p. 92). Anna Garlin Spencer, a teacher/journalist who had been encouraged in her education and authorship by her husband, a clergyman, answered essentially that question in "Woman's Share in Social Culture" (1912/1968). She argued that it was egregiously unfair to make comparisons about intellectual capacity when "most women of talent have had but one hand free with which to work out their ideal conceptions" (p. 106). Noting that society

encouraged male geniuses and inventors who ignored social/familial obligations, she wrote,

No book has yet been written in praise of a woman who let her husband and children starve or suffer while she invented even the most useful things, or wrote books, or expressed herself in art, or evolved philosophic systems. . . . On the contrary, self-expression which has always characterized genius has been met with social disapproval and until very recent times with ostracism fit only for the criminal. (pp. 105-106)

Some authors and speakers thus posed strong opposition to “specialized” education for women and used the ladies magazines and other forums to argue for greater educational opportunity and attack myths about women’s intellect. The most radical stance toward gender difference and education came from authors who held the strongest humanist views. At the beginning of the Victorian age, in 1837, Sarah Moore Grimké, an abolitionist orator, had challenged the conventional wisdom about women’s sphere. Her attack on the status quo, its denial of the enlightenment value of self-improvement, and the denial of equal access to formal education reflected tenets of humanist philosophy by arguing against gender boundaries that conflicted with core democratic principles:

He furnishes himself with a housekeeper, whose chief business is in the kitchen, or the nursery. And whilst he goes abroad and enjoys the means of improvement afforded by collision of intellect with cultivated minds, his wife is condemned to draw nearly all her instruction from books, if she has time to pursue them: and if not, from her meditations, whilst engaged in those domestic duties, which are necessary for the comfort of her lord and master. (1838/1968, p. 57)

Godey's also took up the case against sexism on the grounds that it denied women an equal share in the mind's "infinite capacity for improvement" (Kraditor, 1968, p. 40). A column in *Godey's* called "Modern Female Education" (January 1842), specifically referring to women and the working classes, argued, "It is the privilege of *all* to ask for knowledge, and the duty of *all* to 'give it to every one that asketh'" (Taistro, 1842, p. 190). The article argued that the only limitations on individual aspiration should come from nature (God-given limitations on one's capacity to learn) and the humility one should impose on one's self.

Victorian self-help sources were saturated with rhetoric that advanced humanist principles beyond individual fulfillment to the fulfillment of national destiny. Thompson (1947) cited a popular maxim used in the magazines to remind readers that learning was training for good citizenship: "Education is the cheapest defense of a nation" (p. 27). The ultimate goal of education was formation of strong character, which was circumscribed by the mores of the time but also defined by "well-roundedness." Liberal education has been criticized for its potentials for "elitism" (Jones, 1992; Lazere, 1992). However, enthusiasm for the liberal arts was balanced by humanist principles of democracy, and, as will be explained later, did not prevent progressive activism.

Sargent (1899) admonished household educators whose approach over-privileged a certain canon of knowledge: "Those who try to fill their little children's minds with 'great thoughts' and who teach them to meditate upon the great realities of life, thinking thereby to make them grand and great, are not only defeating their own ends, but are destroying the foundations of future possibility" (p. 58). For the humanist Sargent, human potential must be seen as a balance among traits of mind, body, and character,

and it must be assumed for all. A passage that can best be summarized as an early version of “a mind is a terrible thing to waste” illustrates his point:

Better a thousand times bestow your tenderest care upon an idiot, better believe that you hold the bud of genius and awake to bitter disappointment, than to learn in the end that you have failed to do your duty, and that a genius grand and awful like a fallen temple lies at your feet in the pitiful impotence of manifest but unused power. (p. 52)

These principles of humanist education for individuals were frequently linked directly to the national interest, with both genders playing different but essential parts. Catharine Beecher (1841) wrote,

The formation of the moral and intellectual character of the young is committed mainly to the female hand. The mother writes the character of the future man; the sister bends the fibres that hereafter are the forest tree; the wife sways the heart, whose energies may turn for good or for evil the destinies of a nation. Let the woman of a country be made virtuous and intelligent, and the men will certainly be the same. (p. 13)

Sargent (1899) argued that national success lay not in the “great men” who served as examples in books such as his, but in the “toiling, puffing steam that drags the train” (p. 56). His metaphors again mix the material with the intellectual and spiritual: “What a nation needs is honest toilers; intelligent and scholarly farmers; cautious, scientific, and temperate railroad engineers, learned blacksmiths, and healthy, intelligent, and pious wood choppers” (p. 56). Nurtured by informal learning, individuals could fill up their own hearts and minds and then fulfill their responsibility to fuel the nation’s intellectual, economic, and spiritual progress.

Humanist Learning Around the House: Empirical Perspectives

The works of Csikszentmihalyi in psychology provide an empirical vocabulary for an essentially humanist philosophy. A core concept in Csikszentmihalyi's research is that the healthy personality depends on reasonable balance between two complementary principles, *integration* and *differentiation*. Merging the results of his research with influences from Dewey and Searle in *The Meaning of Things* (1981/1989), Csikszentmihalyi explained the complementarity of the two aspects of human development:

On the one hand, persons must discover the limits of their being, by expressing the purposes and potentials inherent in the individual organism they inhabit. This involves the ability to control the environment, others, and oneself by cultivating purposive habits of life through which one in-habits the world (Dewey, 1934, p. 104).

Only through self-control, through shaping events to one's intentions, can one learn who one is and what one is capable of. On the other hand, people know, consciously or unconsciously, how fragile and insignificant they ultimately are. Thus one also must find ways to establish links between one's self and the far more vast purposes in the environment: other persons, groups, or the great patterns of the cosmos. (p. 39)

Developing Individuality

Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton's (1981/1989) analysis of their 315 participants' responses isolated categories of meaning that reflect individuals' differentiation, the unique qualities that separate individuals from their social context or make them stand out in some way from other people. In this multigenerational study, objects were found to serve more or less differentiating purposes for different age groups: "Meaning for the young seems to arise from active involvement with objects that define the

boundaries of the self; for adults, it tends to follow from a more passive involvement with things that expand the boundaries of the self to include relationships with other people” (p. 112).

Throughout the lifespan, people can “stamp their identity” on things, things becoming “charged with the energy of the agent” (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981/1989, p. 9), as when labor is invested in repairing or otherwise changing a thing. In one of the participating families, a wooden chest was mentioned as a significant object. It was sanded by the father of the family and painted by the mother in acts of “appropriating” the object and “stamping the identity of the owner on its appearance” (p. 62). In another participant response, a self-identified “junkie/garbage freak” mentioned a door he had constructed. His remarks about the door were included in a category of responses in which objects served as “the embodiment of a personal accomplishment” (p. 61). Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton claimed, however, that objects don’t simply *embody* in a static fashion. In interaction with things, individuals learn something about themselves; set and refine goals; accept or reject social conventions; and perhaps most important of all, have outlets for the free allocation of psychic energy.

Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981/1989) argued that this free use of psychic energy forms the very basis of personhood. As a way of explaining both the nature and importance of individuals’ free use of their own psychic energy, the authors reviewed psychiatric literature describing a constellation of pathologies arising from the lack of freedom or excesses of freedom. For example, directing psychic energy in such a way that leads to over-differentiation and psychic chaos may eventually dissolve an individuals’ sense of meaning and purpose; the individual feels too disconnected from larger social contexts and loses any sense of “permanence.” On the other hand, too much

control over one's psychic energy from sources in the social context can lead to a different form of alienation and a sense of futility. Citing a previous study (Sherman & Newman, 1977-78) and extrapolating from responses that show objects as embodiments of past and present relationships, Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton speculated that in institutional environments like nursing homes, where very few objects have personal value to the occupants, have an over-integrating effect: "depriving an older person of such objects might involve the destruction of [the] self" (p. 102).

The Meaning of Things (1981/1989) echoed a few of the ideas in Csikszentmihalyi's later work called *Flow, The Psychology of Optimal Experience* (1990). Csikszentmihalyi's theory of flow rests on his observations that personality for significant numbers of individuals in Western culture is characterized by mood swings between boredom (apathy) and anxiety. Optimal experience or flow, a state of total absorption in an activity after which an individual can assess the quality of the experience and the enjoyment derived from it—isn't achieved unless situation-person or object-person interaction occurs in a way that balances abilities and stimulation, intentions and use of psychic energy. Interaction with objects, such as in working on them, "cultivating" them, "tending" them, or collecting them (all words emerging from the interviews), can create flow opportunities, which in turn lends structure to personality and over time increases the complexity of individual personality (see *Creativity: Flow and the Psychology of Discovery and Invention*, 1996). Home presents one setting very conducive to flow activity because at home, an individual can "make a world . . . create a material environment that embodies what he or she considers significant" (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981/1989, p. 123).

The importance of such experiences, then, isn't in their occasional occurrence but in the way they are actively cultivated throughout the lifespan. The home has the potential to work either for or against this principle. In this way, Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981/1989) formulated their conclusion that "the material environment that surrounds us is rarely neutral; it either helps the forces of chaos that make life random and disorganized or it helps to give purpose and direction to one's life" (p. 17). Other authors have taken a similar position. Gallagher (1993) extended the point to connect domestic structures and objects most directly to flow. She argued that "whether it is a manicure salon or a physics laboratory, a kitchen or a cockpit, most of us . . . depend on places to provide the external framework that helps us structure our inner lives and bring about flow" (p. 172).

Integrating with Family and Community

The differentiation process just discussed is only half the equation of meaningful individuality in Csikszentmihalyi's theory, just as it is in humanist educational philosophy; it "still needs other people to give it meaning" (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981/1989). In *The Meaning of Things*, some objects enhanced their owners' sense of separateness or superiority, as in objects kept for status or as tools of hedonistic pursuits. More often, however, things symbolized interpersonal connections and responsibilities by making concrete the similarities between the owner and others: their "shared descent, religion, ethnic origin, or lifestyle" (pp. 38-39), anything symbolic of the owner's integration with a social context. Acts of preserving or nurturing household belongings, as illustrated by the participants who had kept plants alive or avoided breaking family heirlooms, echoed the nurturing of human connections: "A china cup preserved over a generation is a victory of human purpose over chaos, an accomplish-

ment to be quietly cherished, something to be 'kind of proud' of" (p. 83). Moreover, in this study, objects were repeatedly interpreted to be links between generations and the accumulated wisdom of the past. This pattern in the responses supported the authors' claim that household objects help establish links between the fragile self and "more vast purposes in the environment: other persons, groups, or the great patterns of the cosmos" (p. 27).

Out of the data emerged two specific participant types, whom Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981/1989) labeled "Warm" and "Cool" to suggest the degree of descriptiveness and attachment exhibited in the participants' comments about their households. The authors concluded that participants who attached warm emotional meanings to home experienced an important set of meanings not available to others, which in turn correlated with closeness and satisfaction in family relationships. In a comparison of five of the warmest and coolest participants out of 39 participants total, more Cools indicated experiencing marital problems; 60% expressed goals of escape from elements of their current lives, in contrast to 35% of Warms. Another finding, which will be explored in more detail in the next section, was that a greater percentage of Warms expressed "productive" goals than did Cools, goals defined in the study as desire to improve the self or improve life for others. Cools more frequently expressed self-gratification and pleasure goals.

The difference between warm and cool relationships with things and with people was best illustrated in some of the individual participants' stories. Some participants in Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton's study (1981/1989) had trouble identifying any particular "specialness" in their household objects. Resisting the impulse to argue any cause/effect relationship between object relations and better or worse psychological ad-

justment, since they could not measure any differences in facets of adjustment, the authors noted the apparently healthy psyche of a woman with no close object relationships: she “lives in a world to which she is well-adjusted; she can draw sustenance and comfort from it. The objects she owns keep her warm, well fed, and relaxed. The intentions in which she invests psychic energy tend to be fulfilled, as far as such things can be, and so her sense of self is sturdy and resilient” (p. 104). Although the woman’s lack of descriptiveness and adjectives of attachment to any objects could not be interpreted as evidence of adjustment difficulties, the authors noted that the participant also reported few close human relationships. They juxtaposed her responses with those of a second woman whose living space was filled with objects significant in terms of her family’s past and present. The difference, the authors noted, was the two women’s degree of integration with others:

Compared to the second woman . . . a whole dimension of experience seems to be so atrophied that it is missing—that of the experience of being part of goals larger than herself. There is nothing mystical, or metaphorical, about such an experience. The personal self emerges out of feedback to intentional actions; similarly, the self that includes a larger whole emerges out of feedback to actions motivated by goals of a collectivity. . . . The second woman in this case differs from the first in that her home environment reflects an expanded boundary of the self, one that includes a number of past and present relationships. The meanings of the objects she is surrounded by are signs of her ties to this larger system of which she is a part. She is actively attached to this family system through the psychic energy allocated to the objects; whenever she attends to them, her relationships are activated in conscious-

ness. The belongings she cherishes reflect the goal of her family, both living and dead, which motivates her daily existence. (p. 104)

While detachment from material objects was in no way generalized to suggest a cause of personality pathology or dysfunction for any participant, some individual responses within families expressed clear negative affective repercussions of material environments they perceived negatively (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981/1989). One parent, for example, expressed feelings of continual uncertainty about where she “is going next” (p. 128) (in terms of her general life plan), and she reported frequent moves and unfinished renovation projects. She described the result as “a rather transient look” in her homes (p. 128). Her son described his home environment as “okay. That’s all . . . my mom’s always saying she wants to move out. She’s always changing things around” (p. 128). Other participants attached more explicit feelings of loneliness, alienation, and fear to their households, demonstrating that material environment can be a “powerful medium for communicating emotional states” (p. 128). The affective dimension of objects was rarely a result of purely aesthetic factors; the degree of attachment and the nature of affective response were most often based on what objects said to participants about their relationships and their own identities.

A final way in which objects serve a developmental function is as a tool of cultural evolution. Culture is transmitted as people use objects in culturally appropriate ways; one learns to play social roles through material objects. New inventions/objects inspire new forms and patterns of thought, which in turn influence how people relate to each other and how they perceive themselves. Examples of this principle will be provided as this discussion makes a transition from individual identity in general to gender identity in particular.

Forming Gender Identity

Tisdell (2001) described contemporary trends in understanding the development of gender identity: “Feminist poststructuralism emphasizes the socially constructed nature of our identity around structural systems of power and privilege. Further, our identity is constantly shifting, particularly around our understanding of our ‘positionality’—our consciousness of our race, gender, class, and so on” (p. 275). In *The Meaning of Things* (1981/1989), Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton noted the prevalence of two competing views at the time their study was published. One held that gender roles are adapted in cultures to create divisions of labor and responsibility that make sense for the culture at large (the Functional view). The other, which they refer to as the Conflict perspective and which coincides with Tisdell’s description of poststructuralism, examines ways in which gender norms are imposed on the less powerful gender for the primary benefit of the more powerful one. Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton argued that neither view is sufficient in itself to explain gender identity; that extremes of social constructionism ignore the important role objects play in shaping gender roles and fail to fully account for differences in men’s and women’s preferences for and interaction with things.

Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981/1989) cited history to support their contention that gender roles are to some degree shaped by the material objects available in a culture. For example, women once could only express themselves through a slowly-changing and limited array of objects related to home, garden, and child rearing. As new objects were invented, “feminine” tasks such as crafts and household labor became less popular and less necessary. As women were forced to learn how to interact with new things, they began to define themselves in very different ways. The 19th century in

America provides an excellent example of the authors' contention; it was a time of unprecedented invention, with contraceptives and convenience appliances being only two of the new things important enough to change individual lives and gender boundaries.

Buehr (1965) compiled a history of Victorian household invention in various categories: kitchen, electrical, plumbing and heating, transportation, shopping, leisure, and others. He attempted to help contemporary readers "picture" the contents of 19th century homes and the impact those objects had on the "average" American, a population he admitted was difficult to describe due to regional and demographic differences across a vast geographical landscape, along with rapid social and technological change. In the book's foreword, Walter Miller noted a truth about American culture regardless of geographical or demographic differences: "Americans had come to understand what an inventor is and what his prerogatives are . . . Although every industry and institution benefited, the profoundest influence was felt in the home. Imagine . . . the upsurge in domestic morale when Walter Hunt re-invented the safety pin and Elias Howe and Isaac Singer developed the sewing machine" (pp. v-vi). Leavitt's (2002) study of domestic advice books and periodicals from the early Victorian era to the present noted that the domestic advisors tended to be forward-looking, advertising and describing the benefits of new inventions and styles over old.

Leavitt's (2002) study explored gender differences in preference of household objects. Leavitt noted that 19th century self-help publications reflected a definite gendering of interior decoration. The conventional wisdom was that the household should be appointed primarily to suit feminine taste. Leavitt's analysis demonstrated that the dining room, for example, was popularly seen as the best concession to more masculine taste in colors and design, a compromise made acceptable only if women could control the look of

the drawing room: “This trade-off would allow women to make the rest of the house more feminine by ceding this one room” (p. 27).

Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton’s study (1981/1989) identified clear gender differences in participants’ style preferences and their interpretations of household things. Women more often identified themselves with objects of “contemplation” and “expression,” such as sculpture (25.9% to 10.6%), photographs (30.5% to 14.2%), plates (20.1% to 7.8%), and plants (23% to 5%). The majority of women identified the kitchen as their favorite space in the household, with explanations clustering into categories such as the amount of time spent in the kitchen, use of the kitchen as a base of household operations, and use of the kitchen as an outlet for thinking and venting. Women were unique in their descriptions of spaces and objects in the way they ascribed specific moods to colors and interiors and the way they connected interior moods to relationships with spouses and other family members. Recognition of a room’s “personality,” which included use of personality type descriptors like “cheerful” and “comfortable,” frequently prompted extensions of interior features to descriptions of emotional satisfaction and familial harmony.

Another interesting finding was that although women expressed less emotional *dependence* on material surroundings than men, women evidenced a greater degree of “empathy and responsiveness toward the inanimate environment based on exchange and sensuous participation” (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981/1989, p. 143). One of Leavitt’s (2002) historical examples also supports the idea that women experience various forms of affection related to objects. She cited the author of *The New Encyclopedia of Domestic Economy* (1872), Elizabeth Ellet, and her advice on choosing pictures for a room: “The subject must be such as we can truly sympathize with, some-

thing to awaken our admiration, reverence, or love” (p. 35). There is evidence to suggest, then, that women extract different symbolic meanings from their things, tending to perceive objects as stand-ins for family memories and expressions of various emotions.

Men in Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton’s (1981/1989) study more often expressed “instrumental” reasons for valuing objects and spaces. Some specific objects with significantly higher percentages of male selection included televisions (29.1% to 14.4%), stereos (28.4% to 16.1%), sports equipment (17.7% to .6%), pets (11.3% to 5.7%), and tools (6.4% to 0%). Not surprisingly, men’s preferred rooms were those that housed useful objects, including basements, recreation rooms, and dens. Considering the conventional wisdom that men’s work is their life, it may be surprising that men expressed a notable lack of attachment to any objects used in or symbolic of their occupations, although men’s object preferences tended to involve “shaping and unilateral control” (p. 143). It should be noted that similar percentages of men and women selected six of the top ten most frequently-mentioned classes of objects: furniture, beds, visual art, collectibles, musical instruments, and books.

Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981/1989) expressed surprise and reflected at some length about their findings:

Sexual stereotypes are very obvious, age-related attitudes are predictable, and many of the values and aspirations expressed by our respondents seem trite in terms of a modern, sophisticated world view . . . we did not hope or expect to find such strongly traditional values reflected in the answers. If these are stressed in our account, it is because the respondents stressed them. The interpretive framework we have used emerged from the data rather than vice versa. (p. 145)

In weighing the influence of social construction in shaping gender identity and individual personality, the authors came to the conclusion that “cultural blueprints” (p. 139) do create predictable behavior patterns. However, in their humanist analysis, “it is still the individual person who is responsible for implementation . . . no one else has full control over the person’s psychic energy” (p. 139).

Domestic Things and Progressive Learning: Demonstrating Social Position/Organizing for Social Change

Progressive educational philosophies are more overtly political than any of the others described so far. Elias and Merriam (1995) described “progressive” pedagogy as being so in the sense of “utilizing education to bring about social, political, and economic changes in society” (p. 139). Since the 19th century, education has been political to varying degrees, and this fact again connects to the idea of human beings as Blank Slates. “Blank slate” was an inevitably “progressive” controlling metaphor for human nature and intellectual life. Pinker (2002) explained:

It aimed to prevent people from slipping into a premature fatalism about preventable social ills. It put a spotlight on the treatment of children, indigenous peoples, and the underclass. The Blank Slate thus became part of a secular faith and appeared to constitute the common decency of the age. (p. 421)

The perfectability of society via science became more and more powerful conventional wisdom, with behaviorism as the primary vehicle for engineering social change. Behaviorists argued that problem behavior is a result of social conditioning; therefore, individual belief, identity, and activity over time were perceived to be less important than general social forces and whole cultures, a trend giving rise to ideas such as compulsory education.

Radical/liberatory forms of education seek to completely transform entire systems, based usually on Freirian principles of “praxis” (see Tisdell & Taylor, 1999). While it shares with liberatory pedagogy the Marxist suspicion of pedagogies that refrain from challenging capitalist social and economic structures (Wilson & Hayes, 2000), *postmodernism* as proscribed in the *Handbook of Adult and Continuing Education 2000* confronts even radical pedagogy’s potential for oppression, and questions the very foundation on which all other pedagogies described so far rest: the belief that “humanity’s story is one of continual progress and improvement” (Brookfield, 2000, p. 45). The humanist faith in human perfectability is rejected because its principle of individuality is rejected as well. Hayes and Hayes edited the handbook—the 16th edition—positing that there is no core self to be discovered or actualized, only local, ever-shifting truths. Though it discards the traditional notion of “self,” along with the assumption that inscriptions on the slate are generally benign unless extreme social pressure inscribes something different, postmodernism represents a logical extreme of blank-slate thinking, according to Pinker (2002). Through the postmodern/radical lenses, the sense of progress through education developed in Victorian living rooms would simply be part of the “conspiracy of the normal” (Wilson & Hayes, p. 27) that creates hegemonic social structures. That lens, however, isn’t a powerful enough microscope to reveal the social dynamics influenced by 19th-century informal educational materials.

19th-Century Progressivism

Earlier in this chapter, the appeal of science to Victorians at a personal level was illustrated, along with the primacy placed on the “useful,” the “functional,” the “pragmatic,” the adjectives that form “the predominant standard for knowledge and science” between 1866 and 1920 (Elias & Merriam, 1995, p. 52). Progressive epistemology was

allied with scientific data-gathering methods, observation, experience, and experiment. According to Elias and Merriam, these principles were joined for the purpose of attaining one overarching goal: “The betterment of the human condition” (p. 46). Although Victorianism is typically associated with authoritarianism, the roots of progressivism were as well-watered by liberal arts and humanism during the 19th century. Victorian society was becoming less bound to authority and more to experience and belief in environmental influence over human behavior. According to Malcolm Knowles in the 20th century, the rise of educator/philosophers like Dewey, who is most closely associated with progressivism, demonstrated that “democratic society was committed to change” (as cited in Elias & Merriam, 1995, p. 50).

This section, however, isn’t about men like Dewey and Knowles who have been lionized in educational histories and philosophies. Instead, it focuses on the mostly female educator/activists whose words were as common as dust in Victorian homes. *Godey’s* “Live and Learn” column (1855) commented that readers “will seldom go into any family without observing *something* that would be worthy of adoption in their own, and when they have found it answer, they will be willing to pass on the advantage to their neighbors, so as not only to live and learn, but also to live and teach” (p. 47).

As Stage and Vincenti (1997) asserted, until the 1980s, the view of historians was that women, domestic life, and progressivism were strangers until they merged during the Suffrage movement. Stage and Vincenti, however, argued that politics and domesticity represented a marriage that lasted throughout the entire Victorian era. If their broad definition of political activism is used, researchers can “get beyond voting and office-holding and include the important work women have done organizing for change” (p. 2).

Teaching about Social Class

Stage and Vincenti (1997) observed that contemporary readings of authors like Catharine Beecher emphasize the way they constructed notions of “the good life,” and thus focus on their complicity in purveying classism and racism. While this now-conventional interpretation reveals part of the picture, it oversimplifies. It conceals the complexity of the attention to class issues in domestic advice resources.

As Leavitt (2002) observed, the domestic advisors tended to assume a white, middle class audience. Immigrant women, if mentioned at all, were usually mentioned in the context of their roles as household help and childcare providers. In addition, it is true that besides the functions already described, household objects did convey middle-class values, such as honesty, piety, modesty, cleanliness, and patriotism. Leavitt offered some examples: “The furniture could speak for the family, declaring that this family believed it was important to keep dry in the rain, to obey the formality of wearing a hat, to leave a calling card, and to provide guests with a place to sit while they waited to be shown into the parlor” (p. 25). Building materials and decorative accessories themselves could mark social class, for example genuine mahogany and walnut woods and horse-hair upholstery marking the house as “upper class.”

Leavitt (2002) noted, however, that many of the women who wrote domestic advice were also organizing “campaigns” of various kinds: education, abolition, temperance, suffrage, immigration. Although Catharine Beecher’s conservatism has already been noted, she too was a campaigner, and one of her central issues was social class stratification. Her *Treatise on Domestic Economy* (1841) included a comparison of the fixed and stratified old-world class system with the new-world mobility and flux with which her readers and their families had to cope. Her *Treatise* described in dramatic terms the

comparative freedom with which “high” and “low” could trade places in the American economy and class system. These reflections prefaced her exploration of the burgeoning demand, but shrinking supply, of domestic labor in America. Whereas in her book the English author Isabella Beeton focused on the effective use of servants, Beecher undertook a serious argument that Americans should look on the bright side of serving themselves.

Her writing, albeit gently, advocated a revolution in personal conduct that would erase some of the most defining differences of attitude and lifestyle that create class stratification. Readers were urged by many writers other than Beecher to drop their pretensions to higher socioeconomic status. Leavitt (2002) described the common refrain in the 19th century as simplicity, frugality, “only what you can afford” (p. 31). While Beecher focused her discussions of class on the health of the democratic system, others focused on more localized, private concerns such as the health of family relationships.

Leavitt (2002) identified Susan Anna Brown as another leading spokesperson on this issue. In books like *Home Topics* and *Mrs. Gilpin’s Frugalities* (1881), Brown argued that “the parlor should be the rallying point in daily family life” (as cited in Leavitt, p. 31). The parlor should house toys, books, and pets; pretentious, protected parlors work against family togetherness and love. Leavitt’s analysis catalogued common ways of personifying the parlor throughout the 19th century; undesirable parlors were “insincere,” “dishonest,” “impractical,” “ostentatious,” and “uncomfortable,” traits the writers linked to gentility and idleness.

Catharine Beecher’s sister, Harriet Beecher Stowe, used her fiction to take up the subject of pretentious interiors and their impact on intimate relationships. Leavitt described Stowe’s works on the subject as “essay after essay detailing the lives of families

who became oppressed by their fancy households in which nobody was comfortable. Stowe attacked the furniture and rugs as a direct cause of family dysfunction” (p. 35). Lending urgency to the issue was the conventional wisdom that larger social problems begin at home with dysfunctional families.

Sometimes appealing directly to upper class women, the mothers who are “most tempted to allow their daughters to grow up with inactive habits” (p. 29). Beecher’s (1841) *Treatise on Domestic Economy* argued that these women should reject inactivity and embrace self-sufficiency; “that their country and the world must look for reformation in this respect” (p. 26). In other words, the fashionable classes should stop *making* it fashionable to denigrate manual labor as “degrading and unbecoming” (p. 26). According to Beecher, the high and low should ALL make their own beds, sweep their own floors, and feed their own families. Beecher wrote that “many mothers among the best educated and most wealthy classes . . . not only know how to do, but actually do, all kinds of domestic work,” (p. 45) and were sending their daughters to school for more formal domestic skills training. Ultimately Beecher connected her argument to the health of the democracy by claiming that the elevation of domestic knowledge to a higher station of importance and dignity was the antidote to the wealthy classes’ detachment from domestic necessity, their pride in being ignorant in domestic matters.

Beecher and Stowe (1869) also wrote of the ignorance and incompetence of much of the immigrant labor pool. However, they speculated, were American families to send their daughters abroad to take up positions as domestic servants, they might not function much better. The blank slate idea is very much present in the authors’ chapter “The Care of Servants.” The problems surrounding domestic labor are attributed to lack of education and training (how can women train servants in matters in which they may be

inadequately trained themselves?) as well as what Beecher and Stowe saw as the retention of too many Old World social structures in the New World: “The condition of domestic service . . . still retains about it something of the influences from feudal times, and from the near presence of slavery in neighboring States” (p. 318). Their evidence was the wholesale rejection of domestic employment by American girls, who preferred physically grueling factory work to any “implication of inferiority” (p. 322).

In teaching readers to deal effectively with household help, the authors rebutted common complaints about servants one by one—ingratitude, instability, “surprise . . . that servants should insist on having the same human wants as themselves” (p. 323)—and identified the root cause of most of these problems to be the social hierarchy that governed employers’ thinking and influenced their treatment of household employees. Beecher and Stowe asked,

What is the relation of servant to employer in a democratic country? . . . The carpenter comes into your house to put up a set of shelves—the cook comes into your kitchen to cook your dinner. You never think that the carpenter owes you any more respect than you owe to him because he is in your house doing your behests; he is your fellow-citizen, you treat him with respect, you expect to be treated with respect by him. You have a claim on him that he shall do your work according to your directions—no more. (pp. 324-325)

Believing in the ideal of the comparatively class-less America, Beecher and Stowe (1869) saw domestic service as “An expedient, a stepping-stone to something higher,” not “a profession to live and die in” (p. 321).

Considering the ways in which Beecher sometimes seemed to circumscribe women’s choices, can she be considered progressive? Pugh (1983) described Beecher’s approach as

one of subversion over direct confrontation. Beecher had political aspirations she tried to fulfill with rhetorical opposition to “extremes” of women’s rights, while at the same time she attempted to effect change for women and change in the American class system. Pugh argued that her contradictions need not classify her writings as powerless. Her domestic advice merged home and family in an attempt at “harmonizing such national interests as stability and order while at the same time satisfying people’s, especially women’s, individual needs . . . [it was an] effort to achieve both cultural cohesiveness and female hegemony” (p. 56). Taking on a difficult task while women were often considered selfish and unnatural if not self-sacrificial, Beecher argued the *superiority* of feminine domestic virtues and argued that men should also uphold them, but could not while grasping for success and attention in the marketplace. Focusing as it does on the masculine dilemma of attraction to, and fear of, women’s *power* to “civilize” and deplete male autonomy and individualism, Pugh’s reading conveys a sense that Beecher’s arguments were more radical than typically thought, representing a struggle for women’s dominance of cultural and personal realms. For men, female control of the domestic sphere inspired fears of emasculation that required sublimation. Women’s “civilizing” powers threatened to restrain men and force them to meet responsibilities they “disdained for themselves—morals, children, domestic routine, the arts, and manners” (p. 60). It was only later, as Modernism displaced Victorianism, that the public sphere with all its masculine connotations was deemed the only realm worth having any power over—and the domestic sphere was remodeled according to masculine design principles.

Domestic Entrées into Social Activism

Progressive ideology was advanced more directly in a variety of Victorian venues. Called a new type of American University (Case & Case, 1948), one of the most popular sources of informal education in the 19th century was Chautauqua. Originating in 1874 in Chautauqua, New York, the Chautauqua circuit gained momentum and geographical coverage throughout the century, feeding the Victorian appetite for knowledge, uplift, enlightenment, and entertainment all in one program. Case and Case described Chautauquas as “the poor man’s college . . . perhaps the one and only time in history when the assemblies of ‘good’ people were more fun than the circuses” (p. 20). Chautauqua assemblies evolved to offer a vast array of acts, mostly evangelical oratory early on and, eventually, elaborate stage shows, political oratory, and forums on the most contentious issues of the day. Besides actors, humorists, musicians, and poets, performers included presidents, congressmen, and social and educational reformers, some already famous and some who became famous as a result of travelling the Chautauqua circuit.

Attending Chautauqua was voluntary and widely seen as more democratic than formal education. While colleges were exclusive, the Chautauquas offered open enrollment, so to speak, for women, businessmen, and others largely shut out of institutions of higher education (Case & Case, 1948). Thus, a broad audience was available for social reformers like Cary Chapman Catt and Jane Addams, as well as many other women whose speeches were featured attractions on Chautauqua stages. An account of life on the circuit by a Chautauqua manager recalled the diversity of views offered for consumption by the participants:

We offered every political and social hue . . . all had a fair hearing on some Chautauqua platform . . . If one goes back over the list of speakers and the record of gate

receipts, one striking fact emerges. In what today is considered the conservative rural stronghold of the midwest, liberal speakers, the ones who attacked the status quo, who did verbal battle with the “interest,” got larger fees and packed more customers into the tents, than did the more conservative thinkers. (Harrison, 1958, pp. 118-120)

An Iowa newspaper provided examples of attempts to open the gates to participants from situations other than middle class, financially comfortable families. Vileta (2001), looking back at the first Chautauqua held in Tama County, Iowa, in 1902, reported that evening sessions were free, discounts for early ticket purchases were offered, and the \$1.75 admission fee was reduced to a dime for children from the Tama/Toledo Indian school.

As progressive as they were in some regards, the Chautauquas never strayed entirely from core domestic principles. Back stage, the promoters called them the “Mother, Home, and Heaven numbers” (Case & Case, 1947, p. 71; Harrison, 1958). The female performers were mainly married women orators teaching about and celebrating the morality of domesticity. According to Harrison, another Chautauqua mainstay was what the Victorians called “uplift,” better known to contemporary audiences as motivational speaking. Harrison described the motivational speakers’ approach: “These merchants of perpetual sunshine stressed the satisfactions to be attained from lives of rugged honesty, frugality, chastity, forbearance, neighborliness, and mutual helpfulness” (p. 136). The motivational speakers transmitted traditional cultural values as well as optimism and practical how-to information. Titles such as “How To” be happy, make a happy home, lose weight, avoid the evils of the world (as in a cautionary presentation called “Mantraps of the City”) illustrate the timeless popularity of some self-help topics. In ad-

dition, lacing entertaining production values with traditional moralism made it possible for participants to view more ideologically daring shows and enjoy them without anyone questioning their respectability (Case & Case, 1947; Harrison, 1958).

The power of Chautauqua as a public-opinion shaper and cultural transmitter can only be assumed, but their power to whet participants' thirst for information was undeniable, according to Case and Case (1947): "Even from the beginning the devotees of Chautauqua were hungry for more Leaving the assembly, back home in their relatively empty homes, they wrote back to learn what books they should read during the winters" (p. 15). The original assemblies eventually spawned a four-year home correspondence course that mimicked college with mottos, diploma, and other trappings. The course, eventually named Chautauqua University, was authorized in 1883 to grant degrees. By 1900, the Chautauqua Press was selling a monthly magazine and complete home study materials in every academic area in addition to the summer assemblies. Reflecting on the elitism of formal education at the time, Case and Case claimed that to participants who might otherwise have been shut out of continuing education for whatever reason, "Correspondence study was a gift from heaven" (p. 15).

Perhaps connected to the popularity of Chautauquas, a late 19th century trend described by Green (1983) saw middle-class women getting instruction in other informal settings. The classroom was most often the home of someone offering to share specialized knowledge or skill. Green cited diaries in which women recounted going to a reading class, astronomy study group, or a workshop in one of the hundreds of popular crafts of the day. Women also attended lectures and classes at female academies. Ultimately, women came to believe that they had an imperative to learn for learning's sake, to learn

for self-fulfillment, to learn in order to teach their children, and also to learn to make a difference outside their own households.

Anne B. Hamman (1914) argued that no homemaker was ever *just* a homemaker. She tied traditional domestic principles directly to collective political action, the right to vote, the right to formal education, and, in other writings, women's right to choose marriage or choose "useful labor and self-support" (p. 120) outside the home instead: Women's sphere is the home. Granted, gladly. But . . . there is not a phase of home-making in our complex modern life that does not bring a woman into contact with the business of the outside world. . . . This means dealing with the beef trust, the ice trust, the milk trust, the health board, the makers of pure food laws. It is her duty to educate her little children. She is then concerned with educational boards and commissions, with the sanitation of schoolhouses, with the laws regulating immigration, and the treatment of contagious diseases . . . The problems of the home can not be settled by the individual woman, working for her own husband, her own home, her own children. They can only be solved by all women—and men—working together for all homes and all children. This means not less motherhood, but broader motherhood, for women. Thousands of women who have no children are doing mother-work in the world for everybody's children. No mother heart will be afraid of the ballot if with it she can bring about better conditions for the upcoming generations. (as cited in Woody, 1929, pp. 119-120)

Stage and Vincenti (1997) noted that in the latter part of the 19th century, the activist desire to "bring about better conditions" made science in the home even more popular and necessary. Household manuals began emphasizing the basics of bacteriology and the importance of following basic rules of prevention in order to keep homes free of dis-

ease, a major threat at various points throughout the century. Stage and Vincenti cited a two-part goal of authors who composed science texts for home use: to convey practical information to the uneducated and to “convey the complexity and fascination of bacteriology” (p. 44). Germs and diseases served as the strongest impetus for home study, where women could learn classification skills and experimental procedures using petri dishes and microscopes. The chemical processes and hygiene of canning fruits and vegetables was another popular topic of domestic science (as it was called by the turn of the century) that, in addition, served as a source of income for women.

Stage and Vincenti’s (1997) discussion of manuals and early textbooks countered the view that education related to home matters was lacking intellectual challenge or served only as busy work to keep women occupied and out of the public sphere. The authors cited an argument between a teacher and a male bacteriologist regarding a Cornell reading course for farmers’ wives. The teacher solicited the bacteriologist’s help, saying, “I would like to learn about the bacteriology of a dishcloth so that I may explain to farm women the importance of its cleanliness.” The bacteriologist’s reply was, “Oh, they do not need to learn about bacteria. Teach them to keep a dishcloth clean because it is nicer that way” (as cited in Stage & Vincenti, 1997, p. 43). Here, then, is anecdotal evidence of informal use of scientific method for progressive aims, not simply household edification or beautification, however much “women’s work” was sometimes treated with condescension then as now.

Looking past the Victorian era to the period between 1920 and 1945 is instructive because as physical science waned and behavioral science took on increasing influence and popularity, informal study at home reflected the new theories and still served as an outlet from home into more public concerns. Behaviorism, Dewey’s developmental theo-

ries, and the nature vs. nurture debate were all brewing; home economists, professionals in what was then a formal area of academic study, organized informal study groups in which women could discuss their efforts to try new theories at home: "The mothers' groups organized by home economists nationwide represent one of the earliest attempts to educate large numbers of homemakers and should be considered an important and successful demonstration of adult education" (Stage & Vincenti, 1997, p. 72). Later in the century, study groups gave women opportunities to read the latest child development literature critically to compare it with their own experiences and to have a forum for expressing their opinions. In spite of the still-powerful emphasis on the sacredness of motherhood and domestic life, the practical knowledge developed in the domestic sphere was, ironically, more and more discounted with the privileging of science and "expert" knowledge, except by women themselves: "Despite the experts' characteristic disregard for the experiences and insights of mothers in their formulations of optimal child-rearing strategies, mothers stubbornly clung to maternal experience as a valuable source of knowledge" (Stage & Vincenti, p. 66). Emphasis was on correct vs. incorrect childrearing practices as proven by science, along with the grave consequences to society of bad parental (especially maternal) choices.

The groups' discussion themes, however, eventually broadened. Women began to argue for fathers' involvement in childrearing, discuss their marriage relationships, and debate the role of mothers in the home vs. mothers pursuing other interests. Stage and Vincenti (1997) pointed out an interesting irony in that, although no coherent feminist agenda can be attributed to the groups, studying about the home led women outside of the home in their ongoing pursuit of intellectual expansion: "Mothers were encouraged to think of themselves as individuals with rights as well as responsibilities, although

those rights were limited by the confines of traditional family life. For some women, child study work fulfilled intellectual and personal needs that could not be met by family life” (p. 71). Informal education, then, demonstrated “andragogy in action” almost a hundred years before Malcolm Knowles’ (1984) publication of that title; learning was based on the participants’ own experience and internal resources, and the learning situation arose from their motivation to solve specific problems.

Formal Education as Social Issue

Because of the progressive instinct present in 19th century American culture, domestic knowledge came to be seen as too important to confine exclusively to the home. Leavitt (2002) noted that it was on one hand a *vehicle* for women to get their voices heard in public regardless of the topic. At the same time, it was thought that women’s specialized knowledge could “benefit the larger world” (p. 58). This section provides a brief overview of the debate and evolution of thinking about greater access to formal higher education for women and whether or not greater access solved, or caused, social problems.

Thompson (1947) identified women’s education as *the* social issue most in vogue throughout much of the 19th century. Woody (1929) described several simultaneous and contending trains of thought regarding education for women, reflected in education journals and the popular press texts in informal domestic education. By 1837, a popular target for the popular press’s mockery were the feminine “accomplishments” that had dominated the formal curriculum and turned out vain debutantes of the type associated with Jane Austen novels. These were the young women who could produce decorative needlework and crafts and favor suitors with songs and French phrases, but, as Woody summarized the argument, couldn’t produce evidence of good moral reasoning or logical

thought. According to Thompson (1947), these fictional finishing-school heroines role modeled the “gilded cheats” (p. 34) of the parlors, through which young women put the value of their education to the test by working to catch a husband.

“Finishing” of this sort came to be viewed as trivial alongside images of women as divinely-appointed shapers of civilization, the image that came to dominate the popular press. This view was often paired with the argument cited earlier that the intellectual capacities of women were superior in some ways to men’s. Thompson (1947) cited authors who went so far as to argue that education for girls was more important than education for boys because of mothers’ greater influence on children compared to that of fathers. Pestalozzi wrote, “As a mother is the first to nourish her child’s body, so should she, by God’s order, be the first to nourish his mind” (*The Education of Man*, p. 26). A book called *College Man and College Woman* agreed, pointing out that “it is a function for which women are by nature and taste eminently fitted, and for which most manly men are conspicuously unfit” (as cited in Woody, 1929, pp. 101-102). Thus began a movement to offer “solid” formal higher education that was more equivalent to that available to men. The word *solid* is an important pattern noted by Woody because of its repetitive association with a “masculine” curriculum and its contrast with “feminine” interests.

The idea of cultivating women’s intellectual capacities created a counter-movement promoting more practical education as described earlier in this chapter—the development of skills useful in the home or in gainful employment, such as scientific home-style cooking in public eateries. Critical assessments of the impracticality of formal schooling led to a movement to make educational institutions more like home—that is, to move the informal curriculum of the type delivered by effective mothers, outside home to for-

mal settings where women would be the logical choice of instructors. Baker (1997), in an article paralleling the magazines' rhetorical zeal for educational reform with the language of religious proselytization, cited a *Godey's* "Editor's Table" from 1852 that melded the ideas of maternal nurture and formalized training. The editors petitioned Congress to set aside several million acres of land for training schools for female teachers in every state in the union: "In the influence of intelligent and pure-minded women lies the moral power which alone can give safety and permanence to our institutions, prosperity and true glory to our nation." No great leap of imagination is required to understand how it came to be that teaching was seen as a woman's profession.

The teacher education movement sometimes went so far as to position itself as a single woman's alternative to the doctrines of wife- and motherhood. In an 1844 issue, *Godey's* dramatized women's options through the narrative of a jilting. The editorial offers readers not just a consolation prize to the woman who hasn't yet caught her man, but a treasure presented as better than having a home and family. The article advised, "Crush his wicked letter and cast it from you . . . A brighter torch than that of Hyman is kindled at a higher altar to light your onward path to the region where kindred angels wait" (as cited in Baker, 1997).

Some issues of *Godey's* explored other spheres where women were doing important work outside the home. The July 1855 "Editor's Table" took readers on a tour of Harper Books, which employed over 100 women and met with the editors' approval as a workplace for women, as they were employed at no cost to "delicacy or self respect" (p. 467). The remark suggested that for some, the idea of outside employment wasn't offensive so much as fear of feminine qualities being compromised in a life outside the home. Women's practical domestic knowledge was often associated with advocacy for expanded

opportunity, however, as in an interesting book review praising an author who called for men to accept and encourage women to pursue careers in medicine where their intuitive insights and domestic experiences would be highly valuable commodities. The *Godey's* editors asked readers to consider “how much depends upon diet, upon that fostering which lies beyond the sphere of the physician and his oversight, and which women alone can rightly understand . . . who can doubt the importance of the female physician” (July 1855, p. 176).

In 1869, the Iowa State Agricultural College (ISU) opened; women could enroll in the same courses as men. By 1871, the college began to offer coursework in domestic science. Ever since ISU and other Midwestern land grant colleges, as well as various congressional acts, supplied funding to create departments of domestic arts and science, the curriculum has paralleled broader social trends. Along with issues of funding and government control, two themes have propelled curricular trends in domestic education: economic (what programs will best prepare women and men to be productive in their social roles) and emotional (what the culture believed at any given time to be the most fearsome potential cause of social collapse). Two opposing philosophical foundations of domestic education, then, have fought to dominate: home economics offering liberal arts coursework in critical thinking and decision-making versus home economics offering information and technique—vocational preparation—which further broke down into arguments about what women’s vocations should be. Should home economics prepare women for paid employment or household maintenance? (Stage & Vincenti, 1997, p. 86). The curriculum arguments echoed old debates about women’s sphere and whether a higher calling came from inside or outside the home.

With women's attempts to organize and legitimize domestic education programs outside the home under its various names, the field of domestic science developed a wide field of vision and a socially-transformative sense of purpose that helped launch women into public policy realms. In the era of Ellen Richards, the first female degree holder from MIT and the woman called the "Mother of Home Economics" (Stage & Vincenti, 1997), public policy projects seeded by women's domestic grounding included the following:

- Applying scientific methods (in which Ellen Richards had a passionate interest) to change basic domestic activities—such as preparing and eating and food—in order to better society. Municipal housekeeping experiments such as the New England Kitchen of the 1890s aimed to offer cheap, nutritious carryout food, which proponents believed would play a part in reducing alcoholism among the poor.

- Disseminating knowledge about public health practices; private homes become command central in a crusade for health education.

- Extending practical bacteriology throughout households to sanitation, food preparation, and decoration, and then outside homes with efforts to enlist public policy makers in the war on germs; fighting for revised city housing codes where landlords were lax on overseeing basic sanitary conditions.

- Democratizing information resources: home economics extension efforts provided informal education for those who couldn't afford periodicals, doctors, and other sources of knowledge utilized regularly by the middle class

- Improving child health awareness via municipal facilities like school libraries and recreational facilities

- Preparing women for and opening up new opportunities for women to establish careers outside their homes. Early on, women applied home economics backgrounds mainly on three career tracks: hospital dietetics, business and industry test kitchens and recipe-creation, and extension agency nutrition education and related areas.

These are examples of ways women like Richards attempted to broaden the definition of political power through action and theory. She coined a term she unsuccessfully tried to popularize as the new name for domestic science: “euthenics” (not to be confused with eugenics), the science of controllable environment. Stage and Vincenti (1997) paraphrased and explained her stance as the belief that “social change could be produced by individuals acting decisively to alter their environment” (p. 27). Cornell is the sole Ivy League university with a College of Human Ecology, whose description is useful in gauging how the field has evolved under many names, as well as how it continues progressive traditions:

Human ecology (a.k.a. human sciences, family and consumer sciences, human-environmental sciences) is the study of the physical, cultural, economic, social, and aesthetic environment that surrounds human beings from birth to death. Its . . . mission is to improve the human condition and to empower people to better their situation for themselves. (Schneider, 2000, p. A18)

Material Things and the Progressive Instinct: Empirical Perspectives

In a study of Victorian household objects and advisers, Green (1983) focused on women’s sphere as a construction of capitalist hegemony. Women’s moral counterpoint, he argued, was actually powerless, because it was invested with responsibility for the nation’s morality and served as the scapegoat for social problems. Merish (2000) authored a book arguing that “sentimental caretaking” (p. 5) enacts and contains feelings

of political powerlessness and that Victorian domestic education was entirely about class self-definition and differentiation with others.

Merish (2000) conducted an analysis of 19th-century popular press, philosophical, and fiction texts. In her study, she rejected the idea that “satisfaction and ethical value lie in the voluntary, unregulated, deeply felt exchanges of interpersonal life” (p. 3). She called the belief that they *do* the “fantasy of intimate possession” (p. 3) and used her research to try to defeat it on the grounds summarized below.

1. There is no such thing as taste and attachment to material objects that arise naturally. Like the free market, household consumption patterns are created and sustained by laws and economic policies.
2. Intimacy with household objects promotes feelings of “proprietary power” (p. 4) over things, the sentimental materialism Merish refers to in her title. Proprietary power is the cornerstone of the capitalist system. Therefore, any tool contributing to the reproduction of capitalist norms contributes to social pathologies. Contemporary psychologists and some postmodern authors who promote the “psychology of caretaking and sentimental cherishing” (p. 4) are also complicit, as they suggest that consumption is an expression of individual subjectivity.
3. Besides “subjective bonding with possessions” (p. 4) justifying the unequal distribution of resources, it privileges the nuclear family and middle class norms.
4. Connecting terms such as “‘care’ of an object in both the ethical and aesthetic senses of the term” (p. 5) and equating “taste” with civility and morality, as in the writings of A.J. Downing and other domestic advice authors, privilege these concepts in opposition to the “nonhuman and savage” (p. 5) and therefore justify imperialism.

5. The “unproductive” (p. 8), domestic woman was constructed to enforce the Victorian “binary classification of sexed beings” (p. 8) consumerism being the “primary site in which femininity is imposed and enforced” (p. 8).

Merish’s (2000) work contained a generalized attack on humanist philosophy in its argument that psychologists and sociologists “who describe the importance of bonding with one’s house, and institutions such as pet ownership . . . in fully ‘humanizing’ persons and training individuals in the experience of emotional intimacy” (p. 16) are promoting “aristocratic material forms” (p. 16) or signs of middle class moral superiority (“aristocratic” and “middle class” are used interchangeably). Merish implied that such works should not exist, because they

preclude more comprehensive analyses of the social value, production, and consequences of consumption—be they economic (involving class inequalities or relations of production in global capitalism), political (involving welfare state policies), or environmental (involving the waste and destructiveness of the ‘cult of consumption’ and its role in such trends as global warming). (p. 11)

Csikszentmihalyi and other authors cited in this dissertation no doubt fit the category of researchers targeted in Merish’s (2000) book. It is the position of the dissertation, given its phenomenological orientation, that no work “precludes” any other, except perhaps in the minds of particular readers. Instead, different treatments of similar phenomena reveal different aspects of the same phenomenon. Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981/1989) did not target Marxist and other readings of things for abolition, but did respond in their analysis to a gap they perceived in the body of literature on the subject: “This one dimension has so overshadowed the rest that it is almost

impossible to think of people's possessions except as symbols of their social standing" (p. 29).

Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981/1989) noted that some of the participants in *The Meaning of Things* validated themselves by their acquisition of skill, money, or status symbols; that in American society, the imposition of will may supersede the care of others. They specifically noted that at the cultural level, art can be "expropriated by one group to bolster its control over the psychic activity of others" (p. 119). At the level of individual psychology, status symbols are treated in the study as "an extremely important aspect of the whole person" (p. 119). However, they argued that analysis of class signifiers cannot by itself do justice to the complexity of individuals' relationships with society. Their findings suggested that there is much more to be learned. Although the researchers found that the emotions participants expressed for their objects signified connections with relatives far more often than connections with "abstract principles, institutions, or groups" (p. 120), the study addressed a fundamental misconception about attachment to material things: that it may preclude or discourage engagement with the world.

Does self-gratification at home lead to passivity regarding the broader community? Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981/1989) explained,

The differentiated self is vulnerable and impermanent—a transient pattern of order in a flux of chaos. Therefore, cultivating broader goals, more permanent forms of order, is more attractive. By paying attention to the intentions of others, to the goals of larger systems, one 'buys into' a self that transcends the fragile, differentiated individual. (p. 120)

The pattern that emerged in *The Meaning of Things* was that psychic energy was not confined to the home, even when participants described a high degree of attachment to objects, high degree of physical comfort, and satisfaction with warm interpersonal relationships in the household: “Members of emotionally integrated homes participate in organizations that are actively involved in maintaining or changing the goals of the community—that is, with politics in the broadest sense” (p. 155). For adult participants, the study revealed only slight differences in organizational affiliations, but significant differences in the nature of children’s affiliations. The children of “Cools” were attracted primarily to sports. Children of “Warmes” were affiliated with a greater variety of activities including hobbies, student associations, and religious groups; parents of these children were well-represented in PTA and political organizations.

Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981/1989) used the remarks of an 8-year-old boy to describe how awareness of the world begins at the basic perceptual level. He mentioned a variety of objects in his home, his stuffed bunny, his bank, and his toy animals, which “reminds me of wildlife, all the rabbits, and dogs and cats . . . all my special things make me feel like I am part of the world” (p. 139). Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton explained,

Attention is focused on a set of objects, which release their meanings by activating latent memories and by bringing into consciousness information about the world. Through signs that bring together the self and the world, the boy can truly feel that he is part of the world In fact, [his answer] seems to include mostly that third level of organization that is so rare even among adults: a self-world system in which psychic energy is invested in goals transcending personal needs—in this case . . . wildlife, and animals for whose welfare humans are responsible. (p. 140)

Synthesizing these various findings, Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton argued that a clear pattern of social participation was evident in the study:

Warm families channel the psychic energy of their members toward the broader intentions of the community—the wide world of political action; cool families do so much less, and the public arena they direct their attention to tends to be more toward sports and religion. (p. 157)

Haar and Reed (1996), in “Coming Home: A Postscript on Postmodernism,” offered postmodern perspectives on the relationship between domestic life and social change by focusing on ways architectural design has been used both to “read” culture and to advance ideologies of various kinds. Haar and Reed focused much of their attention on feminist architecture and design, which has had much to do with advancing the notion that there are rich social and political meanings in domestic artifacts: “Just as the dictum ‘the personal is political’ propelled women’s issues into public discourse, so for feminists in architecture, the domestic was not a retreat from the world but the arena where social forces interact with daily life” (p. 255). Since the early 1960s, one way in which objects served not just as artifacts for interpretation but also vehicles for feminist activism was the attempt to “undo the conventions that neglected or disparaged categories of culture associated with women—prime among these, the home” (p. 254). Some projects in feminist architecture specifically sought to uncover neglected women’s history. Feminism and postmodernism in one combination created “nostalgic celebrations of the home” (p. 259). At their extreme, Haar and Reed argued, these theories could create in turn a “passive fixation on the beauties of the past” (p. 259).

In the 1980s, “resist the status quo” was a more popular architectural mantra. These designs in their extreme tended to dwell on domestic life in the form of “nihilistic

ruminations on its corruption” (Haar & Reed, 1996, p. 259). Attempting to bridge this polarization in research and design, Haar and Reed argued that homes are equally capable of “repression and stasis” as they are “cradles of empowerment and change” (p. 253); therefore they are spaces that permit respect for/critique of the past as well as opportunities to achieve self-expression and social change. The significance of Haar and Reed’s research to this study is largely in its exploration of how postmodernism “has returned our culture’s attention to the home, challenging the modernist antagonism toward the domestic with a new interest in the history and variety of home life” (p. 273).

The Domestic Sphere versus the Workplace

Critiquing contemporary philosophies of adult education, Hart (1992) explored the origin of the gendered divisions of labor in Western economies that “culminated in the complete ‘domestication’ of the women of the bourgeoisie in the nineteenth century when the Victorian ideal of womanhood had taken its final hold on the minds of the members of the upper classes” (p. 24). Green (1982) positioned the activities of the 19th century home as “passive and indirect, a dramatic counterpoint to the active and direct means of economic control men exercised in both the outside world and the home . . . ultimate political and economic control resided outside the arena of the decorative—and woman’s—realm” (p. 111). Viewed through the political lens of contemporary educational philosophy and history, the public/private separation of spheres is generally concluded to have been good for men, bad for women.

Although teaching was considered the most noble and appropriate way for women to gain access to the public sphere; higher education and other careers were possible. For the more reactionary members of society, this was the problem; once women were trained for careers, they actually might *get* careers. Woody (1929) reported a variety of

Victorian-era statistics on working women. Demographic information from the early part of the century was apparently contradictory and incomplete; two sources offered contradictory counts of the number of occupations open to women 1836-1837, one reporting seven and one reporting 100. A clearer trend is that more women worked in textile manufacture than did men during that period. In 1845, another of Woody's sources suggested the range of goods women were participating in producing, from glue, to gold leaf, to suspenders and harnesses, and noted some of the services women provided as physicians, nurses, photographers, hair weavers, house painters, fur sewers, and more.

By the time Woody composed his history, he noted, "women are to be found in almost every occupation, be it as paid laborer, employer, or professional expert" (p. 106) with titles as diverse as lawyer, physician, head of an educational institution, stock trader, and bootlegger. Pugh (1983) described the general trend of increasing employment for women in industry between 1850 and the end of the century (1870 was the first year working females were included in the national census), but a decreasing proportion of females to males. Woody's data were used to create Table 2, which helps provide additional demographic perspective on women's home versus career options in the 19th century.

Table 2

Gainfully-employed Women Age 10 and Above (Percentage of Total Population), 1880-1920

Year	Employed Women	Married Women
1880	2,647,157 (14%)	56.8%
1900	5,319,397 (18.8%)	57%
1920	8,549,511 (21.1%)	60.6%

As Woody's data helps demonstrate, in spite of the increasing popularity of marriage, the house and home played a decreasingly central role in people's lives after the turn of the century due in part to increasing career choices.

Ironically, recognition of women's domestic power and importance was luring them outside the home to take up careers. The popular press's glamorization of teaching careers and the movement of women into other professions provoked a counter-movement by those who equated women entering the workplace with an attack on civilized society and as peril for women. As the author of *College Man and College Woman* pointed out in 1906, no law prevented women from entering competitive careers. However, he argued, "The womanly ideal forbids it; it does so on the ground that the womanly ideal is of such supreme worth . . . that she ought not to run the risk of losing it for the sake of the largest rewards these competitive careers hold out to the winners" (Hyde, as cited in Woody, 1929, p. 103). The author went on to remind his readers that a woman should be happy if she "finds herself excused from the task of direct economic production by the generous devotion of father, brother, or son, and can find the economic justification of her life in this ministry and superintendance of the common household consumption" (pp. 101-102). He did allow that it was appropriate for women to take a profession if they didn't marry and had to support themselves, but he warned of the inevitable "disaster or deterioration" (p. 102) awaiting women who exposed themselves to the risky, high-stress world of masculine careers like banking, manufacturing, commerce, and transportation. Woody reviewed a number of other books that similarly helped women weigh their life choices, typically by warning that no amount of money or big-city excitement could give women pleasure and influence as great as the "natural joys of normal family life" (p.

104)—which a book called *A Late Harvest* defined as marriage and four to eight children.

Evidence suggests, however, that some of the rhetoric aimed at keeping women out of the workplace was based at least in part on the general ambivalence about the public sphere mentioned earlier in this dissertation. Victorian conventional wisdom suggested that one couldn't operate successfully in the public sphere without balance from the private. Working women and men both were subject to risks (though women were usually portrayed as more likely to collapse under the pressure). Hyde (1906) described the daily routines of professions like mining, manufacturing, law, and commerce as a perpetual schedule of *strain, risk, quarrels, antagonism, strife, enmity, calumny, and fraud* with “unscrupulous competitors, corrupt politicians, fickle customers, treacherous friends, and secret enemies” (as cited in Woody, 1929, pp. 102-103).

The Victorian era is often called the century of progress and exuberance. On one hand, progress was interpreted as God's admiration for Americans' work ethic and ingenuity, a source of excitement and optimism. On the other, with social progress and economic success came new social problems and new sources of uncertainty and fear. William Morris, the pioneer of the Aesthetic movement in the decorative arts, was also the “Pioneer of English socialism” (Faulkner, 1980, p. 113). Morris referred to the 19th century in his lectures as the Century of Nuisance (“Hopes and Fears for Art,” 1892/1929). While Morris's caché in America had much to do with his textiles and wallpapers, his products were closely intertwined with his writings, which articulated society's problems and argued for the radical reconstruction of the workplace. Like Beecher, Morris believed that work is always better than idleness, the primary occupation of “gentlemen.” However, in 1880s England, Morris perceived that the whole industrial

system was a disaster that called for complete transformation through social revolution. In his lecture “The Beauty of Life” (1880/1929), Morris described the public sphere as he saw it:

The greatest of all evils, the heaviest of all slaveries; that evil of the greater part of the population being engaged for by far the most part of their lives in work, which at best cannot interest them, or develop their best faculties, and at their worst (and that is the commonest, too) is mere unmitigated slavish toil, only to be wrung out of them by sternest compulsion, a toil which they shirk all they can—small blame to them. (p. 94)

Morris pinpointed the most worrisome facet of the workplace as its extreme division of labor, which had created “a machine with powers both reproductive and destructive, which few dare to resist, and none can control or foresee the result of” (“Making the Best of It,” n.d./1929, pp. 115-116). Morris saw the consequences—the separation between human beings and the arts and between one human faculty and another—as intolerable. Production was controlled by a few highly-trained experts and tended by laboring masses who were not allowed to use their intelligence and were no more than profit-making machines. Morris warned that man was becoming machine (Faulkner, 1980).

One outcome of a landscape governed and populated by machine was an increasingly ugly landscape. According to Morris’s lectures (“Making the Best of It,” n.d./1929) commerce and science worked together as reckless accomplices polluting the countryside with coal, hideous advertising, and litter from “sandwich papers” (p. 103) while industry was cutting down trees and creating barren landscapes. As the next section will explain, the answer for Morris, as well as the American domestic advisors, lay within individual households and in the making and consumption of beautiful objects.

Learning How to Succeed In—and Escape From—the Public Sphere

During the first half of the century, most of the informal educational literature for American men targeted men's lives outside their homes: developing the traits for rags to riches success, navigating the moral traps on the road to success, and enjoying masculine forms of leisure. American domestic advice obviously did not recommend an overthrow of the capitalist economy. However, it did frequently echo misgivings about the marketplace and placed its faith in the beauties of domestic life as an antidote to the uglier consequences of urban, industrialized life.

Urbanization and industrialization in the 19th century created a consumer culture, which created a market for education to guide consumers toward tasteful use of their disposable income (McD. Wallace, 1996). Swiencicki (1998) identified 1890 as the beginning of an era in which the majority of commodities were purchased rather than home made. While Morris' arguments were forged from a uniquely aesthetic form of socialism, one concern expressed in the American popular press about commodity culture was a moral one: what temptations men's disposable income could cause them to succumb to.

Swiencicki's (1998) study of male consumption patterns between 1880 and 1930 described men's spending outside the home during that period. Besides culturally approved commodities like sporting goods and lodge memberships, businessmen's urban, public sphere contact offered more worrisome opportunities for festive consumption in men's entertainment districts. They housed saloons, burlesque and gambling halls, peep shows, and brothels. A constant theme in the books and magazines was that a stable home would save men from temptation: "A clean, fresh, and well-ordered house exercises over its inmates a moral, no less than physical influence, and has a direct tendency

to make members of the family sober, peaceable, and considerate of the feelings and happiness of each other” (as cited in Green, 1983, p. 59).

As described by Marsh (1990) and Griffen (1990), men’s work life itself, particularly in the first half of the 19th century, created another problem, the psychological burden of dealing with the everyday stresses of the workplace. The culture that made women “the light of the home” (Green, 1983) “typecast [men] to the point of caricature as belonging first and always to the world of affairs” (Pugh, 1983, p. 82); men were the family breadwinners solely responsible for ensuring the family’s financial security through endurance, cleverness, and other manly qualities. In reality, many working class families could not survive on a single income but still denigrated the reality of a wife having to work or a man being unable to provide. In addition, regular salaries and work schedules were not part of the new economy until later in the century.

A strong piece of evidence that men suffered stress in the public sphere is the identification of a white-collar worker’s disease, Neurasthenia, by George Beard. In one sense, neurasthenia was considered fashionable, the “archetypal Victorian ailment” (Hughes, 1990), since it was believed to be caused by advanced intellectual and cultural achievement and the excitement and nervousness associated with it. About neurasthenia, Beard made comparisons between the Victorian middle and upper classes and others who were basically immune to neurasthenia, such as manual laborers and the more “emotional” races, as blacks and Indians were believed to be. The implication, of course, was that those groups were more primitive, less challenged intellectually. Only white, white-collar Americans would suffer the insomnia, depression, dyspepsia, palpitations, headaches, and other symptoms that could present themselves in a case of neurasthenia (Green, 1987).

Therefore, Hughes (1990) wrote, “It provided a medical catchall that . . . located the cause of derangement in the special stresses of modern urban life” (p. 65). As discussed earlier in this chapter, neurasthenia and other health topics saturated advice books and magazines, helping readers recognize symptoms and recommending remedies. A restful home was believed to be one of the best tonics for the disorder. The term neurasthenia became popular in Europe as well, where painters like Matisse and others named specifically the business *man* as the beneficiary of a soothing domestic interior. The best therapy was a housewife and a “calm oasis” (a “private interior realm”) (p. 54) she created. Pugh, however, placed home as half of an equation that created a “neurotic dualism” (p. 83) in men’s roles as both patriarch and “eternal child” who was supposed to be cared for by a nurturing wife.

The history of neurasthenia helps explain the origin of specific 19th century domestic aesthetics that Robinson (1996) discussed as an intersection between “interior decoration, domesticity and the housewife, and the decorative landscape” (p. 99). In the second half of the 19th century, public buildings were supposed to challenge the mind by being visually thought provoking. Home interiors should serve the opposite function (though as explained earlier, they were supposed to offer intellectual stimulation of their own). Words used to describe the ideal choice of art for the home included *pastoral*, *calm*, *welcoming*, *restful*. Particular popular styles were criticized on this basis; art nouveau was at first greeted as over-stimulating by some critics. Robinson explained how the psychology of color and movement emerged from concerns about neurasthenia-inducing environments. Brodin (1985) cited European philosophers Rousseau and Friedrich Schiller to illustrate the pervasiveness of the belief in art as the force that could heal and reunify society’s spirit.

Morris obviously ascribed to the belief that something had to be done to give “all men some pleasure for the eyes and rest for the mind in the aspect of their and their neighbours’ houses, until the contrast is less disgraceful between the fields where beasts live and the streets where men live” (“The Lesser Arts,” 1877/1929, p. 34). His expression of humans’ need for balance and refuge from the public sphere also helps account for the appeal of bringing nature into interiors, as exemplified earlier in this chapter. Morris went much further, however, arguing that it wasn’t enough to shop for pleasant art and take refuge from the marketplace at home; the marketplace would have to be transformed according to principles of freedom and aesthetics best represented by the ideal home: “Unless people care about carrying on their business without making the world hideous, how can they care about art?” (“The Lesser Arts,” p. 33). Decorative artists would be the vanguard of the revolution. They would take up the fight against “that short-sighted, reckless brutality of squalor that so disgrace our intricate civilization” (p. 21). Decorative arts could not liberate if marketed only to “cultivated” tastes; this Morris likened to a rich man who would “sit and eat dainty food amongst starving soldiers in a beleaguered fort” (p. 35). Decoration would not simply be products sold, but also the means of transforming work for everyone.

Decorative arts would not only beautify homes but also “beautify our labor” (Morris, “The Lesser Arts,” 1877/1929, p. 5) under certain conditions. It would first of all have to be *popular*: if it is “widely spread, intelligent, well understood both by the maker and the user . . . there will be pretty much an end of dull work and its wearying slavery” (p. 6). Morris (1882/1929) envisioned a new economy driven by the “handicraftsman,” who shall put his own individual intelligence and enthusiasm into goods he fashions. So far from his labour being “divided,” which is the technical phrase for his

always doing one minute piece of work, and never being allowed to think of any other; so far from that, he must know all about the ware he is making and its relation to similar wares; he must have a natural aptitude for his work so strong, that no education can force him away from his special bent. He must be allowed to think of what he is doing, and to vary his work as the circumstances of it vary, and his own moods. He must be forever striving to make the piece he is at work at better than the last. He must refuse at anybody's bidding to turn out, I won't say bad, but even an indifferent piece of work, whatever the public want, or think they want. He must have a voice, and a voice worth listening to in the whole affair. ("Making the Best of It," pp. 164-165).

Faulkner (1980) explored Morris' socialist politics and his utopian project of restoring joy in labour by ensuring its variety, its creativity, and its practical purpose of satisfying social needs. Workplace hours would be shorter, factories would be cleaner and attractive enough for human habitation during work hours. Machines would ultimately become labor-saving devices rather than exclusively profit-makers. Morris believed that all this could be achieved if science did anything truly useful. The middle classes would help to bring about a peaceful revolution if they let themselves be guided by tasteful artistic principles and "cast in their lot with the working man" (as cited in Faulkner, 1980, p. 116). The parasitic leisure class would simply be eliminated. Towns would be redesigned according to principles of better aesthetic design, higher regard for nature, and more egalitarian relationships between the genders.

Although American authors were much less inclined to merge aesthetics with socialist schemes, their writing promoted and reflected significant change in the principle of sphere separation. Marsh (1990) argued that after the Civil War, the separate

spheres idea, which had been dominant but not universal before, began to break down. She presented evidence to show that with the increased boundary-blurring came new currents in advice literature for men, which attempted to ease the burden on women to be solely responsible for creating a sanctuary at home. The popular press focused more than before on men where they lived. Marsh explained,

While male advice-givers rarely insisted that men ought to take on the administrative or physical duties of running a household, they did urge them to trade the burdens of patriarchal authority and work-induced separation from family life for emotional closeness to their wives and the pleasures of spending time with their children as companions. (p. 117)

Marsh cited a variety of sources of advice for men, including the ladies' magazines (though it is unknown how many men were consumers). *Godey's* published a series called "Model Husbands" in which a male author addressed men's obligations. These obligations included staying home with the family after work rather than haunting clubs and other male-only entertainments, reading with the family, and helping with household chores. Marsh also quoted novelists such as Harriet Beecher Stowe and various feminist book authors who lead the charge for change with arguments for greater equality in marriage and greater responsibility for household upkeep and child-rearing on the part of men.

Most of Marsh's (1990) evidence for a turning tide comes from turn of the century sources. A quantity of examples of "man to man" instruction from that era are presented in Marsh's book. The male editor of *American Homes and Gardens* in 1905 constructed the following argument in several issues of the magazine: "There is no reason at all

why men should not sweep and dust, make beds, clean windows, fix the fire, clean the grate, arrange the furniture The responsibility for the home is not [the wife's] alone . . . but is equally the husband's" (as cited in Marsh, p. 121). Marsh also used excerpts from personal diaries and other sources to show men in the early 1900s involved in the work of keeping house and taking active interest in decorating the household.

In challenging the conventional academic wisdom that has portrayed production as masculine and consumerism as a socially-constructed and enforced "feminine" activity (confined to consumption of household goods and services), Swiencicki (1998) discussed men's taste for toiletries, clothing, and other luxury goods. His research indirectly lent support to the conclusion that men did take interest in and participate in household upkeep and aesthetics. He argued that "late-Victorian white men were hardly the stridently ascetic beings that separate spheres historians presumed them to be." A personal and emotion-laden description of one man's home came from novelist Mark Twain in an 1896 letter to Joseph Twichell. Referring to the structure he and his family called home at the time, he wrote,

It had a heart and a soul, and eyes to see with; and approvals and solitudes and deep sympathies; it was of us, and we were in its confidence and lived in its grace and in the peace of its benedictions. We never came home from an absence that its face did not light up and speak out in eloquent welcome—and we could not enter it unmoved. (as cited in Paine, 1912, p. 1023)

By the turn of the century, men were targeted for ever more informal instruction on matters of significance to not just the structure of the house, but also the attitudes and relationships cultivated within them. In 1911, Senator Albert Beveridge's advice book *The Life of a Young Man* included a chapter called "The New Home" that instructed by

creating a picture of the ideal suburban life, where a man would “spend all of his extra time, listening to his wife play the piano, reading, and not least, playing with the children” (as cited in Griffen, 1990, p. 196). Marsh (1990) cited another author, who attempted to fight cruel treatment of wives and children, urging men to adopt an air of “agreeable consideration” over “tyrannical and overbearing” (p. 116) paternalism. Several such advice books and columns were penned by politicians who took on the role of domestic advisors.

Advice manuals, speechmaking, and articles written by men for magazines such as the *Independent* and *Cosmopolitan* in the early 20th century promoted family togetherness, involved fatherhood, and friendship between spouses. Reinforcing the idea of a shift toward informal education for domestic men, Marsh also noted a shift in turn of the century advice for women. Emphasis moved from motherhood to wifedom, and authors warned women about being too absorbed with children and household to be interesting companions, at a time when the idea of “companionate marriages” (Marsh, 1990, p. 117) was gaining currency.

The informal education offered in the popular press opens a window to a wider view of general social trends at the turn of the century and the first two decades of the twentieth. The social backdrop for the advice literature included, first of all, increasing job security and leisure time. The fight for women’s suffrage and other movements to expand women’s “sphere” were well underway. Marsh (1990) argued that while some men fought to protect their public sphere territory, others gained satisfaction and contentment by crossing over and enjoying more time in the private sphere. Masculine social outlets like fraternal clubs were waning in popularity; new architectural styles were physically merging the two spheres; populations were fleeing from cities into suburbs;

and family-oriented recreation and unisex opportunities for physical activity were booming (Griffen, 1990; Marsh).

Conducting a search for literature about Victorian men's domestic lives is challenging, and current scholarship focuses primarily on "patriarchy" as an abstract, faceless social force melded into discussions of class and hegemony. Marsh (1990) observed that three images dominate the historical literature about Victorian men: the corporate drone; the victim of a masculinity crisis trying to cope with changing gender roles and growing female empowerment; and the hyper-masculine man's man. Because many sources deal with one or more of these images as monolithic reality, Griffen (1990) argued that most ignore the variety of advice literature available for domestic men.

An additional problem is that little is known about differences in men's domestic lives according to class, race, and occupation; Griffen (1990) argued that "The emphasis in investigating masculinity . . . should be on identifying the variety of adaptations for different social groups in different settings" (p. 195) and any number of influences that, apparently, created a range of contradictory male behaviors and ideas about manhood. Further, they argued in synthesizing their edited collection of essays, "neglected are the settings which males and females share" (p. 185). One goal of this research is ultimately to examine how some contemporary men educate themselves and find meaning in a shared sphere by focusing both their work and private lives on domestic structures.

Empirical Perspectives on Work- and Domestic-Sphere Interrelationships

In *Working and Educating for Life: International and Feminist Perspectives in Adult Education* (1992), Hart argued the necessity of combining any consideration of adult education with a consideration of the way people make a living:

Work is . . . not simply an economic category. It is a major nodal point for a number of fundamental relations: to the self, to others, and to nature. The structure of these relations is historically determined, and the reality of work, of its internal and external features and dynamics, and of the nature of the relations that are governed by it, therefore provides us with the most important information not only about the economic, but also about the social and cultural life of a society. Educational institutions or programmes fully participate in this life, as it is their primary task to train, educate and socialize competent members of society. (p. 8)

The work lives of the participants in Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton's (1981/1989) study played an insignificant role in shaping their interview and survey responses. Most of the male participants, although they identified with instruments of production (play, pleasure, status), did not bring the workplace into their homes. Adult males rarely mentioned objects relating to their professional/productive lives as "special." If, as the authors stated, "voluntary activities are still the main expressions of independence" (p. 140), and the interview protocol was left open for participants to select objects they classify as special, one could conclude that the lack of kinship with work-related objects may suggest a sense that work is neither voluntary nor an expression of independence.

This view is reflected in Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton's (1981/1989) analysis, in which they argued that work often expropriates psychic energy in a way that results in alienation between workers and their labor, experienced as a reduced sense of choice, lack of ownership over the products of a worker's creation, and lack of power to decide the objects' outcome or use. Csikszentmihalyi complicated the issue of work and psychic freedom in *Flow: the Psychology of Optimal Experience* (1990). Par-

participant insights about their work, leisure time, and flow experiences were gathered using the experience sampling method (participants completed a questionnaire when prompted by beeps from a pager at random points throughout their day). Most of the reported flow experiences (challenges and skill levels both reported to be high) occurred at work, across samples including white-collar, clerical, and blue-collar workers. Participants associated flow with feeling “strong,” “active,” “creative,” “concentrated,” and “motivated” (p. 158). Flow was rarely reported during leisure moments, and non-flow states (challenge and skill level low) were associated with feeling “passive,” “weak,” “dull,” and “dissatisfied” (p. 159). It is important to note that most of the leisure activities reported were passive activities, such as watching TV, going to a restaurant, or talking to friends.

A paradox explored in this research was that at the same time workers reported experiencing flow, they also reported the wish to be doing something else more frequently than when they were engaging in leisure. Two possible explanations were suggested. First is the difficulty of gauging quality experience in a culture that represents work as “constraint” and “imposition” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p. 160). Second, although work for most people is more challenging than leisure, lack of variety and challenge at work is a common complaint, especially for people at lower-levels of the workplace hierarchy, though these participants still reported more flow at work than in leisure. At higher levels of organizational hierarchies, participants complained about interpersonal conflicts, burnout, and loss of time with significant others. Two points are especially significant to this research on informal education. One is this:

When we feel that we are investing attention in a task against our will, it is as if our psychic energy is being wasted. . . . Many people consider their jobs as some-

thing they have to do, a burden imposed from the outside, an effort that takes away from the ledger of their existence. So even though the momentary on-the-job experience may be positive, they discount it, because it does not contribute to their own long-range goals. (p. 160)

The other is the sense of apathy commonly attached to work and, even more so, to leisure, in spite of the presence of a leisure industry marketing (mostly passive) leisure experiences. Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) thesis is that Americans spend considerably more time *watching* than *making*, and that too much vicarious participation comes with costs to psychological fulfillment, physical health, and social progress.

Hart (1992) echoed Csikszentmihalyi in her analysis of modern workers as carriers of skills whose own purposes and goals are largely irrelevant, but she explored apathy-inducing work from a different angle. Because knowledge work is now the primary form of labor driving Western economies, workplaces consist of the implements and symbols of instrumental knowledge, first and foremost the computer. Production now consists of rational processes, not manufacture of material goods. Instrumental knowledge is that which entails self-direction, even isolation in learning; it exacerbates divisions of labor and class; and above all, it is driven so much by symbolic representations of reality that the modern worker is all but divorced from material reality.

In critiquing the prevailing epistemology of modern life and modern adult education, Hart (1992) argued that rationality, or instrumental reason, still structures not just the workplace, but also buildings, art criticism, and "all experiences in terms of means-end relationships" (p. 12). She contrasted the unity of body and mind present in earlier forms of work, daily living, and learning with the primacy placed on skills, efficiency, computer-controlled information-processing, and abstract and objective forms of

knowledge. Hart paralleled the rise of the rational society with the denigration of women's work/degradation of all manual labor associated with "necessity" (p. 8): "Life and the activities associated with maintaining and nourishing life" are often viewed "with a kind of horror" (p. 115) (recall Gautier's 1835 remark on page 38 about the "ignoble and disgusting" needs of man due to his "poor, weak nature").

Hart (1992) argued that detachment from birth, everyday life, and death, and all the material objects reflecting man's "poor weak nature," result in a dichotomous division between the social and the natural world. She implicated our desire for freedom from necessity with mastery over people and mastery over the environment, which destroys the mastered and culminates not in freedom, but the ultimate death of the master's soul.

The triumph over necessity always takes the form of mastery: over slaves, over women, over nature. In the merging of the Judeo-Christian theology with Greek philosophy such mastery came to include control over one's own inner nature, one's spontaneity and sensuality, culminating in the asceticism of the work ethic. (pp. 120-121)

Along with considering more fully the developmental, intellectual, and social implications of the decline of experienced-based knowledge from modern to postmodern times, the study describes the lived reality of participants reviving it from obsolescence.

Rejection and Revival of 19th-Century Philosophy and Style

While the feminine aesthetic was segregated and women's psychic energy restricted during the Victorian era, both were also accorded a degree of respect and cultural authority on their own terms. The 19th century was the epoch of faith in Woman as Educator—civilizer, expert in household functionality and aesthetics, and guardian of

economic and artistic traditions (Tiersten, 1996). Modernism, which took shape in retaliation to idea of aristocratic authority, initially supported this view, as an essay by Tiersten (1996) showed. Eventually, however, “passivity, domesticity, affinity with nature, and a sensate, as opposed to strictly rational orientation” (Tiersten, p. 19)—all the “feminine principles” once considered essential in the civilizing and aesthetic instruction of domestic life—took on new and wholly negative connotations. Ironically, just as 19th century beliefs about learning and living were argued on intellectual, psychological, political, and economic grounds, they were ultimately demonized in all the same ways.

The Ascent of Modernism

What does modernism look like? Although from a 21st century perspective the designs of decorative artists like William Morris hardly look “modernist,” reformers who invested objects with moral dimensions such as “honesty” and “simplicity” and criticized middle class conventions served as catalysts in the transition. Morris wrote, “The higher the art rises, the greater the simplicity” (“The Beauty of Life,” 1882/1929, p. 10).

The middle class had been “deep in a passionate love affair with ornament” (Brolin, 1985, p. 58) and dominated the mass market for material goods. The decorative art reformers, as Brolin (1985) called them, “knew that they, too, needed weapons of the intellect that would enable decorative artists to ignore popular taste” (p. 58) and found them in the modernist principles of design. Brolin (1985), Watkin (1977), and others have described the modernist taste for stripped down, simple, mechanistic forms and allegiance to novelty, which necessitated a divorce from the taste and conventional wisdom of the past. Watkin called it the design of “man without a memory” (p. 42). Modernist designers have considered historical amnesia a creative necessity, positing that “social life of contemporary man is so radically different from the past that it cannot possibly be ac-

commodated in the same physical containers of traditional streets, houses and other forms” (Brolin, 1975, p. 70).

Le Corbusier, an influential proponent of modernist design, vividly characterized what the new modernist landscape should look like and to what ends it should exist. Le Corbusier (1927) was addressing “big business men, bankers and merchants” (p. 18) when he wrote the following in *Towards a New Architecture*:

All your energies are directed towards this magnificent end which is the forging of the tools of an epoch, and which is creating throughout the whole world the accumulation of very beautiful things in which economic law reigns supreme, and mathematical exactness is joined to daring and imagination. That is what you do; that, to be exact, is Beauty.

One can see these same business men, bankers and merchants away from their businesses in their own homes, where everything seems to contradict their real existence—rooms too small. A conglomeration of useless and disparate objects, and a sickening spirit reigning over so many shams—Aubusson, Salon d’Automne, styles of all sorts and absurd bric-a-brac. Our industrial friends seem sheepish and shriveled like tigers in a cage; it is very clear that they are happier at their factories or in their banks. (pp. 18-19)

In the modernist scheme, then, “virile” engineers of economic law and mathematical exactness were the only cultural forces worth talking about. “Feminine” domestic teachings and taste were likened to a degenerative disease robbing industrious men of their intellectual vitality.

It is interesting to juxtapose Le Corbusier’s (1927) advice with the views of Morris, the effusive earlier Victorians, and even the Czikszentmihalyi/Rochberg-Halton

(1981/1989) study's participants and their cherished household objects. Le Corbusier advised,

Demand bare walls.

Buy only practical furniture and never buy decorative "pieces." (p. 123)

He explained why one style fit all and how the redesigned cultural landscape would be achieved:

Every modern man has the mechanical sense. The feeling for mechanics exists and is justified by our daily activities. This feeling in regard to machinery is one of respect, gratitude and esteem

There is a moral sentiment in the feeling for mechanics.

The man who is intelligent, cold and calm has grown wings to himself.

Men—intelligent, cold and calm—are needed to build the house and lay out the town. (Le Corbusier, pp. 123-127)

Leavitt (2002) noted that at the turn of the century, many female domestic advisors took up the call for women to throw out the old where interiors were concerned and bring in the new, to embrace the increasingly minimalist styles. In 1935, a book called the *Better Homes Manual* promoted rational perfection as the latest design ideal; Le Corbusier's home-as-machine metaphor was featured prominently in *Home Furnishing*, "a practical book for homemakers" (Leavitt, p. 105). Earlier, in 1902, Victorian and Modern styles were displayed side by side at the Boston Mechanics Fair. Leavitt used notes and articles from a writer for *Good Housekeeping* as evidence of strongly gendered responses to the two room displays, which also demonstrates that not everything written in advice literature was received as gospel. Men generally favored the strictly utilitarian design, while a number of women reacted to it with repulsion and "disgust" (as

cited in Leavitt, p. 98). One woman's remarks were recorded whole: "Yes, simplicity's all well for some folks, but if I had to live in that room, it would make me gloomy. I should feel as if I was walking over my own grave" (as cited in Leavitt, p. 98).

As it turned out, some modernists were hoping to lay a grave for Victorian and feminine aesthetics. Van Zanten (1996) explored the career of Frank Lloyd Wright from an interesting angle; his personal life followed a trajectory that paralleled the march toward exclusively masculine modernism. Early in Frank Lloyd Wright's career, Van Zanten wrote, Wright seemed to strongly ascribe to the principle of nature and homelife as sources of rejuvenation:

Nurture was the function of the suburb: after the men left each morning for the quantified, competitive, gridded, industrially fabricated Loop, the women set to homemaking and childrearing in the nature-filled suburb. And this distinction between organizing and nurturing was the difference between business and art, as Wright himself would state in his 1898 business card. (p. 92).

Wright in fact had called for all architects to place themselves in an "environment that conspires to develop the best there is in him" (p. 94) (apart from the city), one that encourages "quiet concentration of effort" (p. 94). The scale and design of his Oak Park studio embodied his theories. As a businessman, he exemplified a cooperative relationship with his staff of draftsmen in work design and in the system of profit sharing he devised. The most ironic fact of his biography in Van Zanten's opinion is that in 1909, Lloyd Wright "abandoned his wife and children, his Studio and his men, his whole suburban world, to flee to Europe with an Oak Park client's wife" (p. 96). His writings later in life reflected what Van Zanten called a vindictive tone toward the draftsmen who set

off out on their own and were no longer under his control, and a more extreme modernist sensibility in his designs.

In 1869, Catharine Beecher and Harriet Beecher Stowe explained exactly what fears lay behind their drive to educate about domestic life. The authors' remarks, if not prescient, at least showed a sage grasp of American intellectual trends. In *The American Woman's Home*, they wrote about the new generation of "languid girls of a modern age,"

drilled in book-learning, ignorant of common things. The great danger of all this, and of the evils that come from it, is, that society, by and by, will turn as blindly against female intellectual culture as it now advocates it, and having worked disproportionately one way, will work disproportionately in the opposite direction. (p. 318)

As public and private spheres were pulled more and more diametrically apart, authors and designers of buildings and art objects ridiculed domesticity as the nemesis of modernism and worked harder to erase the feminine polarity altogether. Reed's (1996) collection of essays offered the most complete exploration of themes recurring in the world of art, architecture, and decorative design in the 20th century, the zenith of "anti-domestic tenor" (Reed, p. 9).

Clapper (1996) described a key spatial manifestation of the separation of art and decorative objects, the rise of museums. Their design and the expense involved in building them demonstrate the cultural authority with which they were invested, and they illustrate the institutionalized separation of the aesthetic from the "everyday." Things in museums were art, which appealed to and were born of the higher intellect and moral sense; things in homes did nothing but gratify the senses (Troy, 1996). The privileging

of art and architecture as objects for the rational mind became visually obvious in the objects themselves: “Modernist art historically has been accessible only to a well-informed few capable of grasping its formal and theoretical complexity” (Brolin, 1985, p. 47).

Watkin (1977) illustrated how changing styles of design can signify far more significant cultural shifts, in this case a true reorganization of the Western mind. Watkin cited an architectural journal from 1967 that looked back at the evolution and significance of the change, calling it “an important shift of attention and process that took place in the 1920s and 1930s and from which . . . powerful lines of thought appeared” (p. 11). The journal defined this shift in thought as “the passionately held belief that there had to be some kind of complete and systematic re-examination of human needs and that, as a result of this, not only the form of buildings but the total environment would be changed” (p. 11). Public health, safety, and education were also evacuated from the domestic sphere, becoming almost exclusively the domains of institution and law.

Modernist social engineering was based on beliefs not just about intellect and gender, but also about class. The distinction and privileging of the “artist” over the decorative artist (including the homemaker) had accelerated in the late 1800s with what Sociologist Herbert Gans called a “marked disdain for ordinary people and their aesthetic capability” (as cited in Brolin, 1985, p. 192). Brolin explained how the romanticization of poverty and demonization of the middle class were rooted in Rousseau’s “noble savage” idea, which Pinker (2002) has identified as the boon companion to the idea of the Blank Slate. Brolin wrote,

Peasant craftsmen were supposed to possess all the virtues lacked by the middle classes, and the term “simple” was often employed when reformers spoke about folk

arts. . . . In their folk wisdom, humble craftsmen had allegedly turned out these simple, honest objects because they knew better than to harbor unnatural aspirations to the unattainable extravagances of the aristocracy, and were blessed with enough common sense not to covet the tacky imitations that satisfied the middle classes reformers frequently assumed that the simplicity often (but by no means always) marking the life of the poor was a matter of choice. When men like Ruskin, Morris, and Crane eventually turned to socialism, this supposed peasant virtue took on an even more pointed meaning, the simpler folk crafts becoming tangible proof of the uprightness, practicality, and natural wisdom of the poor, as contrasted with the degenerate taste of their social “betters.” (Brolin, 1985, pp. 158-159)

Ironically, then, although Victorianism is usually best known for its unrelenting didacticism, Brolin (1985) argued that modernism “has enabled them to clothe the most disparate design choices in virtuous morality with equal ease” (p. 121).

Three specific tenets of modernist morality and ideology have been identified by Brolin (1975). *Equalization*, the solution to middle and upper class excesses, could be achieved through *standardization*. Because basic human needs could be met by simple, elemental things, all unnecessary features should be removed, which also would accomplish the goal of removing artificial markers of class distinction, which in turn would help erase social class itself. Because as Brolin pointed out, no such complex social implications were attached to traditional structures, old buildings were easy to abandon or destroy. New structures would have to replace them, however, and those were planned according to the third tenet, *collectivity*. Part of the “rational” model of building and design was abandoning the entire idea of private sphere in favor of the collective, thus the

birth of architectural forms such as the high rise and the housing project. Single-family dwellings were no longer considered practical and were hopelessly outmoded, besides being politically incorrect in light of radical modernist social engineering projects. Perceived by someone with more traditional taste, modernist design reflected

a belief that architecture as an art involving taste, imagination, and scholarship should finally be abolished and replaced by a scientifically plotted Utopia in which tamed collective man with all his wants defined by technology and gratified by computerized planning would contentedly take his apportioned place as in some gigantic rationalistically constructed beehive. (Watkin, 1977, p. 12)

Other critics of modernism, such as Brolin (1985), described just how far the modernist landscape had gone visually in its evolution away from its Victorian predecessor:

“beauty” became “ugliness” and “ugliness” became “beauty.” History and nature, the wellsprings of beauty for cultured Victorian gentlemen and ladies, became synonymous with ugliness—symbols of aesthetic degeneracy—while industrial and technological forms, which had been non-art at best, the epitome of ugliness at worst, were transformed into the very measure of beauty. (p. 193)

Czikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981/1989) also addressed the issue of visual styles, describing the stimulus provoked by contemporary things in terms of anonymity, extreme rationality, over-exaggeration, and sensory overload (again implying that human beings not only construct things but are also influenced by them).

Because art and decoration are tied to self-image, Pinker (2002) argued that modernists had other, less socially-conscious motives for going to visual extremes, such as attention and status-seeking in a consumer culture where “beautiful” goods are plentiful. He places his analysis in the context of the general history of visual trends:

Every art form increases in complexity, ornamentation, and emotional charge until the evocative potential of the style is fully exploited. Attention then turns to the style itself, at which point the style gives way to a new one . . .

In the twentieth-century, the search for the new thing became desperate because of the economies of mass production and the affluence of the middle class It is hard to distinguish oneself as a good artist or discerning connoisseur if people are up to their ears in the stuff Art could no longer confer prestige by the rarity or excellence of the works themselves, so it had to confer it by the rarity of the powers of appreciation. As Bourdieu pointed out, only a special elite of initiates could get the point of the new works of art. And with beautiful things spewing out of printing presses and record plants, distinctive works need not be beautiful. Indeed, they had better not be, because now any schmo could have beautiful things. (pp. 412-413)

As traditional notions of beauty were scorned for guilt by association with mass marketing and the crass middle class, some postmodernists pushed the envelope even further with a militant denial of human nature, denial of “human nature” being at the heart of Pinker’s (2002) critique of modernist science, art, and philosophy. The extreme-postmodernist position was based on the argument that beauty necessarily enslaves and that it must be confronted, even destroyed. Thus Pinker adds clarity to the roots of a trend that accelerated from “puzzling audiences to doing everything [artists] could to offend them” (p. 414). Further sealing the divorce between aesthetics and pleasure was a “support team of critics and theoreticians”(p. 414) who privileged theory over subject matter itself; the more unintelligible the commentary about it, the more protected art would be from the taint of ordinary life and mass-market commodity-making. Herein

lies an illustration of how far an idea may travel from the intentions of those who initially gave it currency. Morris was quite specific in admonishing artists as follows:

You must not only mean something in your patterns, but must also be able to make others understand that meaning. They say that the difference between a genius and a madman is that the genius can get one or two people to believe in him, whereas the madman, poor fellow, has himself only for his audience. (“Making the Best of It,” 1882/1929, p. 58)

Given the historical pattern that every extreme design action seems to result in an equal and opposite reaction, as well as the vast divide between artist/critic and consumer, a reassertion of Victorian sensibilities—home-centered and accessible, ornate, “feminine,” and historical—was almost inevitable.

The New Victorianism

Reed (1996) argued, “The repressed always returns, and definitions of necessity perpetuate both terms of the difference that creates meaning (the meaning of ‘up,’ for example, relies on its opposite to be understood as ‘not down’). . . . The domestic, perpetually invoked in order to be denied, remains throughout the course of modernism a crucial site of anxiety and subversion” (pp. 15-16).

In 2002, Pinker noted that “currents of discontent [were] coming together in a new philosophy of the arts, one that is consilient with the sciences and respectful of the minds and senses of human beings” (p. 416). Pinker was speaking of artists, critics, and scholars. This dissertation will focus at the level of the consumer. Evidence that the repressed was returning became noticeable enough to be called a trend in the 1990s, created a market for the self-help education described in Chapters 4-6, and therefore created an irony that

helped inspire this dissertation. In the 1990s, journalists were reporting on the *unisex* need for refuge from the public sphere. Carol Clurman in *USA Weekend* (1994) wrote,

Dropping out of the rat race isn't just for the wealthy or tenured anymore. These days, middle-class boomers are finding ways to quit, too—at least temporarily. And at no time has the desire to opt out been more palpable than in the current era of corporate downsizing They are overstressed boomers who are stretching the definition of sabbatical to mean an unpaid leave to put harried lives back in balance. Working parents want to strengthen family bonds.

A male journalist a year later expressed a similar observation in *Time* magazine:

Whether burdened by an overwhelming flurry of daily commitments or stifled by a sense of social isolation (or, oddly, both); whether mired for hours in a sense of life's pointlessness or beset for days by unsolved anxiety; whether deprived by long work-weeks from quality time with offspring or drowning in quantity time with them—whatever the source of stress, we at times get the feeling that modern life isn't what we were designed for. (Wright, 1995, p. 50)

Talbot (1996) used the phrase “shelter experts” teaching how to *nest, cocoon, nurture, center, and retreat* to refer to the self-help gurus who stepped in to satisfy consumers' interest in topics that families no longer felt an imperative to pass on and academic institutions deemed frivolous. Talbot called it “an era when it is not at all uncommon to be cut off from the traditional sources of motherwit and household lore—when many of us live far from the families into which we were born and have started our own families too late to benefit from the guidance of living parents or grandparents” (1996). Martha Stewart helped fill this void, which allowed her to build her media empire (worth \$224 million in 1999, according to “Martha's World,” *Business Week*, 2000) with a product line called Mar-

tha Stewart Everyday and the philosophy of informal education—also the slogan for her television show—“Learn something new.” Her business philosophy also expressed her instructional focus: “I wanted to be comprehensive, expansive, all encompassing. I wanted to take a subject, not a brand. I took the subject of living” (as cited in Schrage, 2000). Since then, home renovation themes have become a mainstay on cable television, 24 hours daily on Home and Garden Television; the home makeover phenomenon also represented on popular broadcasts such as The Learning Channels’ *Trading Spaces* have spawned multimedia instructional and fan materials and local network imitations.

Although the terms “cocooning” and “neo-nesting” were coined in the twentieth century, events early in the 21st accelerated the trend. The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, prompted a reassessment of many aspects of American culture. An interior designer, the author of a book called *House Comfortable—The Art and Science of Comfortable Living*, theorized that even in the context of national tragedy, the phenomenon of cocooning should not be interpreted as “running home to bury our heads in the sand—to block out all that is happening” (Sell, 2002). If cocooning is not necessarily a synonym for hiding from the world, what exactly is it? Sell’s and other articles published after September 11 were attained from the LexisNexus database and reviewed to form a list of some of the components of the trend. Three themes emerged from these articles:

Changing Consumer Behavior

Staying home more

“Making [homes] more valuable for the future” (Anderson, 2001)

Spending more on housewares and renovations

Spending more on home furnishings and electronics

Outfitting home offices

Focusing on quality (Sell, 2002)

Creating, getting back to basics; seeking the mundane and “homey”; participating in old-fashioned crafts (Kaufman & Barnes, 2001)

Eating at home; enjoying comfort food (Kaufman & Barnes, 2001; Novick, 2001)

Responding to simple, but not simplistic advertising; responding to clear and focused messages (Novick, 2001, *Advertising Age*)

Home as Psychological Safe-Haven

Finding home “less menacing than the outside world” (“Into the Bunker,” 2001)

Becoming more “family focused” (“Into the Bunker,” 2001)

Recharging (Sell, 2002)

Achieving familiarity, sense of place (Sell, 2002)

Nurturing

Experiencing contentment, relaxation

Expressing love and caring (Sell, 2002)

In *DesignWeek*, Hockenberry (2001) reflected on the significance of the fact that on September 11, architecture had become a target, and later that year, referring to the discovery of anthrax in US Postal Service and Congressional facilities, “mail had become menace.” Hockenberry’s piece expressed the concern that America would adopt a bunker mentality to avoid the new potential danger in everyday objects. Instead, he proposed recognizing their power. Echoing Morris’s and others’ challenges to decorative artists over a century earlier, Hockenberry wrote, “There is an electricity of significance, curiosity, solidarity, and shared experience out of which meaning can shine if designers provide the spark. Designers must grab this moment because they are in the vanguard . . . we must connect to the world . . . to show the way forward: that’s why we design” (2001).

Illustrating the still-strong appeal of viewing material reality as abstraction—and one of the more extreme examples of the relativism and separatism prevalent in the art world—Pinker (2002) cited the composer Karlheinz Stockhausen’s review of the events of September 11: “the greatest work of art imaginable for the whole cosmos . . . artists, too, sometimes go beyond the limits of what is feasible and conceivable, so that we wake up, so that we open ourselves to another world” (as cited in Pinker, p. 416).

Although American culture’s shifting relationships with shelter and everyday objects is important to understand in backdrop, this study’s focus is not the renewed pull of the domestic sphere in general. Rather, the dissertation focuses on one particular nucleus of cultural irony: a specifically *historical* revival. In 1989, *Newsweek* magazine (Kantrowitz, 1989) first reported on the burgeoning popularity of “Victorian” in art, furniture styles, fashion, housewares, home construction floor plans, and in the increasing popularity of restoring the actual structures referred to in cultural critique as guilded prisons. Authors such as Sarah Ban Breathnach (1995; 2001) published best-selling non-fiction that drew extensively from Victorian aesthetics, crafts, and family rituals and demonstrated that the appeal of the Victorian era could be explained in relation to all the educational philosophies discussed so far: the appeal of liberal learning and the quest for beauty; the desire for self-expression and fulfillment combined with closer connection to family and community; desire to improve communities; and desire to have a satisfying work life balanced by a comfortable refuge at home.

Contemporary Research in Informal Education

Marsick and Watkins, who advanced a theory of informal education in a book written in 1990, identified over 150 studies in the field in an article published in 2001. However, their books, and the majority of articles, are focused on the workplace and other

institutional contexts that trigger informal learning opportunities. As Marsick and Watkins (2001) acknowledged, “informal and incidental learning take place wherever people have the need, motivation, and opportunity for learning” (p. 28), and these forms of learning tend to be integrated with daily routines. The most comprehensive available bibliography of works that make reference to informal learning in private life is accessed through a Web site, *The Informal Education Homepage*, rather than conventional academic publications. Further limiting the resources available for this review of literature, most of the published works on the subject come from authors in the United Kingdom and elsewhere in Europe.

The dearth of works on the topic of informal education in domestic life bears out the complaint by Wedemeyer (1981) cited in Chapter 1; lack of attention to “self-made” learners is ironic in light of the American experience. In his book *American Education: The National Experience, 1783-1876*, Cremin (1980) cited Enoch Cobb Wines (1838):

As a nation, we are educated more by contact with each other, by business, by newspapers, magazines, and circulating libraries, by public meetings and conventions, by lyceums, by speeches in Congress, in the state legislatures, and at political gatherings, and in various other ways, than by direct instructions imparted in the school room. (Cremin, p. 367)

Wines’s argument was that considering what Americans had accomplished with informal education, the possibilities would be limitless with a comprehensive system of formal public education. However, his remark illustrates that informal education is an old concept that has always been at the core of the American way of life. Cremin described the variety of ways learning was accomplished in the first hundred years of the republic:

apprenticeships and professional societies, periodicals and other popular literature, church, and all the relationships and activities that constituted domestic life.

Cremin's (1980) consideration of living room education included analysis of the variations in both the deliberateness and focus of instruction carried on within families. These differences were shaped by the racial, ethnic, and religious identities of families, as well as by their immigration history, socioeconomic condition, means of subsistence, and the degree of self-selected or other-imposed segregation they experienced. Although families differed both in how systematic they were in their teachings and the particular lessons they taught, Cremin identified common curricular threads: discipline (passing on morality, values, social obligations, and beliefs about human nature); information and skills (languages, household skills and food-gathering, animal husbandry, and reading); games; and social conventions.

Contemporary informal education theory is tied closely to the precedents of the past and educational philosophers such as Pestalozzi, Dewey, and Knowles, and it addresses as comprehensive a scope of topics. By nature, informal education concerns itself with the "whole person." Smith (2004a) noted that it "demands a proper respect for a range of experience—intellectual, aesthetic, religious, moral, social, physical, emotional, and expressive. It also requires a comprehensive view of what the curriculum provides and what the rest of school life is directed toward" (Stewart as cited in Smith).

"It," however, needs further definition. There is more than one term for education that occurs outside formal educational institutions. A small number of sources distinguish between *informal* and *non-formal* instructional forms. Reed (1987) explored the conflicting images of non-formal education alone, conflicts based on differing assumptions. Does "non-formal" education refer to processes of social change? Social conserva-

tion? Or to any and all pedagogical processes and tools (media, simulation, etc.) chosen to meet goals for specific groups of learners?

Infed.org distinguishes non-formal from informal education by tracing the term *non-formal* education to policy discussions in the 1960s and identifying some of its distinguishing features. Non-formal education occurs outside established systems and is *negotiated* with learners, but is still organized by community groups and others to “serve identifiable learning clienteles and learning objectives” (Smith, 2004b), usually disadvantaged groups. This form of education usually occurs across large populations. Trade union, health education, rural development, and literacy programs in countries such as Cuba, Ethiopia, and Nicaragua were cited as examples. The purpose of Reed’s article was to offer a rubric for distinguishing the purposes and procedures of non-formal education programs for agency administrators and staff.

Informal education, the idea at the heart of this dissertation, could be defined very briefly as “everything else,” but it requires some discussion in order to help establish parameters for the selection of participants for the study. Infed.org’s definition was used, because it refers broadly to “the lifelong process in which people learn from everyday experience.” Marsick and Watkins (2001) added specificity to the definition by noting that informal learning is *intentional*, “but not highly structured” (p. 25). Informal learning encompasses *self-directed learning* (Marsick & Watkins), the label that accurately represents the activities of the study’s participants in their roles as learners. *Incidental learning* was also evident in the participant narratives. Marsick and Watkins described incidental learning as tacit, sometimes unconscious, though “a passing insight can be probed and intentionally explored” (p. 26) as in trial and error and learning from mistakes.

Although informal education can take place anywhere and is represented in In-fed.org material as *opposite* the set curriculum of formal learning, it may involve a “special sort of social setting;” the educator builds “an atmosphere or grab[s] an opportunity” (Smith, 2003). Chapters 4-6 describe some of the settings in which the participants teach and they offer illustrations of the aspect of informal education that involves opportunities for people to study experiences or questions in focused ways and develop special interests. As has already been explained, the participants in the study describe their and their students’ intersecting interests in domestic artifacts and history.

Informal education seeks to work *with* rather than provide *for* learners (Smith, “Practicing Informal Education,” 2003), one learner or a group of learners. To that end, informal education’s primary pedagogical tool is conversation, but because it involves exploring and enlarging experience, hands-on and other instructional methods play a part. Direct observations of the study participants engaged in instruction are described in Chapter 5.

Usually, informal education is not linked to any formal educational institution (though structured informal education sometimes is), but it may be organized or promoted by a community group, a town, or some other entity. The study examines relationships the participants have with national, local, and for-profit organizations. And finally, as Chapters 1 through 3 have already outlined, the study describes how the participants merge the interests of body, mind, and spirit, and how they engage with the wider world. Smith defines informal education as democratic in its fullest sense, and argues that it should engage all of these aspects of human beings.

CHAPTER 4

THE PARTICIPANTS AS LEARNERS

With one exception, during the interviews the participants were located in their own homes in a room they identified as a “favorite” part of the house. Early in each conversation, the questions focused on the participants’ early lives, questions such as “Tell me about the houses you grew up in.” “What formal schooling have you had?” “Have you found your college majors to be relevant to your careers?” “What did your parents do for a living?” “How did you learn to do what you do now?” These questions were fruitful in illuminating the intersection between the domestic objects the participants value—from houses to hats and corsets—and the educational activities they stage inside and outside their domestic spaces. Although the participants have different specialties and different methods of educating, all of them speak about their pursuits as something they *love*: “I was in love.” “It was a passion!” “Something . . . just grabbed ahold of me . . .” In each case, they are talking about the places they live in and the projects they pursue.

The participant profiles offered first in this chapter help answer three of the study’s major research questions:

1. What are the participants’ perceptions of their formal educational experiences?
2. What social rewards or sanctions have they received in applying their practical/experiential knowledge?
3. Without academic degrees in the areas most important to them, do the participants’ experiences follow the trajectory of informal learning described by Smith (1999) in which “engagement deepens and becomes more complex,” ultimately becoming “organizing or facilitative roles”? How do everyday experiences and self-help resources help shape this type of expert knowledge?

The fourth question (what instructional settings and resources do the participants employ?) is answered in Chapter 5 with a description of three of the participants at instructional events they facilitated during this research project. Chapter 6 addresses the fifth question in a detailed analysis of the compatibility between the participants' responses and the philosophical categories already defined and explored in Chapter 3 from a historical perspective.

Bob and Pat

By the time Bob and Pat met and married, Bob had restored 11 houses and Pat was working on a folk-Italianate-style property that had been remodeled into a Queen Anne. The house was changed to keep up with fashions inspired by the Columbian Exposition of 1893. Like others in the neighborhood, the house gained a porch and turret and a half-story became a complete second floor. The house was located in Rock Island, Illinois; at the time, Pat was commuting to Chicago to serve as a social work consultant for the University of Chicago. Bob was also living in Rock Island while hosting a syndicated radio talk show called *House Doctor*. As the House Doctor, he took calls from and dispensed advice to do-it-yourself listeners and produced a companion newsletter. He was also writing newspaper and magazine columns; keynoting home and garden and trade shows; hosting seminars; designing a hands-on renovation skills course for at-risk youth at the Rock Island high school; training local gang youth in building trades by employing them at his project sites; working with various cities interested in aesthetic and economic revitalization; and mentoring homeowners looking to obtain financing for historic properties and technical assistance with their projects. Pat at that time saw herself as a house junkie building her nest; she had not made preservation or restoration a career, and educating others about it was limited to giving instruction to contractors; she

was still learning herself. Pat referred to the Rock Island Queen Anne by its house number, 605, and recalled the difficulty of finding anyone to help her do the work

I had already finished the house in Chicago, and so I sort of at least had a half of a clue about what the hell I was doing. And I called all these contractors, some of whom had been in this town for 60/70 years, well known, friends of my family. And I would meet them, I knew what I wanted to do, and I had the money to do it, and I would meet them in Rock Island, and they would go through the house, and I would ask them to send me a bid, tell them when I . . . Well they all left and went, "*Whew* lady, this is a big job." And they would leave and they would never call me back.

They would never even call me back.

Pat compensated for the lack of skilled and willing labor by hiring a group of bikers and a group of "profoundly mentally ill people" who worked in a day treatment program.

The house did get done, though far more as a "do it yourself" project than Pat had anticipated: "I had really pretty much done 605. So when Bob and I got married with kids, everybody sort of felt like it was my house." After Bob moved into 605, Pat became his partner in education, presenting at restoration seminars, co-hosting a PBS special called *Top Ten Tips for a Healthy House*, and later, appearing regularly in a weekly PBS series called *About Your House*, which Bob created, produced, and hosted. The series ran for three seasons (54 episodes) and is still seen in syndication. Bob and Pat took on the restoration of project houses for the purpose of resale and community improvement. Eventually, they made a promise to each other never again to live in a house undergoing renovation. Even so, they were attracted to the idea of living in a house that they worked on together. Then, Pat recalled, a friend asked her to take a look at this "really neat house" they wanted to restore but couldn't do themselves. Pat described seeing the

house for the first time: "I mean my heart, I was 16, I was so in love!" As she was talking, her voice conveyed the breathless excitement of their first meeting, from the first floor up to the third:

So we came in the back door, and the kitchen was huge, and my heart started to beat . . . and then we came in the solarium and, oh, the ceiling was falling down but there were these gorgeous windows that went forever, and this view of the river, and then we went into the living room and the dining room and there was like a built-in bookcase, and these big windows. Everything was really dark because they had velvet and drapes and sheers and, so, it was flocked wallpaper and all that sort of stuff, and then you went into the other room and it was big, and then you went into the front hallway, and you know, these gorgeous closets, you know, with metal wires where the guys put their bowlers, and then this great staircase, and upstairs these bedrooms, and then there's built-ins on the third floor, . . .

However, in spite of her infatuation, when Pat first tried to describe the house to Bob, she tried to "low-key it. And I was saying, 'So I think we should go look at this house.'"

She recalls Bob putting down his newspaper and saying,

"What's the address of this house?" And I said 935 Mississippi in Davenport. And he said, "Are you fucking trying to kill me? I've been through that house! I've done three renovation plans for that house to John Deere executives, and I told all of them it was like too big of a job, and it's too big of a job for me, and da de da da da." Oh we fought, we fought and fought for days and I said, "We don't have to buy the house, just LOOK at the house, LOOK AT THE HOUSE!" And so, then finally he relented, and we looked at the house, and then the kids said that they didn't want

to move, and then the kids were really disappointed because their dad decided, and here we are. That's my version. And I'm sticking to it.

Bob didn't dispute Pat's version, admitting that he had always wanted a "mansion":

It was, you know, sort of like the pinnacle of my career with old houses. The idea of doing it myself was important because I don't want to move into a house somebody else has done anyway. And this was architect-built by a very prominent architect here. It's just the epitome of a Tudor-style house that's just so well designed from a flow standpoint; there's just so much of interest . . . but it was a huge job.

Pat reminded Bob that at the time of the interview, it still was. The project involved approximately 6,000 square feet to restore. The interview was conducted in this Tudor Revival mansion in the solarium, which is surrounded by 9-foot windows. Both Bob and Pat said that this was their favorite room in the house, depending on the season; "We pretend we're in Jamaica when we're out here" (see Figure 2).



Figure 2. Site of the interview with Bob and Pat: The solarium.

John and Steve

John is the production manager for *Midwest Living* and several other special interest magazines focusing on home renovation, decorating, gardening, cooking, and crafts; Steve, his partner, is the merchandiser/buyer for a furniture store and manages the store's design staff. He and John met in college when they lived in the same fraternity house, the first of many old houses they would share. They hadn't been out of college for long when they moved to Des Moines and rented an apartment that was being rehabbed, actually "an attic in an old house." Soon after that move, Steve recalled, "we went on the house tour . . . and we fell in love with the old houses right then. Ever since then, we had a couple of different old apartments; we upgraded our old apartments in Sherman Hill for awhile then bought our first house." The neighborhood they chose, which bordered downtown Des Moines, was one John described as in rough condition at the time:

In the late 80's, [the goal] was still just stabilizing the neighborhood. I mean some of the areas were still a little rough, still fighting crime and illegal activity, but still trying to take the neighborhood to another level. It still had a bad rap; there had been a couple of murders in the early 80s . . . two people that had been restoring houses. Someone broke in, a burglar, and murdered somebody. And so that really, you know, kicked them in their knees really bad, and for a long time it was . . . people still think it's a bad neighborhood. Some people do.

Steve and John mentioned a 1903 brick structure in the neighborhood and their underwhelmed initial reaction: "It was a really unique design, and when we first drove by when we heard that they had bought it, we thought, 'My God, they bought the ugliest house in the neighborhood!'" Later, after they decided that this was the neighborhood in

which they wanted to own a home, “we ended up buying it from them, and loved it.”

Steve added that they feel the same about the house “to this day.”

The project set Steve and John on a path that led beyond “just picking up knowledge” to possessing highly specialized knowledge they began sharing with the neighborhood and the city. While they were still living in the 1903 brick property, a member of the neighborhood association “casually mentioned” that she would be interested in including their house on the annual tour. To get it ready for the public to see, they finished the interior restoration in seven months. Steve pointed out with a laugh, “We were younger and had much more energy then.” This was the first of many experiences in which they would open their home and answer questions from house tour participants; eventually, they became regular event chairs.

A second, much larger project in the same neighborhood followed; “All the way through the first and second we were real involved with the neighborhood.” Promoting the neighborhood and educating other homeowners involved doing radio, TV, and newspaper publicity; a neighborhood association presidency for John and service on the Historic District Commission; educating neighbors about historic appropriateness and technical how-to; and attending Planning and Zoning Commission, City Council, and Board of Adjustment meetings to educate political leaders about the neighborhood and about historic preservation.

At the time of the interview, Steve and John had moved on to another historic district in the same town, a district whose house tour they had helped organize. It started with saying to friends, “We’ll do it, we’ll show you how to do it; we’ll do it with you.” The event attracted 800 people, but the more important attraction was the one Steve and John formed to an 1898 Colonial Revival mansion in the neighborhood. John recalled,

“There’s nothing like falling in love with one that you want *so bad* that hasn’t been touched yet. Hasn’t been restored yet. You know, it’s like, Oh my God, imagine what *you* could do to that house.”

The property, however, was not for sale, so for a time, their love for the house was unrequited:

Steve: This house has the site, with the river, . . .

John: And we wanted a big house. We wanted a big old house. It was *big*, and it had a lot of the parts inside. I guess, I don’t know, we’ve talked about this before, what we call the reception room would probably be [our favorite] room, with the fireplace and the ceiling and the stairway, the bookcases, and . . .—we’d bring people over when we were looking at it. They’d be living down here and stuff, and we’d drive by and sit in the driveway.

Steve: Watch the tenants come in and out . . .

As strong as the attraction was to the house’s exterior, what counted most was what they would eventually find inside it. John explained,

We wouldn’t buy a house to keep forever and live in if it didn’t have a lot of the original fabric in it. That kind of stuff is important to us. So I guess that’s part of what we like about an old house, the original stuff. I mean, you know, if all this was gone, we wouldn’t be here . . . If it was gutted in here and we had to recreate it, it wouldn’t be right. It needs to be the old materials. . . . All things just kind of worked together to bring us here.

The interview took place in the dining room in front of a massive bay window overlooking the Des Moines River. We were seated at an Empire-style, quarter-sawn, claw-foot oak dining table. The elaborate table had been a centerpiece in Steve and John’s

staging of a recent office party and other events. The acquisition of the three-story house had made it possible for them to begin to act on a fledgling ambition: to merge their restoration and career interests and form a new business: events planning/hosting and, possibly, a historic interiors design studio. A task on their schedule the day of the interview was taking down Christmas decorations they had been commissioned to design for the Governor's mansion. A few months before, Steve had served as the interior design member on the team of a *Queer Eye for the Strait Guy*-style makeover for a local conservative radio talk show host.

Steve and John called attention to a deep wound in one of the feet of the table where we sat during the interview. It, along with various other pieces in the house, had served as a chew toy for their bulldog. John remarked as the interview got started, "We love our antiques—but we love our dog more." (See Figure 3).



Figure 3. Site of the interview with John and Steve: The dining room.

Joan

Unlike the two couples participating in this research, Joan's story isn't about the restoration of houses, although she also identified a *place* as a *passion*: the American West. She recalled her childhood imaginings about the West that led her to settle in the real thing:

I was born in '57 and there were . . . Westerns on the television from one end to the other. And having been in Colorado and seen the real cowboys, and, you know, been to the Wranglers where they have barbecue beef for dinner and then the Wranglers sing, I was really immersed in that Western thing. Roy Rogers was really big, and he was kind of an idol, and Dale Evans and all of that. And I'd had sort of a romance with the West always. And I really did expect to end up out here. And, you know, we played with Lincoln Logs and stuff, and, coming to Colorado and seeing the log cabins that the miners had built that were still standing after a hundred years, I thought was a really . . . It was ingenious of them to use the materials that were there and they fit the area, because it was natural to that area.

These early imaginings, and the Lincoln-log building, left a strong enough impression to determine the kind of structure Joan wanted to live in, a common theme in all the conversations. A centerpiece in Joan's life, however, was the building of a new house.

When she and her husband, Tom, were planning to move to Colorado and get married, she told him that she had always dreamed of buying land and building a log house, and "that sounded cool to him!" Like the other participants, Joan had definite criteria for the look and construction of the house, to make it a "real" log home; as it turned out, the toy Lincoln Logs provided some of the design specifications for the house. Joan explained,

We looked at having a custom log home made, where the people actually are stripping the bark, the whole bit. They are so outrageously priced. They are for the rich people. And the logs are larger, and so you get a smaller house and all of that. But we bought a kit from a company in Montana, and the logs . . . the logs are milled, and they are rounded on either side. I was real insistent on that, that I wanted that round look, the Lincoln log.

While the other participants described the intense labor involved in renovating a structure, Joan described the years of patience required to be able to build the structure they wanted; years in which they were living in a trailer to save money for the right piece of land and “one by one, year by year . . . putting in the utilities;” putting in an eighth-mile road that snakes around the mountain where the house is situated; clearing the 1000 trees necessary to pave the road and build the structure; blasting rock to make way for a septic system; bringing in power; and digging a well for water. Joan was able to explain in great detail the design of the house and the joinery of each course of logs, the house’s insulation system, and its energy efficiency. Although the interview took place in a Boulder, Colorado, motel room at the foot of the Flatiron Mountains 18 miles from where she lives approximately 8,400 feet up, the house is central to understanding who she is and what she does. She offered a virtual tour of the log home during the interview:

The interior . . . it’s all exposed logs . . . the wall you see from the outside as you come to approach the house, is the same log inside. It’s a big great room; I wanted it very, very open. And so there are beams of course for structural support . . . And then any dividing walls, those are drywall. And there’s also tongue and groove wood. And the ceiling in the living room has the great big beams that are support-

ing the floor, and the ceiling is the floor of the upstairs. . . . But we've been in the house now eleven years, and we heated with our wood stove all that time. And it's really efficient. And we could stoke it over night and it keeps us warm until morning. And we could even leave it as we went to work knowing that it was safe, catalytic converters and all that stuff.

It's not a big house. It's 1,875 square feet. So it's not very large; it has three bedrooms, but we robbed space from one to put a jacuzzi tub in upstairs . . . So the house is oriented . . . double French doors and a set of four skylights across the top to the south, so that the sun soaks into the tile; it's the dark terra cotta color. And it doesn't have a shiny finish because that would bounce it right back out again? So that is a passive solar, soaking in the sun's rays and then that radiates back out again. And the logs have an incredible thermal mass . . . The house is really cool in the summer and incredibly warm in the winter.

Having lived in Colorado for 17 years, Joan described her immersion in local history, her acquisition of authority on things constructed in and natural to the area. Her passion is preserving or recreating the artifacts of people's lives in the 19th century West, particularly women's lives, in order to tell their story for audiences at Western festivals, museums, and women's organizations. Looking back at her own past, Joan described a painfully shy child who experienced a transformation when she figured out what she loved to do:

When I got into my senior year, I got involved in the plays that they were doing. And it was like, I had to make up for lost time. And it was the first time really ever, I think that I or my parents had recognized that there was a passion. Something that had just grabbed ahold of me. And what I was doing was spending 'til three

and four in the morning either in the costume shop or with my living room piled with fabrics. I did the *Wizard of Oz*, with a cast of 77 people, on \$17.

While she worked regular jobs in marketing and secretarial work, she was still holding her interest in costuming in reserve: “It was something that at some point I wanted to bring back into my life, knowing it wasn’t going to be my means of support.” She explained how it made a comeback in her life when she visited

a little Western mining town called Central City. And they had an annual event that had been going for quite a few years by the time I got here; it’s called Lou Bunch days. And Lou Bunch was the last madam to work that town before the gold played out and she moved on. And it was really creative because that was quite a different thing to promote. And they had bed races and Can Can girls and the girls running around in their little saloon girl-looking things, and then the madams. A lot of the older ladies dressed as madams, and, um, the first year we were here, in ’86 before we were married, . . . I said to Tom, “I’d like to go.” But I’d like to go in costume.

Joan won the Central City Madam contest several years in a row. Eventually, she formed a group of 16 performing women called The Shady Ladies, who through persistence over time received official designation and financial support as Central City’s Goodwill Ambassadors. In one of their educational performances, the ladies position chairs and nightstands, parlor lamps, trunks, a brass bed, antique tin tub, signage, and corsets, hats, and Victorian negligees to recreate a Victorian “Parlor House” (see Figure 4, p. 167). Many of the Parlor House set pieces are family antiques. As a sign at the edge of the stage announces, men could come to Parlor Houses to be “Taken in and Done For.” The group’s Unconventional Women of the West performances bring to life eight

individual women per one-hour show, women such as Calamity Jane who could not or would not be confined to a conventional 19th century household. Joan serves as president, director, and chief marketer for the group.



Figure 4. The Parlor House set.

Having been shaped by it herself, she is conscious of the mystique of the West created through popular culture. She commented, “The West has a lot of wonderful festivals, and they’re all related to the Old West; . . . when people from Shanghai or something come here, they want to see cowboys and Indians and saloon girls. You know? So the area caters to that.”

Joan has also created one-woman shows set in the 20th century, one for a portrayal of a woman’s life “On the Home Front” during World War II and one for “Lost in the 50’s with Lucy,” a cultural history of the 1950s. Both are structured around props, costumes, and music.

Joan is the solo participant in this study. Her husband, Tom, participates solely as transportation assistant: "Tom doesn't give a hang about theatre. . . But I've tried taking him along and dressing him up, and he's like dressing a Siamese cat. I don't even want to go there. But he's been really helpful." She noted that in a month, the group would be taking the Parlor House on the road and would have an enormous 16 x 20-foot tent to set up, one that was specially made of canvas duck to look old and authentic for a presentation about 19th century life.

Formal Education

Although all the participants in the study have some college education, not all have completed degrees. The interviews suggested that formal education was significant in their lives to different degrees, in most cases far less so than education pursued by other means. From some of the conversations, a theme emerged of the school experience, including college, as largely irrelevant.

By the time he began pursuing a degree in construction management, Bob found that his practical experience had already surpassed anything the program could offer:

At UNI I went up there and I was gonna be in construction management or teach shop, and then they started eighty-sixing all the voc-tech programs around the country. So I switched to the construction management part of it . . . But like at UNI, the professor says, "Geez, Bob, you ought to be teaching this class." You know? And so it was like, I was just there to get a piece of paper. That part of it, the diploma, was never a big part of it for me. It was life experience and learning things, and I liked to explore and research . . . find things out.

He left college with 170 credit hours. Only 120 or 130 as he recalled were required for graduation, but he changed majors several times: "I have a good education, just don't

have the piece of paper.” The lack of interest in, and ultimate decision to not complete the degree did not translate to a dislike of the college experience, but rather a stronger interest in courses not “required:” “Quite frankly, the—the liberal arts part of college really interested me. I was a philosophy major. I was a history major. I really enjoyed that part of college. Didn’t feel constrained.” A few months prior to the interview, Bob had been job-hunting. Although his resume consumed multiple pages to itemize the breadth of his experience, he discovered that missing the “piece of paper” mattered; younger interviewers making hiring decisions would accept no substitute. Several months later, Bob found a position as Preservation Specialist for the Historic Landmarks Foundation in another Midwestern state.

John, too, went to college, studying communication studies and public relations for four years, but chose not to complete a course of study—to get what he also called the “piece of paper.” In his case, a work experience at a family business in his hometown pulled him away from a formal program of study, “and then it was difficult to go back and finish.” As Steve put it (Steve has a BA in Communications/Radio and TV broadcasting), “He got into his career.” Almost twenty years later, John doesn’t dismiss the idea of finishing his degree if he were able to find the time, particularly because his employer reimburses educational expenses. Now, however, he noted that he would make an entirely different choice of discipline: “I’ve really thought a lot about getting a historic preservation degree. Although, I work for Meredith corporation, which is a publisher, so I really don’t know if I could tie that in . . . at all.”

The practical link between degree earned and living earned played a part in most of the conversations. A concern Steve and John expressed related to this theme was that such a program—a formal program in an area they love—wouldn’t equip them with a

degree marketable in their geographical area. John commented, “If I had known then what I know now, I quite possibly would have gone into interior design or preservation, which there sure isn’t a lot of call for. There aren’t any jobs in that field, in Iowa, really.” The idea was inspired in part by a friend pursuing a degree in the preservation field through a distance-learning program in another state. When asked if they had found many practical applications for their college education in their lives after college, their response to the question was “Not at all.” During that part of the conversation, Steve interjected an emphatic comment:

Steve: “Hey, if both of us had it to do over again, . . .”

John: Hands down,

Steve: We would have chosen different study paths.

One point to make about these reflections on the general relevance of college education is that of course, participants such as Steve and John didn’t know then what they know now; they mentioned that their interests had simply changed as their lives changed. Pat made the point that, like most of the other participants, college had nothing to do with inspiring her to pursue an “avocation” that became much more than a hobby for her and a career for the others: “All my formal education was about what I thought my career was going to be about, it had nothing to do with anything else, like home ec, or art, or decorating, or horticulture. Those are all things I discovered I was really interested in as like an avocation after I left college, and then I just read books and . . .” In fact, Pat had experienced something earlier in her education that might have discouraged those interests if not for the intervention of her father. She explained, “The last art class I had was in eighth grade, and I had a teacher who was a bitch, and she made me cry all the time. And if it weren’t for my father, I wouldn’t have passed

eighth grade because I would never have passed art school. Cuz he'd be like, 'We can do this!'" However, Pat is one interviewee whose college education was completely relevant to her eventual livelihood: She earned a BA in psychology, with a minor in political science, then an MSW, and has been a practicing social worker since completing her degree.

Joan pursued her college degree in off-and-on fashion. After a couple of years at a university, she visited her grandmother in Colorado and stayed for eight years. During that time, she worked for a phone company. She explained, "when the divestiture came between the Bell System and AT & T, at that point I decided to come—to go back to Iowa City and finish my degree. My parents were willing to let me live at home and pay my tuition, so hey, an offer you can't refuse." Several factors influenced her choice of major:

My first major when I went into school was theatrical design. I very much wanted to do costuming. You know, living in Iowa and not having been outside that area, I'd have to go to New York or California to make a living with this, and that was a really frightening prospect. And, uh, when I came out to Colorado, I took a course at a business college, you know for secretarial work and things like that, and I got on with the phone company. And I was really interested in their PR department. And, I don't have good math skills, so when I went back to the University, instead of getting a business/marketing type degree I went for journalism and mass communication. So that's what my degree is in.

Unlike Pat's experience with her art teacher, and other participants who mentioned nothing about their high school and college instructors, Joan mentioned that high school introduced her to significant mentors who had much to do with shaping her future, even

remolding her personality as an “incredibly shy child” and “kind of a loner.” One was a close friend in high school who was very persistent in trying to involve her in theatre. Another was “an incredible drama instructor”:

Oh, she’s just our idol. I feel . . . she’s in her 70s now and we still correspond. We write back and forth all the time. I learned a great deal from her. She was a battle-axe. I was scared to death of her! Oh, we weren’t allowed to speak during rehearsals, we were only supposed to watch what was going on on the stage, and pay attention! You know how kids are, if you’re not the one up on the stage, it’s neah neah neah neah neah neah, and she would not allow that. She would take people out of the cast if they couldn’t behave. She really was a taskmaster. But, I could see that the reason she was being so hard on us was to teach us. And she had tons of experience and a great love for theatre. And uh, she was just my mentor. And seeing what theatre involved and that my interest was in costuming. And she said, “Have at it.”

These experiences were followed by a drama class for one English credit. In this class, the students did what Joan called “themes, and readers’ theatre, and things like that.” Involvement with plays like *The Importance of Being Ernest* earned her enough hours in her senior year to get a Thespian designation, “you know with the big national organization or something, and it usually took people three or four years to get one.” The price she paid for her passion for extracurriculars was her performance in the required curriculum:

My grades went to hell. You know. And yet my parents didn’t see that as a bad thing because they could see for the first time . . . And then when I started at the University of Iowa, I majored in Theatrical Design. But, I was a terrible student; I’d

sleep 'til 11, miss classes, and of course, it wasn't just theatre classes. It was rhetoric, and math, and all the rest of the stuff. You know, I wasn't the best student.

Her goal was to go to design school, but Joan pointed out some additional personal issues that may have influenced the decision not to, to delay finishing college, and eventually to go back to college:

My parents both worked at the university. I was adopted when they were in their 40s. So by the time I got up for going to college, my brother and I, they were ready to retire. So I think part of my not being there as a student was a rebellion thing. Then, when I came to Colorado, I didn't do anything with theatre for a very long time. And got a job and started working in the real world and going wow! You know, this is very different! And that not having a degree, I wouldn't be able to move forward in anything.

Ultimately, Joan too worried about the practical problem of making a living and finished her college degree, with the intention of working for the Bell System or AT & T in public relations.

Pat, as a social worker, volunteered a unique perspective on the issue of whether or not formal college education "pays":

One of the things that we're finding at the social service end of it is that a lot of these kids that go on to college probably shouldn't go to college, and a lot of the jobs that they get were jobs that in past years were not given to college graduates, and so they're actually overeducated and underutilized because there's not a gazillion jobs out there that are really for quote "college," what used to be considered college people. That's what we're seeing on the social services side. So you know, I have

working for me now as an administrative assistant a girl who graduated from Augustana College with a 4.00. She's a philosophy person. She can't get a job.

Bob has formulated his own position on the value of college education and incorporated it into his teaching. That view emerged when he was describing his role as headmaster at a school for preservation called the Pine Mountain School. His answer also reflected how the declining importance of manual labor has changed the American economy, and thus the perceived value of particular forms of education.

The idea is to find kids in Kentucky that are at-risk, who are identified, and that's easily done. And to interview them and find the ones that have enough of a gleam in their eye and an interest in this to bring them in and to teach them a trade. So that when they get out of high school, they're no longer, they're not . . . in the old days, in Kentucky, you graduated from high school or you dropped out when you were 15 and you went to work in a coal mine. And those kinds of jobs just aren't there anymore. And here in the Quad Cities, you could graduate from high school and walk into a job at any of the farm implement companies, have a job for life, make really pretty good money, for a blue-collar job, full benefits, and a retirement plan. Those jobs do not exist. And so, we find more at-risk kids today because there's not as much hope for them. And, regardless of what we think . . . I can remember my mother calling Roosevelt High School in Des Moines where I went to high school and saying "Don't let Bob take shop, he's going to college." Well, great, but you know, what did I end up doing, involved at some level in that genre all my life. And, there are, I don't know what the percentage is but there's a large percentage of kids that never have and never will go to college. And how are we training them to be productive citizens, so that they can have a decent life?

Informal Learning

The participants' path to area expertise began with informal learning in its truest sense—early experiences in their families' living rooms, helping out in home shops, helping around a farm, or exploring an attic. In some cases, participants' interests were shaped through observation of the tastes and interests of people close to them, family members simply going about their daily lives. Some family members attempted to instruct and exert an influence through explicit advice-giving. The participants illustrate both the influence of upbringing and independence from it.

Incidental Learning: Role-Modeling and Rebellion

The narrative themes described in this section relate to the shaping of personal tastes and interests in an unstructured, non-directed way, simply through the course of daily living (see the discussion of incidental learning on page 153). The narratives raise the possibility of both people and things playing a significant part.

Influential Structures and Objects

The line of questioning reported in this section was influenced by the historical and contemporary literature (see Chapter 3) that suggests that learning not only takes place in the house, but is in some respect initiated *by* the house; that structures and their contents can shape intellect and personality. The questions were chosen for their potential usefulness in revealing the relationships between the people interviewed and the objects and settings they value, as well as their motives for choosing architectural and other material objects as pedagogical springboards. Their responses yielded many examples of material artifacts shaping people, as well as people shaping artifacts.

One might expect the participants to report being reared in the same type of environment they now value so highly; this, however, was not necessarily the case. Some of

the interviews yielded examples of experiences outside a family home—where parents wanted their surroundings to be new, not old—providing a basis for comparison and inspiration; in some cases, participants experienced a strong desire for what they didn't yet have.

As Pat described the houses she grew up in, she noted that “by and large there was nothing architecturally redeeming about any of the houses . . . they were just the standard, typical, middle class Americana.” These structures included a cement block house, “little ranches . . . out in little cornfield developments,” and a split level that Bob immediately noted was “tacky.” Pat’s grandparents lived in older houses, and she had great aunts who lived in “this big old farm house out in the country.” The one exception to the architecturally uninteresting structures Pat lived in herself was “a foursquare that was an older home, the first older home that we lived in.” It was not her mother’s idea of the perfect house. She “used to complain because she would wash the hardwood floors all the time; she wanted carpet.”

Pat had a different view of the house, the only one she could call “sort of neat,” for its woodwork and its size. In explaining why she liked the house, she attached strong feelings to it as the other participants did with various structures throughout the interviews. The “good feeling” Pat attached to this house related to architectural features as well as the people and events she associated with the structure: “I think I liked that house a lot just because it’s sort of where I feel like I grew up and kids would come over all the time, and it was real warm and had a nice big front hall; not as big as ours now, but then—so I liked that house; I thought it had some—it felt good, it had character.” In a later residence, Pat’s only fond memory was attached to some alterations she was allowed to make: “the house on 35th St., I didn’t mind that house, it was a new house, but I

liked that house because I got to create a rec room for myself and all my friends down in the basement, so that was really its only redeeming feature as far as I could tell.”

Steve and John both lived in older, interesting houses, but moved as their parents’ tastes, like Pat’s parents’, motivated them to move into or build something new. John remembers, “Until I was six we lived in a probably 1910 house, and I don’t remember much about it as far as, I mean, I remember the layout and stuff and I’ve gone back to it since then, but I don’t remember much about it.” Steve was born in 1965 and his mother still lives on the family farm they lived on when he was born. Back then, they lived in “the old farm house that was moved several miles by horses around the turn of the century and was my family house.” In 1965, Steve’s parents built a ranch house connected to the old farm house his family then rented out: “So we still had the old house, which was an 18—probably 1870s Italianate house, and, so, I kind of grew up having two houses. I was raised and grew up in the ranch house, but got to spend a lot of time in the old farm house, too.”

John’s family moved to a 1970s brick ranch. Even though his memories were vague, John, who had no further contact with the 1910 house, felt something missing while living in the new ranch-style house: “I always wanted a house with an upstairs, you know? When I was a kid, I always wanted a house with an upstairs. . . I always wanted an attic to go play in. We had an attic at the other house; I remember going up there and digging around a little bit, but I always wanted an attic.” Steve’s reminiscence of the attached farmhouse indicated a similar feeling of something missing, since he was only a visitor after the move. He explained, “We rented it out—We always rented it to families with kids, so I would love spending time over there. I always really felt more at

home in that house. There was just lots more room to play, and big rooms, *big*—they probably had 11-foot ceilings. But I always loved being in our old farm house.”

Bob is the only one of the participants to have lived from his earliest memory in the type of structure he later chose for himself. He recalled the impact one of those early residences had on his imagination when his family moved from St. Louis to Des Moines. He recalled being sensitive to his surroundings from a very young age. At the time of this move, he was three:

My parents bought in an established old neighborhood, this absolutely drop-dead Craftsman style house, red-tiled roof, quarter-sawn oak woodwork, beams, huge rooms, and hardwood floors, tile bathrooms, and it was a fabulous house . . . I was very young. Three years old. I mean, I remember moving into the house, remember staying at the Savory Hotel while my dad closed on it, and moving into it and being just in awe, thinking I was moving into a castle with all the wood, the French doors all over, and I just thought it was the coolest thing you’d ever seen in your life.

There were nooks and crannies all over the house, and alcoves, and you know I used to sleep in my bed at night thinking that some monster was going to come in through this little alcove and nail me, you know? Um, so sometimes I would actually get out of my bed and sleep under it. Which is a whole other psychological thing. And my mother . . . the house was just filled with antiques.

Time Alone

Just as Steve kept busy on the family farm and played with the kids in the more interesting house next door, the participants as a group grew up with considerable time

to fill however they chose to. They provided several in-depth illustrations of children structuring their own time in ways that involved household objects.

Bob's mother, who was an antique dealer, writer, and "left-wing feminist," was also described as a stay-at-home mom who "was just never home." A nanny was employed full time, and Bob mentioned that he didn't remember seeing either of his parents much when he was growing up. This left him plenty of freedom to explore the nooks and crannies of the structure he found so fascinating and, at age 11, he embarked on his first commercial venture making jewelry boxes and selling them to neighbors door to door without his parents' knowledge.

Besides making use of the shop when no one was looking, Bob filled his free time with bigger entrepreneurial ventures as he got older, and he described how he "bought a house when I was 17, and my parents didn't know about it." He explained how, as a teenager, he was able to acquire a land contract without his parents' knowledge.

I was in a play with another buddy of mine, and this gay couple wanted to leave Des Moines and move to San Francisco—and um, they had this bungalow, this Craftsman bungalow, and they said, "Do you kids want to buy a house?" We said "well, we're only 17." So we went over and looked at it, and they said, "Well we'll sell it to you, and we'll be the bank. It's called selling on contract." So we said ok, saved up about ten grand between us—we gave them five thousand down, and we bought it at like 28, \$30,000, something like that, put five thousand in it. And uh, we spent five thousand renovating it, and then we sold it, for around \$65,000. But we couldn't sign the deed, so we had to go tell our parents. And they were upset at first, and then they found out how much money we made and they thought we were good little Catholics.

Joan's reflections illustrated similar childhood independence. She remembered a family home that like other participants' childhood homes lacked architectural distinction. Her family first lived on a farm, and then the structure they moved to when her father decided to go back to school on the GI bill, a two-story built in the 1940s. Joan recalled three bedrooms, a basement, "built-in different types of cupboards like a pantry-style in the kitchen, things like that. It wasn't very large." As in Bob's household, antiques were an important part of the setting, but not as part of the ritual of collecting. To Joan's parents, keeping antiques signified living frugally. She described the nature of her parents' household:

Well . . . they were sort of the repository; everyone else wanted new modern furniture and would give [the antiques] to them. And they were, you know, they were raised during the Depression. Actually Mother was born in 1914 and Daddy in 1920. So they were cognizant of what was happening during the Depression. And there's just an attitude, "Well that's good, why do you need to throw that chair out?" And Mom and Dad had been practical Iowa farm people to begin with. It was like, "We'll make do with what we have." And so I grew up with antiques with a great love for them and appreciation for them.

Joan's descriptions serve as an illustration of how a child with a high degree of independence can turn "making do with what we have" into childhood entertainment, and how the principle came to represent much more in her adulthood.

It was in a nice, quiet neighborhood. There weren't very many children, mostly older people. I didn't have a lot of people to play with, and I learned to be really good at entertaining myself. I did a lot of play type of things. I had a huge bookcase that, um, I would make into a doll house for Barbies—I loved Barbies. And you

know, every shelf was different . . . and I'd wrap 'em in fabric. I didn't know how to sew, so Mother would get real upset when I'd take their heads off to put their clothes on. [Laughs] But just hours and hours I would stay doing that, and you know, a girlfriend from school could come and join me to do that, and that was wonderful. But if not, I was fine too. But I did an awful lot of that type of—I guess actually theatre as a child. And I had—my brother is just about a year older than I am; we were both adopted from different parents but we were close in age, actually in the same class in school. But we would see things on television, and we would even recreate commercials. Brand X, you know, at that time, or something. And we'd play *I Dream of Jeannie* and *F-Troop*, and you know the programs that were on television at the time when we were small—costumes and sets and everything.

Influential People

Typical of the participants' early lives in the late 50s and 60s were stay-at-home mothers who also had a career before or during the raising of their children. Pat's was a stay-at-home mom until Pat entered high school; she then took up real estate, which Pat remembers her mother loved. The participants mentioned both fathers' and mothers' influences, in some cases because of the jobs they held, in others because of the hobbies they pursued. Other family members were mentioned, along with one teacher, the high school drama director Joan described earlier in this chapter.

Pat recalled that her father was a sales representative, to which Bob added, "The Dean Martin of Rock Island." Pat concurred: "My dad was Dean Martin. Frank Sinatra. My parents were both beautiful people; they dressed to the nines and drove big convertibles and all that kind of stuff, and I think Daddy liked that lifestyle." It was per-

haps another side of her father that was more influential in shaping her future interests:

He sold visual gauges and machine tools for the farm implement industry. But my dad was very very very very *very* artistic. Uh, my mother didn't have an artistic bone in her body, but my dad was just this phenomenal artist. He drew people, nudes actually, and they're pinups . . . Just beautifully proportioned, and he evidently as the story goes was offered a job when he and his mother were out in California when he was younger; he was offered a job at Disney. And he turned it down, because he was young and he was supposed to take care of his mom, and so they ended up moving back here. But he was very artistic . . . Although we never owned a home, my dad was really handy, although I don't know how I know he was handy. But I mean at one point in time he made this beautiful walnut bookcase, and gun rack, and all this sort of stuff. He liked to work with wood though he never had a shop . . .

Bob's father was an "upper-mid-level executive for Standard Oil of California who "ran an Ortho lawn and garden/agricultural—in fact he created, helped create the company when he got out of World War II. My mother was a writer, and she wrote books about how awful it is being a corporate wife—national magazine articles." When asked what it was his mother objected to specifically, Bob explained, "Well, you're supposed to be like a Stepford wife. You know you're supposed to have a bobbed hairdo, and drive the right cars, and be in Junior League, and put on parties for all your husband's business people. And join, be a member of the Country Club. They were members of the Country Club and all that but she just didn't want to play that game." Instead, she did what she really wanted to do, writing and antique dealing. Bob's father provided a sec-

ond role model in the passionate pursuit of an avocation. This “frustrated corporate guy” fantasized about becoming a beekeeper. His avocations and his personality style apparently restricted his corporate career advancement:

He would go to the meetings in San Francisco and everybody else would be brown-nosing the CEO’s and the presidents and he’d be off in the corner talking to his salesmen. And that’s all he cared about was his people. He wasn’t interested—he could have ended up being—I don’t know where he could have ended up but he got offered all kinds of promotions and turned them all down.

Meanwhile, he was doing what he loved to do:

He was a farmer from the day we moved into the house when we moved from St. Louis. I mean we had illegal pigeon coops in the back yard; we had ponies, chickens, roosters; and the neighbors were just insane. And then when he built that house out on the South Side, he had bigger chicken coops. God, what did we have, we had every kind of barnyard animal you could think of right in the heart of this brand new development. And he used to get me involved in pigeon shows. We used to go show these Chinese owl pigeons. I’d always find something to do with my dad because he traveled a *lot*. I rarely saw him growing up.

Eventually Bob’s father realized his real dream when Ortho eliminated its agricultural division. “His gig was the agricultural stuff. They offered him early retirement, and he bought a farm and became one of the largest beekeepers in the country. He wanted to move out there, but my mother wouldn’t live in a new house. In fact they hired an architect to design a new house. They didn’t build it. He just went out there every day.” Bob’s father offered his son explicit advice that he should do what he loved, and that he had a responsibility to teach others what he learned, and he modeled these

principles in his everyday life. When asked if his father had taught him some of the things he was now teaching others, Bob recalled how he used to help his father with his renovation projects: “I’d hold drywall up with my head while he nailed it up; I’d . . . he had a nice woodworking shop and I’d—he didn’t like me using the big power tools so I’d wait till he was gone and he was gone a lot, and I’d use them.”

Bob’s mother, it’s reasonable to assume, shaped another facet of Bob’s development in her explicit adamancy about the family living in old structures. Bob elaborated on how this view eventually came into conflict with a decision his father made when he got tired of renovating.

He built a new house. On the South side of Des Moines. He drug my mother screaming and complaining because she hates new houses, and built the house and uh, it was a Dutch Colonial with a cedar-shingled roof, and within two years my mother made us move back to the same neighborhood and we bought a French provincial house in the same neighborhood which had solid cherry woodwork, crown moldings, five fireplaces, and hardwood floors . . . so we really lived in big houses growing up, and all period architecturally . . . even the house that my dad built, he custom built it so it had a lot of architectural features to it. And that’s the last house I lived in with my family.

Because the building trades eventually became Bob’s vocation, he mentioned apprenticeships as relationships that were also important to him. He named, for example, the owner of a German furniture company from whom he learned how to design and build furniture while he was working on his college degree sporadically.

John’s father “worked at the same company, a printing company, his whole life and ended up owning it the last 17 years. Worked there in his adult life, and you know

worked there 40-some years. And my mother ended up working there when I graduated from high school, but other than that, she never worked the whole time I was growing up, and I was the youngest of six. She stayed home to raise kids.” Steve’s dad was a farmer, his mom a stay-at-home mom who raised five kids, of whom Steve is the youngest.

About their first major restoration project, Steve and John were asked the question, “What was it that made you think you could do that kind of work, or was it something you didn’t really puzzle over? Did you have any background at all in construction?” The response reflected both men’s perception of John’s father as an instructor and helper:

Steve: None whatsoever. Neither of us had really swung a hammer in our lives until that first house.

John: My dad had done, you know, projects and stuff and built the house that we lived in, the brick one that I grew up in, so I knew we could always fall back on him to help.

Steve: And teach us.

John: And teach us, and he did, and has still continued to help us even on this house.

Steve and John had not depended on their parents in the formation of their architectural tastes, however. John remarked about his father, “He had helped on our other two houses, but to him it was always an ‘old’ house. ‘Oh yeah that’s neat, but it’s still old.’ He always wanted to make it look new.” Reflecting on his parents’ tastes while he was growing up, John mentioned that

Yeah, we never had an antique in the house unless it was something handed down—very few. [to Steve] You probably had a few more handed down things than we even did.

Steve: Then we had the old house, too.

John: Right, but around my house it was all brand new. It was new stuff.

John's story is unique in that it presented a case of the students, in this case the teacher's son and his partner, not only using the teacher's knowledge to meet their own unique objectives, but also to in turn instruct and influence the teacher/parent. Steve and John described how they played a part in the evolution the retirement plans of John's father and, apparently, his architectural tastes.

John: He was over here helping us on the third floor to get moved in, working on the plumbing or something, and I had mentioned it to him, and I said, you know, that building up the street's for sale. It had been vacant for about 8 or 10 years. And he said, "You know, we should go look at it." Cause I—over the years we'd always try to get him involved to buy a property or something, you know, especially if we thought he could make money on it, buy it, and fix it and sell it. And, that was on a Sunday, and by that Wednesday or Thursday, he was buying it. We went and looked at it that afternoon, we got our screw guns out, got the OK to go ahead and go in and went and looked at it, and the next thing we know he's buying it! And, of course my mom was freaking out. He had just sold the company he owned and so he was retired . . .

Steve: He had just retired earlier that year . . .

Question: And so she thought he was going to relax?

John: Travel, they were going to travel. And, the funny thing is, he had never been interested in anything old like that.

An important similarity in the group's experiences is an agrarian background, Steve and Joan growing up in part on farms, Bob's father bringing the farm home to the suburbs. Most of the participants have at one time or another been in close touch with this form of material reality, learning about basic cycles and necessities of animal and human life though living in a basically urban culture. Joan described an intersection between her father's career as an agricultural researcher at a university and the activities of her childhood. Her father welcomed his children's participation in parts of his work.

My dad ran a research lab for the pediatric department; he was out at Oakdale, which had been a tuberculosis sanitorium at one time. And it was where they would have the inmates work. So they grew vegetables and they did canning, and crafts that they'd sell and things like that. So it was a great big campus kind of thing. And um, the university purchased it and changed all of the buildings into labs and things like that. So Daddy actually raised the pigs that they used for research. He had been a farmer, he had raised pigs and had a dairy herd, and so he was a natural to take his chemistry work and then also raise his pigs. And there was a special breed of them, I think we had to go to Indiana to get the original boar, but they were called mini-pigs. But Daddy was doing studies on infant nutrition, and the digestive system of pigs is the closest to humans, beyond monkeys or anything else.

But it was interesting because we would, they were live, so we'd go out on the weekends to feed them, the little piggies, and we named them all. But we understood what they were for—you know, what end they would eventually come to. They

were going to be dissected and studied, things like that. And then Mother was a registered nurse and worked in, oh, she was in orthopedics and student health, where they had an infirmary so that if students were sick they could get out of the dorms.

Another influential figure in Joan's life was an uncle who also involved her in his work. He was an antique dealer in Pennsylvania, "and he had business overseas; he worked for a big company. He would bring back European antiques; he would come to Iowa to get primitives [laughs]. Which always made us feel like, 'We're out here and we have *primitives*.' You know. Pine furniture that was available in Iowa City and Iowa. And he would take us on his excursions. We would go to different dealers and go to estate sales . . ." Approximately eight years old at that time, Joan described what she learned from her uncle's collecting runs and the impression they left on her:

Just like children can learn a foreign language, antiques was a foreign language for me that I just soaked up. And I always enjoyed that . . . Uncle Lawrence is going to come to visit, that means we're going to look at antiques. But it was exciting. And I learned about so many different things. It wasn't just like he did furniture, and that was all. It'd be candlesticks, it'd be glassware, it'd be farm implements. You know, and it was wonderful to have such a broad education in antiques at that time. And that was just a beginning in that I always studied on my own, and if I have free time now, my favorite thing to do is go in and . . . my house is so full! I couldn't fit another thing in there. Now I just appreciate them, and it's kind of fun to price them and say Oh my! You know, mother has this, and look how much it's costing now.

Joan directly linked her experience with her Uncle Lawrence to the sensibility that currently drives the design of her educational programs:

In my programs, that's something that I really love is having the real thing. So the Parlor House is, if it isn't actual antiques it's things that can definitely pass for that, especially among other real ones. I'll never take anything glass that's an actual antique. We have hurricane lamps in our program, but they're reproduction. They have the look. So that's something I've been real careful about, setting the scene and using real antiques.

Self-Directed Learning and "Just Doing It"

At one point in the conversation, Pat became quizzical about her own life, and how someone who had "been a social worker ever since I was born" had become so interested in architecture and interiors. As she reflected on the question "How did you learn to do what you do," she repeated several times, "I don't know where all of this comes from." A major pattern in her recollections was that she learned how to do many things by doing them. While some of the incidental forms of learning still apply to the narratives in this section, they are different in that they show the participants taking greater control of their learning, directing it to achieve specific goals.

With Bob's assistance, Pat described her first remodeling attempt, which came about when she got her mother's permission to let her redo the basement in the house the family had when she was 16.

Pat: It was my first renovation project; actually, I painted my bedroom, I was 16, and I bought all "new" quote bedroom furniture except I went to the second-hand store, and bought a piece of furniture that I still have that I paid \$10 for, and I brought it home and my mother cried because she thought it was so ugly. She liked

everything new. I painted my bedroom and then, it was an unfinished basement. It had cement walls but there was a fireplace down there, and so I painted the walls, and then I put sealer—I went to the hardware store and I put sealer on the cement floor so that we could dance and have a party.

Bob: And make out.

Pat: And make out, and I decorated it, and that really probably was my first little project and it was just a basement. I mean it was tall enough to stand up in, and it was—you know, it could have been finished, somebody had obviously made the house for it to be finished, since there was a fireplace down there and all that kind of stuff, so um, you know I went to little stores and got wicker baskets and made them into end tables, and I was 16. So that was my first reno. project.

Because their interests lay outside what was offered in most formal educational curricula when the participants were college age, their expertise in their specific domains is largely self-taught. Each offered a narrative of mastery developed largely as a result of experience, with which came increasing interest and focus. Another similarity among the participants is the experience they gained as a result of dealing with challenges of everyday living.

Necessity, Mother of Invention

For each participant, the first foray into domains they eventually mastered was motivated by economic necessity; each needed to accomplish something they couldn't afford to accomplish in another way. One of their common goals was to have roofs over their heads. Having an affordable place to live that also accommodated the interests they had beyond basic shelter needs— meant having to *work* on the roof or other features of their

dwellings. All of the narratives involved *remaking* spaces and objects so they could fully serve their purpose or be fully enjoyed.

Pat described living in Chicago as a new college graduate with \$100 a month to spend on rent. In the apartment she chose, she redid floors, bathroom tile, wallpaper, kitchen cabinets, and paint: "I never could afford great apartments and so, it's like you just take what you get and make it comfortable and homey, and . . . I was in my twenties. And I lived there for seven years." Bob wanted to own a home early in his career, but couldn't initially meet his goal an easier way: "I think a lot of rehabbing for me in the early years was all a matter of practicality. I wanted to own a home, and I couldn't afford to buy one that was done. The only way to afford it was to do it myself." When Steve and John first settled into the Sherman Hill neighborhood, restoration was, similarly, a way of economizing. Steve recalled, "We knew we wanted to buy a house, and at the time, we couldn't have afforded a finished big house, and we just decided it would be fun." John filled in some details about how they decided on which house to take on. The house they chose required an affordable initial investment of \$30,000, but also what restorers call "sweat equity." (That property had been on the market not long before the interview, and sold for \$149,000.)

How economic necessity influenced the selection of objects in Joan's childhood homes has already been discussed, as has the years she and her husband spent saving money in order to build the log home of her childhood dreams. Joan also offered examples of how she has used her ingenuity to compensate for lack of capital in her theatrical ventures. One of the earliest examples she recalled was her set and costume work on the \$17 budget allowed for her high school's ambitious *Wizard of Oz* production:

Because, we had no budget, we had lots of things that had been donated: dresses, draperies, tablecloths and things like that, so that was how I first started costuming. I remade things; I wasn't a great seamstress, I'm still not. You know. Also I was so into it that I kind of had a good idea what the look should be, and I was very interested in costume history. So I did a lot of study on my own even then. You know, because in order to make something for the stage, I had to find that information myself.

When Joan founded the Shady Ladies group, financial considerations quickly multiplied with long-distance phone calls and mailings to group members in different towns, publicity materials, and eventually a newsletter, and "just doing" an activity out of necessity or for pleasure became a more structured educational endeavor with an ever-growing audience and more complex responsibilities. Joan recalled, "I supported the group for about a year I think, on my own." Responding to the financial pressures created by the group's success, Joan asserted herself with city government and requested financial support in exchange for the ladies' service as Goodwill Ambassadors. After several obstacles, they received both the official designation and financial support.

The economic imperative is easily understood, but for these participants, its companion was a sense of *aesthetic* necessity: the need to control their surroundings, to be surrounded by particular colors, shapes, and materials. This was evidenced in Joan's experience by her need to clad her own exterior in particular ways. She described how her love for "playing dress-up" led to something more:

All I was going to do was take these girls around in their dresses and maybe we'd attend Western festivals or something . . . And they were saloon girl types. And, so, I would dress up friends of mine in the clothes that I had. By this time I'd made cos-

tumes for several different years of being in Central City. And we had to have two a year, because there would be things during the day, and then everyone would change into a ball gown at night. So. You know, a reason to make TWO dresses! TWO dresses a year! And but, then what I found happening was that I enjoyed being with these ladies and they with me, in costume. And we were having a really great response from the public that saw us. You know, posing for lots of pictures, and lots of banter; we'd do almost an improv in talking to people on the street, in our little characters about the West. And we could tell them some of the history of Central City, you know, and maybe point out some things in town that would be fun.

And you know, it was just kind of this, I needed a hit every now and then. You know, being in costume. It didn't have to be all the time, it didn't have to be every minute. It *became* that at one point. Because things just get carried away. Success begets success, and the more people that saw us, the more people that wanted us. And at first we went places without any charge, because we just wanted to be out together.

Pat's aesthetic needs were reflected in the way she chose to immerse herself in improving interiors, renovating not just one, but all the apartments she ever lived in. I asked several follow-up questions to explore her motivation, given the restrictions many landlords place on tenants making any changes to rental properties, and many tenants' preference to avoid investing any effort in temporary housing. For Pat, it clearly wasn't enough to live cheap, about which she had no choice. Referring to one of the apartments, she recalled, "It was awful [laughs]. I'm a nester, you know, I think that's really what it boils down to—how to make your environment as nice as you possibly can." Pat's remi-

niscences, then, help clarify the idea of aesthetic necessity; for example when she referred to her “awful” apartments, she was asked to define what “awful” meant to her.

What was awful about it was that it smelled. Um, what had happened was, it had hardwood floors, and somebody had laid that old icky carpet on it, that back that looks like hair? And it must have gotten wet or something and it soaked into the varnish. And so it was this odor that just wouldn't come out. And I loved the apartment. I mean for \$100 a month, two blocks from Wrigley Field, a block from the train, two bedrooms, living room, a huge kitchen, and a bathroom and a big back yard. I mean I had two Great Danes at the time; I was in heaven. So I said, well, I can't live like this, with the smell, so I conned a friend of mine into sanding and re-varnishing the floor. It got the smell out.

Aesthetic necessity (and perhaps health concerns) motivated Pat to plunge in and ultimately advance from decorating surfaces to taking on more demanding renovation tasks as she could afford it, either doing it herself or watching and learning. Eventually, her job and her avocation intersected when she was asked to oversee a renovation project through the social service agency she was working for in Chicago. A building was to be transformed into a group home for homeless kids, and she proposed that her agency lease the building for a low fee in exchange for finishing the renovation job the owner had started on the exterior. A 1910 brick Chicago two-flat followed as Pat's next home, along with another renovation “born out of—I didn't like the way it looked, I didn't like the way it felt,” even though it had “character.”

It was describing this project that prompted Pat to express most explicitly her “Just Do It” philosophy. Interestingly, it also provides one of several examples of how “making

the best of what we have” and improving aesthetics ultimately had a financial payoff as well:

That’s sort of—that’s really where I’m going, it’s just doing it. These tenants pulled these nails out of the plaster walls upstairs and there were, like, holes that were two feet wide, and under and in back of one of these holes was this big space that turned out was a fireplace. Chicago banned wood-burning fireplaces after some orphanage burned down not long after the Chicago fire, so you couldn’t have a wood-burning fireplace in the city for I don’t know, 60 years or 70 years. So we uncovered this fireplace and I said, “This is really cool! Let’s do this.” So, I went to my local bank and got a construction loan and rehabbed the sucker, and bought the place for what, \$80,000, put 40 into it, and sold it for \$190,000 four years later.

Pat’s narrative illustrated how her aesthetic sensibilities were refined with each new project, further enabling her to make distinctions about “awful” and “not awful” and to act accordingly:

Well some of it is I think aesthetics; I mean for example, the house in Chicago had, you know, it had oak floors, it had oak woodwork with that real dark, you know varnish, it never occurred to me to paint that. You know, I wanted to keep it like it had been. I mean it’s like trying to do things right. I don’t know where that comes from.

I commented to Pat that she wasn’t at all afraid to take on the big jobs, to which she expanded on her concept of doing things right—for her, a core principle in her teaching and learning. The emphasis on “just doing it” in this chapter so far may have suggested hasty or thoughtless action. On the contrary, in Pat’s view, when historic structures are involved, considerable care must be taken with the quality of the work, a principle she

shares with the group as a whole. For Pat, the principle seems to have been shaped mainly by her increasing immersion in the fabric of the buildings she lived in. Pat recalled,

I also didn't want to do a half-assed job. I wanted to try to preserve the integrity of the structure, I wanted it to look like it had always sort of been there. I don't know where that comes from. Nobody told me that I should do it a certain way. It's like I went to, you know I stripped the front door, which was you know, this beautiful door from Salvage One, and got an old antique mailbox and fixed that up. So I don't know where that comes from. There was tile in the front of the hallway that was all covered over with linoleum; tore that up and got all the goop off, and so, I don't know.

Quality was a persistent theme in the responses of Bob, the self-described "extremely picky" restorer ("I kind of set a quality standard in the neighborhoods that I work in, and I get my rehabs done quickly. And it kind of shows people what the possibilities are") and in those of Steve and John:

Steve: We always feel that we have a responsibility to do things right.

John: Even if you're going to screw something up, do it in back!

Making Mistakes

Whatever their good intentions to do things right, the participants acknowledged that they have made mistakes in the process of learning new skills. Their interpretation of the role of mistakes in learning is interesting in light of other themes that might be interpreted as "perfectionism." At one point early in his career, Bob launched himself on an odyssey of skill improvement in furniture making, building construction and restoration, and general home improvement, experiences that edged out the desire to finish the

college degree. He was building his skills sometimes on his own, sometimes in an apprentice relationship with a master in the trade:

I kept looking around at houses, doing some buying; I was doing some general contracting and renovation-type work as well. Um, worked for other contractors. I had my own furniture business in Des Moines for nine years, designing and building furniture all over the country. Bought more houses, renovated them, lived in them, sold them. There were a lot of houses over the years. And uh—never did finish college. I went to college for about seven years, but I built furniture and painted houses while I was living in Iowa City.

For Bob, this list of experiences is rated highly as a factor shaping what he would eventually become, what he knew how to do. With that, he added the corollary that in learning to do something well, one inevitably learns what it is to do something badly, and that this is an important and desirable part of the process: “You know for me, learning is as much about doing as it is about anything else. It always has been; making mistakes. There are a lot of them, and you hopefully learn from them.”

In describing their first house project—which was also the first house on that particular block to undergo restoration—John conveyed a sense of what it was like, more than ten years and several projects ago, to be restoration novices, and he recalled some of the mistakes that they made.

It was National Register eligible; we just never got it listed. Just for design alone, because it was so unique how it was. And all there, really. It had been turned into a duplex. But, we learned a lot on that house. We didn't know what we were doing at all. I remember scraping wallpaper off the walls and gouging the plaster and going, “Oh my God, what are we going to do now?” You know? But we got better as we

worked on that one. And loved it. And at the end, the kitchen I would still hold up against any kitchen. We used all salvaged materials. Every piece of wood you saw was salvaged wood. We didn't use any new wood, anywhere. So, we got real fanatical real early about stuff like that. But we were just self-taught. I mean, we would go on neighborhood tours and see other people in the neighborhood, but we really—you start to just pick it up, you know?

Joan freely mentioned mistakes (such as the drenching of her set pieces) and “failures” that did not deter her. When she first approached Central City for financial support, she believed her case to be convincing. Her argument was “You know, we carry your name with us wherever we go, and we're getting a great response.” Nevertheless, at first they turned her down; “it was the marketing department that said, ‘We don't have any money for that. We don't think this is of value.’” Her reaction was to wait a while and then present a proposal to the city council, which also turned her down the first time. Remaining persistent, the group was eventually funded.

The Spirit of Inquiry: Doing Research

For all of the participants, “just doing it” was not sufficient to teach them what they needed to know in order to complete their increasingly complex projects and, eventually, to teach. This section explores the self-directed inquiry and diverse sources of information utilized by the group.

Steve and John recalled that when they were trying to learn “how to,” they looked for information wherever they could find it. They identified human resources as extremely important to them, particularly when they first started their restoration ventures and media resources were scarce, formal educational opportunities even scarcer:

Steve: We'd read things and watch TV and learn from people who were doing it, people that we liked what they were doing.

John: We were lucky because we had a neighborhood we had landed in where that was doable, so we had people to teach us, or just being around them for a few years before we bought, and we would just kind of pick things up, and watch, and learn. Because at that time, there weren't a lot of TV shows out there. *This Old House* was out there; that was a half an hour on Saturdays. Now, on Home and Garden Channel, there's a whole lot more! But, back then, you were—we didn't know that much. And we'd ask, and talk to people. How do you strip woodwork? We didn't know how to heat-gun at first.

Steve: We learned really quick!

John: Yeah! [laughs]

Steve: Our whole first house, we stripped.

Asked if they relied on any favorite reference sources now, John mentioned special interest magazines such as *Victorian Homes* and a restoration-related television show, and how they benefit from the show now that they are experts themselves:

As far as *doing*, when we're working on something we probably, if we get into something we've never done or don't know about, we do some research on that, magazines or books. Other than that, the TV shows we watch now are mostly, like we watch *Restore America*, just to see, just to look, you know? More so maybe not for how-to, but just because you want to see it all, see what other people have done. [to Steve] Don't you think?

Although all the participants are immersed in topics historical, they rely extensively on technological tools of inquiry. When Bob bought and resold his first house at

age 17 in the early 70's, "The only thing about restoration was the *Old House Journal*, which was like an eight-page, three-hole-punched newsletter at the time." As times change, Bob pointed out, his quest for information becomes easier.

On any subject I want to learn about, . . . what I was able to access really, back when I was younger, compared to what I can get today, thanks to the Internet quite frankly, and because of interlibrary loans, and all the different things that are happening out there from an information standpoint, that if you're into something . . . you can become an expert at something. It's so much easier and faster, quicker, because you have the advantage of the knowledge of people that you couldn't access before. The Internet is absolutely critical. I'm able to dig up stuff on the Internet that I never would have, or no one would have had access to before. Um, and a lot of . . . well, as far as research goes, I mean, really that's where I can do all my research now, is on the Internet.

Pat explained Bob's answer further by pointing out that he also reads a lot, which helped him recall a number of other modes of inquiry he relies on: "I read every periodical on the subject. I take inside trade magazines; I subscribe to them from industries that I tell everyone not to use. Like the window industry and the siding industry, and get their journals because I want to find out what they're up to."

Joan learned about the mechanics and enjoyment of research not from a composition class where research is typically taught in the formal high school curriculum, but from working on a play: "Mostly within the library; uh, if we were doing a period piece like *The Importance of Being Ernest*, a Victorian one, I was able to look at books other than that play." All the participants have taken their inquiry beyond libraries at least in part because conventional libraries had little to offer them. In some cases, they were

ahead of their time in researching topics eventually targeted heavily by others. Joan explained in detail the original seed that began her quest for information about women in the 19th century West, and how she began to piece together “little threads” from the scant information that was available at the time:

Because the idea of the Lou Bunch Days really intrigued me going, you know there *were* really women like this out here. And in '92, I couldn't find a book on women in the West to save my life. Not at all, it's amazing. When I started doing my research, there were very few books about, *everything* about the West was on men. And what I was doing was looking in the index in the back going ok. Here's a woman. And then trying to find women who were involved in prostitution. And it was next to impossible to find that. And so I just kind of got these little threads here and there and started to collect this material. And there'd be a line in one entire volume.

You know, so, I started to put that information together on ladies of the West. And while I was trying to sift through and find information about prostitution in the West, I was running across a lot of other really unusual women. What I would do would be, write down the source and the date, there's something about this person there, but I still had my focus on learning about ladies of the evening. And then probably about '94, was when the real stampede to write books about women of the West came through. I swear I picked up just about every one through the years, and there was more about prostitution. Then there was a shift where there were entire books on prostitution in the West. But when I wrote the program that you'll be seeing this weekend, it was before those books really were coming out.

A museum called the Old Homestead in Cripple Creek (near Colorado Springs, where she lived for awhile), a building that once served as a brothel, proved to be a cru-

cial source of qualitative data for Joan. Her lengthy description of her search at the museum is included here because it provides a unique example of qualitative data-gathering for informal education purposes, and it allows Joan to characterize in detail the persistence of her inquiry and where an exhaustive information search may lead.

In 1957, a couple purchased the building and made it into a museum. And at that time there were women who were alive who had worked there in the 1890s. You know? And they, a lot of them had married into good families in Denver, and they would only give information under the veil of anonymity. But they told their stories about working in the house. It was a *real* high class place. Men had to apply and had their credit checked, references, and it was like \$50 a night. Which was weeks and weeks of pay. So this was for the wealthiest men. And so I learned an awful lot from the docents who worked there. They were older ladies too who had maybe not had a chance to speak with those original ladies? But that material had been passed down. . . .

And one of the docents that I learned a lot of information from died just a few years ago. And I feel so grateful for having the opportunity. I took an entire day and went down and spent the day interviewing her about what she knew about the business. And it was great because these ladies were very forthcoming with the information, and so that has been one of my primary sources in finding material that I built the Parlor House presentation on. I just kept reading and catching little bits and pieces of . . . I was up in Montana, and did a presentation, and one of the people in the audience said "You know, Louis and Clark?" because they went right through there and they were really big on that, that the members of their party would ingest mercury to prevent venereal disease. They believed that it would. All these kinds of

wife tales and things. And so, and something our audience finds of particular interest is Victorian birth control. So some of that I got from the Brothel Museum. It really is wonderful the things that they've been able to preserve about the life. And then I was down visiting in Tombstone Arizona, you know, another hotbed, "The town that would not die." And I picked up just a little book at a bookstore locally, and I think it was a local historian who had written that, and he excerpted, um, a diary of a prostitute. It talked about how she had learned this method from someone else and had been able to pass it along. And sometimes it's just everyday items that they would use as birth control. They were so creative, and had some kind of basic understanding about how the human body works that I just find fascinating.

As the president and creative director of the Shady Ladies group, Joan plays the role of instructor for the other group members, giving them research assignments about the pool of 30 characters from which the cast of characters for any one performance will be formed, and helping to guide each performer's inquiry. Joan expects each performer to research her character's life by locating a minimum of three sources so that they are exposed to diversity of historical interpretations. She explained, "They only have 5 minutes to tell her story, and they do it in first person as if they were her. And um, so it's up to them as to what they feel was most significant about her life." Asked if she has to offer much guidance or advice about her cast's research, Joan answered in a way that was reminiscent of a common complaint of high school and university instructors about their students' lack of independence in the learning process. In a mocking tone, she said "Lots. 'Where do I *look*? What do you want me to *do*?' *Right*. And I have a pretty good collection of books myself."

Joan described in detail how she guides the ladies in researching their characters, exhorting them to carefully compare and evaluate information sources.

Well, there are lots of things available on the Web now that they can find. Somebody doing Calamity Jane, my God! There's stuff everywhere. There are movies that have been made about Calamity Jane. And so, it's really interesting to me to look at how other artists have interpreted. You know, a movie is a piece of art, to say what was the take on her life there. Like Doris Day did it in the '50s, which was a real fantasy. But then, Angela Huston did it, as part of McMurtry's books? Calamity Jane was a significant character. It wasn't *Lonesome Dove*, it was, oh I don't remember. Oh *Buffalo Girls*. That was it. So here were two really divergent views of this same person. Now read about her. Read some biographies about her, read a book about wild women in the West, which she's one of, and then read about some of the others too, and see how her wildness maybe compares to them. And read about the Victorian times, read about the settling of the west, so not only do you take a look at the woman but you know what she comes from. What are the influences in her life? Why would Calamity Jane forgo hoop skirts and corsets to dress in buckskins at a time when that was, like, totally inappropriate. So I ask them to go deeper to find the motivation of these women.

Chapter 5 describes how the participants' exhaustive inquiries come to fruition in their planning and delivery of instructional events.

CHAPTER 5

THE PARTICIPANTS AS TEACHERS

The study involved at least one direct observation of three of the participants doing an educational presentation, demonstration, or dramatization. Those observations are described here along with additional data that describes how each participant instructs in live venues and who their audiences are.

Bob

I observed Bob serving as keynote speaker and principle presenter for an Old House Fair sponsored by the museum district of an industrial Iowa town and held under a tent in a city park. Cities, states, preservation commissions, and Main Street organizations are the entities that typically organize events such as old house fairs. To this event, Bob brings an array of tools, products such as window glazing compound, wood storm windows, and other props and arranges them on two 6-foot tables at the front of the tent. The rest of the tent is filled with approximately 100 chairs for the audience. He delivers two formal presentations, "Why Preservation Makes Sense" and "Cost Effective Ways to Renovate," and leads a one-hour question and answer session later in the day. He opens "Why Preservation Makes Sense" by introducing himself and mentioning his father, "the frustrated corporate guy," and he tells the audience about holding up drywall with his head as his dad worked on his various home renovation projects. Before he delivers the "how-to" part of the presentation, he rallies the audience around the premise that "restoration doesn't cost, it pays." As he contrasts traditional building features and procedures with contemporary ones, he offers the audience a philosophical and practical primer on protecting themselves from devious sales tactics from the replacement window and siding industries. This theme is also echoed in the hands-on demonstrations he

offers during the “Cost Effective Ways to Renovate” session. He answers audience questions during all the presentations and chats with event participants on the grounds in between.

I had the opportunity to observe Bob at another event sponsored by a historic church in Galena, Illinois, a town with a thriving tourist industry based on its preserved 19th-century architecture. The format for Bob’s appearance here was also different from the Old House Fair presentations already described. During the Galena appearance, he was displaying a variety of print resources such as *Traditional Building* magazine and his own book, *About your House*, at a table at an old-house renovation site. Here, the “curriculum” was determined entirely by the questions people asked when they approached his table. Some asked questions that could be answered with a product suggestion; some exhausted a long list of questions about house maintenance and restoration; some wanted to meet in person the “House Doctor” they remembered from radio or as the host of *About your House* they had seen on TV. Some engaged Bob in conversation about more philosophical matters relating in one way or another to restoration and preservation.

During the interviews, Bob had mentioned several other instructional formats he offers at the request of the sponsoring group. In one, he leads a group on a field trip through a historic neighborhood to point out examples of both careless “remuddling” (removal of historic parts and addition of inappropriate and unsightly ones) and careful preservation. In another, he presents a slide review of audience members’ renovation projects, conversing with them about their project while describing some “lessons” in each project for the audience as a whole. During our interview, he mentioned that he was in a “major teaching mode” at that time and summarized what that meant:

I try not to do a lot of Home and Garden shows anymore, um, just because, that's all celebrity based and I'm trying to get away from that, and so most of the stuff I do are preservation fairs or cities hire me; I have a contract with the state of Pennsylvania, and Gettysburg, and all these small towns where I put on seminars on how to restore original windows and how to paint houses and get 15-year paint jobs, and all these different types of techniques. So you know, I guess I'm in a major teaching mode in my life. Even on the current restoration project, the 1869 Gothic Revival on the Mississippi that I'm doing, I'm taking in a lot of young, inexperienced kids and trying to show them how to do things. And now I'm a historic preservation consultant; I travel all over the country helping communities figure out how to utilize historic preservation as an economic development tool and doing seminars on cost-effective, efficient rehab techniques.

At the time, Bob was also headmaster of the Pine Mountain School for practical historic preservation in Pine Mountain, Kentucky.

At the Old House Fair, Pat was present and chatted informally with audience members, but didn't participate in the presentations. She did, however, help profile the participants who come to events of this kind: "You bring in people who might not normally think about buying a house like that so that they are open to other possibilities, but also, we find a lot of people that actually are interested in renovating, and come to pick people's brains." Bob followed up with an informal demographic profile based on his conversations with people who attend his presentations and ask him questions:

It runs the gamut. I mean, it is a wide spectrum of people. I don't know that I can peg it down to one group. Uh, probably 50% are college-educated, and the other 50% are not; and they range from very poor to working poor to you know, all the differ-

ent economic levels; we're getting more ethnic following; um, gosh, I don't know. Small contractors more than ever before, because they want to learn new ways to skin a cat. People are hungry for information on how to do things well. The average homeowner has no idea what kind of quality standard they should be expecting. They don't know. And part of my job is to give them that information. And in my career, I only have one client. It's not the industries or the trades, it's the consumer. That's it.



*Figure 5. Illustration from Bob's book *About your House* (1997): Removing old paint.*

John and Steve

John was participating in a panel presentation with two other old house restorers as part of the same museum-sponsored Old House Fair. The panel was set up at the front of an old auditorium with a wood floor, the second story of a historic Italianate house that is one of the museum's properties. It serves as a meeting and event venue for museum groups and private functions as well as the meeting place for the city's

Women's Club. John's part of the presentation offers a 40-slide PowerPoint tour of the mansion where I conducted the interview.

The presentation opens with an exterior shot of their second major restoration as it looked when they bought it, with sagging porch and peeling paint. "After" shots of its new exterior colors and interior restoration, rooms furnished entirely with period antiques, follow. As he advances before and after slides of their current home, John describes what he and Steve were thinking before they bought the house and as they have planned and executed its restoration, from exterior roofing, repair, and painting to interior demolition of the dingy apartment configuration in place when they bought the property. Other slides show the uncovering of 19th-century wallpaper fragments and hardwood floors, the process of refinishing floors and fixtures, and the period revival of a bathroom and the kitchen. Occasional gasps and laughter come from the audience as he describes some restoration surprises and obstacles. One is receiving a one-month heating bill costing multiple thousands before they were able to replace the boiler; another is how and why they acquired the taxidermy moose head hanging in the front parlor. John also offers a short narrative of the house's place in Des Moines history, displaying some original photos of the house and land from the turn of the century. He concludes by describing the success of house tours in helping to change the neighborhood's image and its prospects for the future.

House tours are the educational venues for John and Steve; like the "Ask Bob" setup, the course of conversation with tour participants is determined by what participants want to know as they walk through: typical questions ask how something was done, what something is, or where something was procured. On two occasions, John and Steve opened their home and the building John's father was working on for art teachers

who were involved in a workshop at a nearby school. They were hoping “to show what we were living through and doing” and to inspire the teachers to in turn talk to their students about historic architecture in their neighborhood. One of the teachers eventually bought a home in the neighborhood.

Because one of John and Steve’s goals is to educate about and promote the neighborhood itself, they encourage people they meet to come to the district for self-guided tours. John described how the strategy has worked:

I work with people that, since Sherman Hill is close to where I work, will say, ‘Oh, I drove through.’ Brian that I work with always says he drove through Sherman Hill at lunch the other day; ‘boy there are some neat houses.’ Just since I’ve worked with him for three or four years, he’s gotten to at least look around old houses, and things like that, so it makes people appreciate their surroundings a little bit.

The day of the interview, Steve and John took me to meet two couples who are friends and who, like them, are restoring historic houses. No part of either house was off limits, and all three sets of homeowners freely discussed what they had done, what they planned to do, and how their projects compared.

A structured venue is not a necessity for Steve and John to help old house restorers make decisions about their projects. People call and come to see them to ask how to do things, or what something should look like:

John: We’ve had a lot of that over the years in different houses and locations.

Steve: We’ve had a lot of our ideas copied by other people over the years. I could list you a string of those. We’ve done a lot of color consulting, too.

John: What color should I paint my house?

Steve: And color placement, . . .

John: You'll always run into somebody and they're like, "My windows are so bad, I've got to get new windows put in," and of course the hair on your neck goes up.

Steve: That's a hard argument to talk people out of, new windows.

John: Cause they are really into it, and it's like . . . you always say, Have you thought about a really good storm window? You know, it's cheaper! You don't have to replace the window! And, so, it's hard, and maybe we're a little bit more fanatical than some people on it.

Steve and John mentioned that their career paths could change if they realize an ambition to open an interior design firm. As they see it, interior design will be another educational forum: "Well, when we get our business going, uh, doing historic interiors and maybe exterior color consultation and etcetera, certainly we'll be doing a lot of it then."

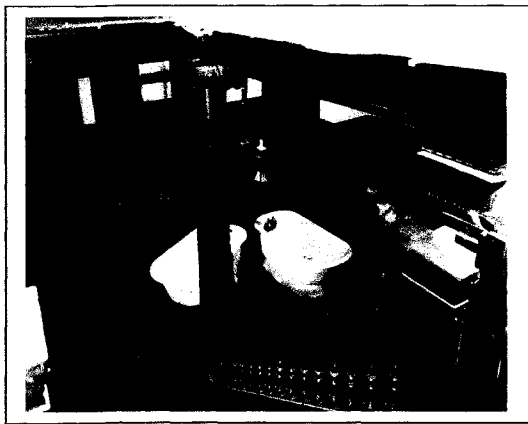


Figure 6. Slides from John's presentation: Bathtubs moved in, unwanted wall and floor coverings taken out

Joan

Because her performers live in different towns and the group offers a variety of programs, the logistics of the Shady Ladies' educational presentations are complicated.

Joan's description of how the *Unconventional Women* program works illustrates both the organization required to make the production happen and the content of the shows:

When we get a request for a show for *Unconventional Women* is, a women's club or a library will call and say "Can you come on Sunday May 22 of 2005?" And that's one we just booked. And I'll say, "Let me go see who's available." And I will never guarantee characters. I say it's dependent on which of our members is available, and you may choose some of the characters that they do. One person can only do one of her characters, you know. So, I will then put out an email to the group, and I finally got them trained; they see that, they respond. If they don't respond, I'm not going to ask them again. Because I had a real problem with that. A real problem, that I just had to get real tough with that, because I've got a client waiting on the other end for an answer. So then people will respond, and out of the 16 I say I'll take the first eight performers and then there's one announcer. And there's another girl and I who share that duty. And um, so the first eight to respond will be the cast.

And it's so interesting because it'll be maybe Polly Pry, who is a reporter for the *Denver Post*, maybe it'll be Baby Doe Tabor, who married a silver king and ended up in rags when he lost his fortune, and maybe Mother Jones, who was a labor activist in the coal fields of Ludlow, Colorado. There was a massacre there and an uprising. And, it'll be an incredible cast! I guarantee that, you know, because I believe in the characters I have offered to the girls.

As she described her audiences, Joan noted that she hadn't done as many programs for younger children as she had senior groups, but that she had auditioned her *On the Homefront* one-woman show for a group called Young Audiences that places performers in schools, and she had been added to their catalogue. She told me that she had already done some school groups "and they're wonderful. It's about Junior High that they've been learning about World War II." She had observed that her shows set in different eras appealed to different groups for different reasons:

It's sort of this thing about, that's when you're coming of age and moving into young adulthood is your time. I'm capturing that when I go to 80 and 90-year olds, the 40s is theirs. Then it's the 60 and 70 year-olds that are catching with the Fifties. But there's such an interest in the Fifties now. I had a little girl in the library, probably about 9 years old in a poodle skirt, saddle shoes, and ponytail with the scarf you know? It was fun because I talked to her afterwards and I said "You know, it starts there. You're dressed up, this is what happens!" [laughs] And I'm in costume with my Lucy lips you know, my wig and everything.

The day after we met to complete the interview, Joan and the Shady Ladies were doing the *Parlor House* program as part of the Buffalo Bill Days festival in Golden, Colorado. With its large cast and elaborate set, the Parlor House is the group's most labor-intensive program, yet Joan recalled a year in which the Shady Ladies did 54 events in that year alone. A personal communication I received from Joan (July 11, 2004) as we worked out meeting times and places conveys a sense of the effort required to create the Shady Ladies' "classroom:"

8:00 am: Arrive in Golden before the streets close for the parade to get parked and begin the parlor house setup.

9:00 am: Start the setup of the PH in earnest. All the furniture, etc. has to be carried outside to the porch of the visitor's center and set up. We have draping and curtains to hang, bows and floral garlands as well as dealing with the furniture . . . if we get done early, we may do a quick run-through of the presentation

10:00 am: Three of the girls are riding on a tractor in the parade

11:30 am: We'll all get into costume to be ready for our first "customers" at noon.

12:00-4:30 pm: We'll be doing the presentation every half hour

4:30 pm: We'll be tearing everything down, repacking, and moving it back into the visitor's center for the night.

Looking ahead to the performance, Joan had mentioned in our interview that "many of them will be doing it for the first time and are excited—but scared, too." This turned out to be true; I observe Joan working with one of the performers on her lines before the show. She is in full costume but having a difficult time remembering the lines and reacting to her cues, and she begins to cry. She takes temporary refuge upstairs in the Visitors Center, which has become the performers' dressing room.

At the scheduled time, the group is ready to perform, and one of the Ladies in a white petticoat, lace negligee, and pink ribbon tied over her ringlets, introduces the show. She tells the audience about the group and states the purpose of this show: to focus on "one variety of woman—ladies of the evening in the Victorian West." She tells them that their goal is not to "shock or titillate," but to inform, but that later, the performance will describe the methods the women used for birth control. She gives the audience the option of leaving if they would rather not hear that part of the program. She concludes her introduction by inviting them to visit www.shadyladies.org, but not, she

says in a mock-menacing tone, wagging her finger at the crowd, shadyladies.com or shadyladies.net.

The next performer, wearing white pantaloons, a black bustier, and a black shawl, takes the microphone and provides some additional historical context. The performance represents the period from 1859, when gold was first discovered in the region, to 1918 when the moral reform movement shut down most red light districts. The Ladies provide some demographic information about their historical counterparts. They tell the audience that prostitutes tended to range in age from 16 to 30 (age of consent being 10 at the time); were exclusively Caucasian (Jewish, black, and Hispanic women were restricted to kitchen work in the brothels); and were motivated by the need to make enough money to survive widowhood or divorce or to care for children, by desire for adventure, or by an already-spoiled reputation. Because a “woman of negotiable affection” could make as much as \$400 a month as opposed to \$36 a month for the average shop girl, the Ladies point out that prostitution was the most popular employment option on the frontier at the time, accounting for 60% of the workforce of single women.

As each performer does her part of the program, the set pieces become more prominent; one Lady explains that the Parlor Houses were usually equipped with the finest furnishings and amenities for miners and cowboys who had considerable money to spend (as a precaution, the Madams sometimes ran credit checks and asked for references). The Ladies’ narratives revolve around objects common in the “household,” some displayed and some only described. Some of these objects and their role in the performance are described below with a summary of the social history they represent, as told by the Shady Ladies.

The Color Red

During the Victorian era, red was believed to signify opulence as well as passion; In Parlor Houses, red was the color of choice for “making the blood boil.” The Parlor House set is heavily garnished with red, in the glass shade of the hanging parlor lamp, a bouquet of roses, a table scarf, the upholstery of several antique folding chairs, swags hung over white lace window panels, the background of oriental rugs on the floor, and the Parlor House signage. Even as their passions were being aroused, patrons were expected to observe basic civilities. A sign rests in front of a brass spittoon to remind patrons, *“If you expect to rate with the ladies, do not expectorate on the rug.”*

Red lights. “Red light district” refers to the red railroad lanterns a Parlor House patron would leave outside the establishment to reduce the risk of fire inside and to signal to his fellows (most likely miners) that he was occupied inside.

Humidor and Cigar

Two of the Ladies pull a round parlor table to the front of the stage and demonstrate the selection, preparation, and lighting of a client’s after-dinner cigar, a ceremony they liken to a Japanese Geisha ceremony.

Bath Soap

On the set is a tin tub from the 19th century, popular fixtures in parlor houses because they could be moved to a private room after a customer’s companion was selected. One of the ladies holds up a large bar of white lye soap and describes the significance of the bath as one of the primary pleasures of the Parlor House visit and a necessity before other services could be rendered because of the months of mine or trail dirt accumulated on the average patron when he came to call. The bath was self-serve and was an excellent profit-maker; the Madam charged a fee for soap and each small cotton damask

towel a man used, as well as the soap. A man could elect to economize by renting a washstand and a bottle of carbolic acid instead.

Cosmetics

The Ladies describe implements such as corsets and perfume that were used to enhance the Ladies' appeal. They sometimes splashed perfume into their eyes for extra sparkle, or ingested bella dona to achieve "bedroom eyes" (dilated pupils). See Figure 7 for a photograph of two of the presenters demonstrating the procedure for lacing up a corset.

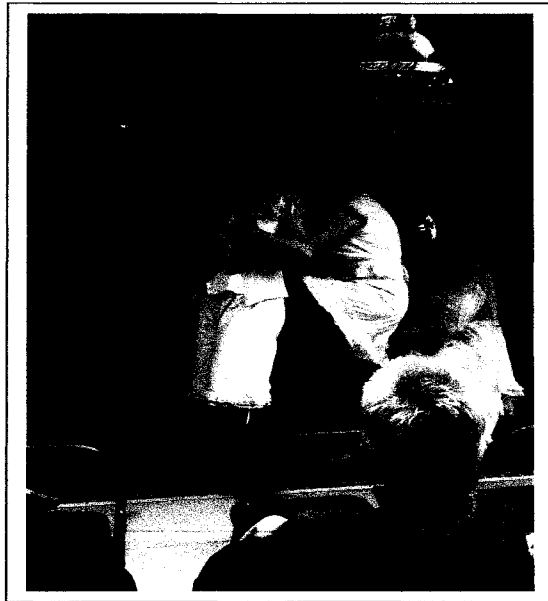


Figure 7. Shady Ladies demonstrate how to lace a corset.

Citrus Fruit

As the presentation nears a conclusion, one of the Ladies holds up an orange. During the first morning presentation, no one left; in the afternoon a group of four leaves just before this display because the program has arrived at the topic of birth control and

venereal disease. The orange, the speaker tells us, was used as a barrier device for pregnancy prevention. Oranges and other small citrus fruits were cut in half and hollowed out to serve as diaphragms with the added benefit of citrus spermicide. Whalebone and coins were relied upon to serve a similar purpose, along with rusty nail water and mercury to prevent unwanted births and the diseases that killed many women or left them sterile before they were 35.

The morning audience has no questions at the end of the performance, but after the last show of the day, the audience has many: How much did the women make per month? What was the Madam's take? Where was the Red Light district in this town? and How do you go to the bathroom in a corset?

Chapter 6 concludes the descriptive analysis of the interview data, focusing on the philosophies evident in the participants' narratives. The chapter presents some answers to the questions Why do the participants do what they do? What do they believe they are accomplishing for themselves and their audiences? What is the "value" in an old house tour or a parlor house re-creation?

CHAPTER 6

EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHIES IN ACTION

Chapters 4 and 5 focused on describing *what* the participants in this study do and how they have learned to do it; Chapter 6 explores *why* they do what they do and organizes segments of the interview data to make transparent the philosophies framing their learning and teaching activities. The major research question organizing the phase of interviewing reported in this chapter was this: Do informal educators focusing on the material world share beliefs about the purposes of education similar to those that motivate instructional design in formal settings? The same question was first addressed in Chapter 3 when the discourse of 19th-century domestic advice was examined for its philosophical underpinnings. Like the parallel sections of Chapter 3, Chapter 6 uses the philosophical categories liberal arts, humanism, progressivism, and performativity to organize relevant interview data. None of these terms (with one exception) was explicitly mentioned during the interviews. However, as they answered questions such as “What is it that you like about old houses?” and “What do you hope to accomplish with your educational programs?” the participants generated detailed reflections and analysis that proved to be a very good fit for all four philosophical categories.

Liberal Arts Learning

Becoming a well-rounded person: mastering reading, writing, and computation skills; acquiring broad knowledge; appreciating the arts and humanities; developing complex reasoning skills; attending to physical health; refining aesthetic sensibilities

Godey's Ladies Book constantly exhorted readers to use their free time to learn something, offering its liberal arts-saturated pages to help readers take advantage of the never-ending teachable moments in the normal day. Contemporary domestic self-

help experts such as Martha Stewart, who was inspired by Victorian predecessors Isabella Beeton and Catharine Beecher (Leavitt, 2002), have taken up this “everyday liberal arts” philosophy. In an interview (Schrage, 2000), Stewart engaged in self-analysis about the purpose behind her publications and product development; some of her remarks echoed the participants in the present study. Stewart identified one of her own greatest talents, and most enjoyable pursuits, as research (“which I’m really crazy about”).

In the same interview, Stewart also described her purpose at the level of media empire: “I wanted to be comprehensive, expansive, all encompassing. I wanted to take a subject, not a brand. I took the subject of living” (Schrage, 2000). Instructions for everyday living are conveyed in her television show, the text on her product packaging, and within the narratives about objects of human utility and aesthetic pleasure featured in *Living* magazine.

The mingling of subject domains, as illustrated in the 19th-century periodicals and books described in Chapter 3 (*Godey’s Ladies Book*, Catharine Beecher’s and Isabella Beeton’s works), is similarly a hallmark of *Living* magazine. In the magazine’s discussion of household objects, descriptions of things are accompanied by historical narrative. An article called “Learning How to Measure It” (Brink, 2000, p. 160) displays a variety of contemporary and vintage measuring devices with a photo caption summarizing their invention and uses. Before the article delivers the “how to” information, it offers two columns summarizing the history of measurement, from craftsmen’s attempts to understand each other’s non-standard measurements to the French Academy of Science’s designation of the meter in the 18th century. Articles about objects also frequently incorporate scientific narrative. *Living* describes the chemical composition and behavior

of food, to convey the flavor, texture, and behavior while processing or cooking occurs. Recalling 19-century amateur naturalism, moreover, *Living* regularly treats science and nature as art. Articles in the May 2005 issue included “The Easy Art of Botanical Rubbings” (Wong, pp. 94-99) and “The Exuberance of Peonies” (Heeger, pp. 110-119), which described the distinctive colors, forms, and cultivation of peonies along with the symbolism of the flower and possibilities for artistic arrangement.

Drawing once again from Elias and Merriam’s (1995) definition, Liberal Arts philosophy values broad knowledge, rational, critical thinking, good physical condition, and a refined aesthetic sensibility, concepts for which popular press resources such as *Stewart* have found a substantial market. The educational niche the participants in the present study have created reaches a much smaller market, but the liberal arts are, similarly, a significant force. Their applied liberal arts curricula are discussed in this chapter from three perspectives: Intellectual Development, Use of the Physical Body, and Aesthetic Sensibility.

Intellectual Development

In 1869, Beecher and Stowe wrote in *The American Woman’s Home* about the objects of a household potentially doing much to enrich the inhabitants’ minds. Chapter 3’s review of historical literature illustrated the strength of this belief throughout the Victorian era; in the same chapter, authors such as Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981/1989) provided some contemporary empirical evidence; and the interview transcripts in this chapter provide rich anecdotal evidence of a connection between material matter and brain matter.

Desire to Learn

A core tenet of the liberal arts is the importance of developing certain habits of mind, foremost among them the desire to know. Whether or not curiosity is “just something in you,” as John described it—something that helped the participants discover their passions—or a habit developed as they went about facilitating their passions, a common theme among the participants was their excitement about the process of learning.

Although the group is focused on highly specialized interest areas, curiosity in these specialty areas spills over into other domains. Bob used the specific phrase “liberal arts” in identifying the aspect of college that proved to be the most interesting for him, explaining that “I was a philosophy major. I was a history major. I really enjoyed that part of college. Didn’t feel constrained.” In his lifetime, he has also been involved in theatre and politics, at one point running for mayor of Davenport, Iowa.

American history is a favorite topic among the liberal arts for the group. In describing why old houses are so appealing to him, John described getting to know an old house as experiencing a living history lesson:

Oh boy, um . . . I guess sometimes I feel like, I’m not really a history buff, but I like the history of an old house. You know? Or maybe who built it . . . you know if you go on a grander scale, the big mansions that are left in town; I mean, my God, you just want to go in and go, “I can’t believe this is how people lived!” The money, and the stuff in here, and now, you couldn’t afford to do that. It was just a different way of life back then.

Although Joan’s educational productions classify primarily as theatre, she went so far as to identify herself as a self-taught historian: “I consider myself a historian. I’m not

professionally taught in that way, but because of the depth of interest I feel I've shown in this, and the depths I'm willing to go to in it." Her responses to several questions conveyed her enjoyment of learning and teaching history, sometimes in that she directly described a sense of "excitement." Her enthusiasm was further communicated by the facility with which she wove historical anecdotes into contemporary ones and made connections and comparisons between them, as in this example:

It's so exciting for me working with women's history, like when I was writing my show about the 40s, and learning about Rosie the Riveter and how reluctant employers were to hire these women, thinking, "They can't do anything but wash dishes and diaper the children." And the women themselves going, "Ooh, that's a man's job. I'll get dirt under my fingernails," and "I don't want to leave my home." And how the country needed the workforce that women would provide in such a big way that attitudes could be changed. And then when those women got in there, they said, "I can do this!" Women really were very sad to give up their jobs when the men came home. And they were just summarily fired, you know? Or laid off. And the reason would be, "Well we don't need tanks. And the men can make the washing machines." But what I talked with a lot of my audiences about is working in environmental engineering with such a large percentage of females, the students I see say "I was good at science and math," which we weren't necessarily encouraged to be as girls.

As Joan continued, she linked the experiences of the underestimated Rosie the Riveter with her underestimated female environmental engineering majors, for whom she serves as an advising coordinator.

Just as the participants could identify various liberal arts at work in their own lives, they provided examples of liberal-arts oriented philosophy shaping their teaching. One of Joan's instructional goals is to *motivate desire* to learn. She recalled,

We started both the Parlor House program and Unconventional Women before there was this surplus of books available. And there are a lot of lazy people, who wouldn't pick up a book to read about this to save their lives! I really think the purpose of the program is to pique people's interest. So that maybe we can get them off their lazy butts, to pick up a book about maybe one of those women, who really did pique their interest.

During the course of the interview, Bob and Pat offered advice they considered relevant to anyone: to keep learning throughout the lifetime, which Bob posed as an inevitable part of "doing what you love:"

Bob: I just think be curious, and do what you love. See most people don't do what they love. Be involved in what you love. Then your curiosity level is going to be high. I like to explore and research on, like, all of it . . . find things out. And I'm in a field that's fairly open to that.

Pat: Well, I think it is curiosity. I also think that it's, I don't know how to say this, being open to opportunities.

Training the Mind

A liberal education is about not just facts accumulated, but also about effectively utilizing the mind to transform information into useful knowledge. Pat offered an extended example of what "being open to opportunities" can mean intellectually. It involves the ability to make connections between seemingly unrelated pieces of information (as Joan illustrated on page 224 in her connection between women in the

1940s and the engineering majors she advises). In Pat's example, she is watching a documentary at home (at first inattentively), she takes note of a particular scene in the documentary and makes a connection; she then applies it in a different domain (her workplace) to solve a problem and create a new approach to dealing with clients. Italics are added to emphasize her process of arriving at an insight, the excitement of discovery she expressed, and the outcome—the practical use—of her discovery in her workplace, a social services agency:

You know, we talk in our business, the social work business, about teachable moments. Um, and what that means to me is, that people are open to hearing something different. I'll give you a really good example which has *nothing* to do with preservation. We have a residential facility, and they end up using restraints on the kids a lot of times, because the kids are very very disturbed, and they're angry, and etc. etc. Okay. Well, we've been struggling with how is it we can get the residential care staff, who are by and large not very educated, you know, they're not Master's level social workers or PhDs, to begin to learn how to communicate with these kids in different kinds of ways; maybe intervene earlier, talk 'em down as opposed to having to throw them on the ground.

We've been having these discussions now for many weeks, and one night I was doing a crossword puzzle and there was this thing on the Discovery Channel. It was about this guy, there was a movie made out of it, and the guy has figured out how to communicate with horses and break them differently. The movie with Robert Redford, *The Horse Whisperer*, actually based upon the life of this man, the real horse whisperer. But, how they showed it in the movie was not how they showed it on the Discovery Channel. And really what he did was he spent all kinds of years observ-

ing how horses communicate with each other and what certain things mean and what behaviors mean, not to us, but to the horses. And to make a long story short, it was really neat, he then developed a way to intervene using their language, okay?

So, I said to myself, "Geez, this is so exciting!" and I'm not doing the little half-hour vignette justice. We should begin to talk to our people about . . . *these are processes you could use on a person. You don't have to use the processes on a horse, you know?* So now, so I went back and we were developing a training program for new hires. And part of it was about developing the helping relationship. So I was telling my co-directors about this, thinking of course that they would just laugh at me, you know, yeah yeah, Pat's gonna have us watching horse movies. *And they got so excited,* and so now, we show this film at every one of these trainings, and then we talk with the classes. Now, has it changed the life of everybody? No. but, *they're beginning to see that there's another way to communicate,* that there's another language. We can't set the language. The client has to set the language. We can't set the timetable, the client has to set the timetable. And *that was just serendipitous.* I wasn't looking, I wasn't even looking at the film, I was doing something else. *I saw this, and my brain just started to twirl.*

But I think that's like again, *being open to the possibilities wherever you see them* and, *I could have watched that movie, and made no connection in my head.* I could have watched that and just said "Oh well that's interesting," or "Who the hell cares? It's about horses." So, I don't know, that said something to me, and *I feel badly for people who don't, who aren't open to the opportunities. Because they come at us a million times a day.* Not just when you're looking on the Internet. But you have to . . . unless you grab it, *unless you're available for it, it really doesn't matter.*

Pat's recollection of transforming passive TV-watching/relaxation at home demonstrates the possible payoff when learning is not confined to school and work settings; instead may be allocated anywhere an opportunity arises (i.e., everything is treated as possible education).

Joan's narrative described a physical condition that for a time left her unable to seize opportunities to make connections, organize information, or even remember it the same way she had before a car accident on the mountain where she lives. Because she received a head injury that affected several areas of her brain, her ability to deal with numbers ("which I'd never been good at anyway, so let's throw that out the window!"), her memory, and her ability to navigate logistically were all impaired ("I had a terrible time getting to places"). She worked with a neuropsychologist who explained that the neurons in her brain were essentially short-circuiting. Joan described what for her was the most challenging cognitive effect of the accident:

It's, the little neuron guys kind of pull apart, and sometimes they can find their connections and sometimes they can't. But one of the most significant things that happened as a result of the head injury was I didn't seem to be able to memorize. And as a performer, you know, it was like "Oh my God, this is over." And I took on some projects with the Shady Ladies that I had planned to do before the accident happened, and never having been through anything like this, "Oh I can do this!" And I got myself mired in this major major project, that I just was hardly able to pull together. And, um, so I was really frightened by not being able to memorize, and wouldn't go find my characters that I'd had before; I was afraid to attempt that. It was something that—I brought theatre back into my life leading the group, and

then, you know, to be threatened at losing it and then not being able to find that skill again . . .

Although she calls the neuropsychologist she worked with a “wonderful woman,” her own self-directed learning became a key part of her therapy, an effort to change her life in a tangible way:

That actually was one reason why I decided to do a one-woman show, was to see if I could challenge myself in a way that would be as difficult as I could possibly think of. I couldn't remember my phone number for three years? So here I am saying I'm gonna write a show, and I'm gonna learn that. It turned out to be absolutely the best therapy. Because theatre just makes my heart sing, and to see that I could write a script and learn an hour's worth of material.

In her judgment, this “treatment” was successful:

Yep. And that's what they say, if you don't use it you lose it. But, now that I've written a second show, I was worried. I was like, “Oh my gosh, can I keep two of them in there.” And fortunately this year I've had bookings of both? So I've been able to keep with my . . . I'm not having any trouble. I never mix them up.

Using the Physical Body

The historical literature described in Chapter 3 had much to say about the health of the body. One such theme, present throughout Beecher's works, was that the work of the hands is essential to building a strong mind and strong character. Work of the hands is integral in the lives of all the participants in the study. Some degree of physical stamina and hands-on manipulation of the materials of their trades and avocations is required. Bob, the woodworker/restoration contractor/renovation demonstrator, has in fact experienced several injuries and required extensive knee and back repair as a re-

sult of his labors. An earlier section described Joan's part in preparing the land to build her home; the log home and acreage must also be maintained through winter snows and summer growth, and a long drive is required to get up the mountain to the structure: considerably greater overall physicality is required than what is experienced by the average homeowner. Both Bob and Joan travel frequently to deliver their educational programs. Joan both directs and participates in the transportation, arrangement, takedown, and packing-up of the many set and costume pieces she uses in her presentations. John and Steve, in thinking about the hard work that comes with restoring old structures, accept it willingly and expressed the view that they would not wish to turn the labor over to someone else for hire even if their financial situation allowed it:

Steve: Oh I think the more you do, the more hands on, the more bond you have with it. The more sense of satisfaction you get.

John: It's a little weird to us when we know people that are restoring an old house, but we know all they're doing is writing the checks. I mean granted, if we had the money, we would probably write more checks than we do now.

Bob described the physical act of working on structures in terms of enjoyment. For all the participants, it seems reasonable to say that they provide examples of flow, the state of optimal experience and enjoyment that Csikszentmihalyi (1990; 1996) distinguished from pleasure (easy forms of gratification that generally do not lead to psychological growth, such as eating, watching TV, etc.). In the flow state, the level of challenge and skill balance, causing the participant to feel completely focused and absorbed in what he or she is doing, both body and mind, and the participant possesses the awareness needed to assess the quality of the experience and the outcome. The concept of flow was not specifically mentioned to the participants in any of the questions put to

them; it is mentioned here as a general interpretation of the interviews and of the responses to the questions “How do you feel when you’re doing the actual work of restoration? When you’re teaching? What benefits do you think there are in this work for you?” Bob answered the latter question as follows:

What renovating has done for me personally? Well, it’s an outlet. There are two phases to my renovation life. One is doing it for a living, where I buy, restore, and sell historic homes, and the other one is my own home. My own home goes slower, because I’m picky on all my projects, but I’m *extremely* picky on my own house. Um, it’s what my life is. I don’t know, I mean . . . people say don’t you ever get tired of it, but the truth is I don’t. You know? I mean there are days, but in the big picture, I absolutely love it, I mean I am in heaven. I have this new project I’m working on and I’m in heaven.

Aesthetic Sensibility

The Victorian domestic advisors were certainly unafraid to distinguish between good taste and bad, and they argued that good taste—an appreciation for beauty and quality—was an essential part of being human. It was accorded a place among the informal and formal liberal arts because, it was believed, it intertwined with every other facet of becoming a well-rounded person: knowing information about the past and present, thinking, making decisions, relating to others. Similarly, the informal instructors in this study incorporate aesthetics into their own teaching; they attempt to train others to discern differences in appearance and quality just as they *feel* strong connections or revulsion to the visual elements of their own environment. At one point in the interview with Bob and Pat, I posed a scenario to them that I posed to all the participants and asked them to react to it: I asked them to imagine being forced by some circumstance to

live in a structure completely unlike their own. For discussion purposes, the scenario usually involved a cheaply-constructed 1970's ranch-style home. The conversation resulted in a disagreement between Bob and Pat, but it revealed the importance of aesthetics to both.

Pat: I could do it because, you know I was just thinking about this. Growing up, a guy that I hung out with for years and years, we dated for awhile and then we just were really good friends; his mom and dad got divorced, and she moved to this apartment. And it was a nothing apartment. But it was the neatest apartment, it didn't seem like an apartment. It was filled with books, and antiques, and interesting architectural items, and so she, they had lived in an older home so she just sort of brought it with her, so you didn't even notice the architecture, you didn't notice that it was a nothing apartment.

Question: So you would say it has to be covered up at least a little for you to be able to stand it?

Bob: Hidden!

Pat: Well sure, but I wouldn't, I mean I can't . . .

Bob: You see I couldn't because I'd be looking at it all the time; look at that awful woodwork, look how badly it's constructed; I mean, I am so into the minute details of how things are done well, it's probably . . .

Pat: I'm just more adaptable.

Bob: And I'm some psychological screwup of some sort.

Pat: I'm just more adaptable. That would not be my preference. At all.

Bob: Well that's how she grew up. Also, you could go back to that and just hide it.

Pat: Yeah, I could just work around it. I could just pretend that that didn't exist and you know, put up interesting collections all over and . . .

Bob: I think living in a generic cereal box to me is not an acceptable. Like I said, just shoot me.

Steve and John's responses were similar to Bob's. Steve spoke for both: "We couldn't do it." John mentioned that they had played that "game" before: "OK. For a million dollars you'd have to live in a 1970s house for five years. And you wouldn't be able to tell anybody why you got stuck there; you wouldn't be able to SAY." Because it represented a living environment so opposed to their actual taste, they imagined a scenario in which they would go "ultramodern:" John said, "My alterego would make it just a super-contemporary cement and metal and glass structure." When he asked John if he could live comfortably in such a house, Steve amended his opinion and answered, "Maybe as a second house." Then he posed another question to further establish the game's rules, and the fantasy could no longer be maintained:

Steve: Is it a split foyer?

John: No!

Steve: Oh good, at least it's not a split foyer—that would be worse even! We'd rather rent. Yeah. No way.

For John and Steve, the selection of materials for old-house renovation was not a game, but once part of their daily reality as historic district commission members. Within a local historic district, a certificate of appropriateness is required for exterior changes to historic properties, and changes would thus have to be approved or rejected by commission members. This places members of the commission in a position to educate homeowners about what is and is not appropriate, which Steve and John also did

on an informal basis for neighbors who voluntarily asked them for help. Over the years, they observed a variety of aesthetic choices they found questionable on the part of neighbors who didn't ask. John recalled some examples:

They're working on an old house, they're fixing it up. They're "improving" it. It's like, really, I'd rather see the old fake brick on. Leave it alone, at least it's sitting there waiting. Really I love that old siding on old houses; I'd rather see that there than the new vinyl, or that stripped off and the house painted white. I could almost handle white better than a lot of colors though. Blue, pink, . . .

John described a specific instance in which a neighbor's aesthetic choice was rejected by the commission. Historic districts are one of the few settings in the United States where certain aesthetic choices could be reversed through court action.

We had one right across the street from us, this poor little old Vickie/little Queen Anne house, cottage, 2-bedroom. It was owned by—Midge was her name; she had passed away and had lived there probably for a long time, and this young girl bought it, put a roof on it, and was putting in a picture window with Craftsman stained glass above it, removing the original porch. You know, the original window in the front of the gable—she moved it over so it's off center. We were just having a heart attack.

Steve: And replaced it with an Arts and Crafts from Menards window.

John: Yeah. So we had a pretty ugly situation. They were screaming at the neighbors and . . . One problem is, even people that are "doing" old houses, they sometimes still don't get it. An old window to them is a craftsman window, an old house is an old house. A Craftsman window is not appropriate in a Queen Anne house. Or porch posts that are only 4 inches square.

Steve: Look like toothpicks.

Because “aesthetic choice” can be interpreted to mean “taste,” and property owners feel it a right to do what they want to their property, educating them to do otherwise was sometimes difficult, according to John:

You don’t want to tell people you know more than they do, but you just try to say, we’ve done this for a lot of years, we’ve done a lot of research and we’ve done our homework on it. Use other people’s knowledge to *learn*. You know, people don’t always want to hear that. You know, it’s their house, they’re going to do what they want, this is a Victorian porch post and it’s appropriate for my house. It’s available.

The instructors had to find ways to appeal to their students’ self-interest; therefore, as John explained, aesthetics sometimes had to be mingled with economics:

Just to try to explain to them that if they remove any historic fabric to that house, it’s gone forever. And that historic fabric builds the whole neighborhood. You know it’s the street rhythm, the streetscape, and all that that adds to everything, and why their property values are increasing. In Des Moines the property values in historic districts have increased proportionally more than other neighborhoods. Where people are restoring houses and wanting to move back into those neighborhoods—the property values are going up more in Sherman Hill currently than other places around Des Moines. And tell them that their house will be worth more when they get it done or go to sell it if they do it, because other people will be interested in those kinds of details.

Humanist Learning

Valuing individual identity, including gender identity; achieving self-actualization and personal fulfillment; maximizing human potential; strengthening community

The common aesthetic theme for the participants in this study is that generic and fake are ugly and unacceptable; unique and authentic are beautiful. In this theme, the liberal arts appreciation of culture and beauty merges with the philosophy of humanism. The participants' insistence on authenticity describes not only their views of historical appropriateness and visual appeal in exteriors; it also represents what they believe to be at the core of their identity. The Humanist tradition in education has traditionally been focused on recognizing and supporting individuality, encouraging the expression of individuality in educational settings, and helping students achieve the fullest possible realization of their potential. Victorian self-help literature expressed serious ambivalence about the potential destruction of individuality by commercial and educational institutions (see Chapter 3), and the discourse of popular periodicals and books invested homes with considerable power as places where individuality could thrive and potential could be developed.

The contemporary author Sarah Ban Breathnach has written several bestselling books inspired by, and directly drawing from, Victorian exemplars. She has created "Mrs. Sharp," a persona in her self-help publications and her live educational presentations. In *Simple Abundance* (1995), Ban Breathnach offered the reader a day-by-day, yearlong course in "excavating the authentic self" in part through aesthetic means. Ban Breathnach wove together personal narrative and social observation to describe some conditions of contemporary living that bury and sometimes abuse one's sense of individuality and authenticity: financial worries, conflicting job and family obligations, mass-media encouraged over-consumption, and over-stimulation, and disorder at home.

A series of entries (unpaginated but labeled by date) cluster into a theme for January, as a reader would be starting a new year. The entries encourage "working with

what you've got," advising that "it is in the details of life that beauty is revealed, sustained, and nurtured." Thus, the author concluded, "There is an immediate emotional and psychological payoff to getting our houses in order." At home, one can create what Ban Breathnach called a "sacred space," a "quiet center," a place to observe "the sacrament of the present moment." Although she wrote that "self-exploration must come before paint chips and fabric" (May 22), other entries suggest that colors, fabrics, and a range of sensory experiences can awaken the viewer to his or her personal preferences and enable awareness of the overtures the "true self" makes that are usually ignored.

A persistent theme in the book is opening the eyes, gazing, concentrating, perhaps by painting a wall a color that makes one "come alive" or by visiting an art gallery. According to Ban Breathnach, readers who truly takes pleasure in an aesthetic observation will be "rewarded with a vision of [the] authentic self," and greater "personal power" will follow. *Living* magazine also invites readers to experience flavors, textures, and colors deeply and implies a psychic payoff in doing so. The September 1998 issue featured the color yellow. The exploration of color made a connection between person and material world, and sometimes seemed to dare the reader to make the connection and experience the result: "Are you really brave, like Van Gogh, who combined tones of chrome yellow in those famous sunflowers?" Yellow was contrasted with the ubiquitous whiteness of the material world: "White is safe. White is the easy way" (p. 205). The article asked readers to contrast the blandness of white with the "smooth velvety coats" of color displayed in the article, colors of "tang and wit" (p. 204). The article described the decision of a male staff member at the magazine to take a dare and paint a room yellow. The reader follows the narrative of the man taking the implied sensory risk. Color choice is risky because of the science of color, which makes its appearance changeable

depending on context: “Yellow’s hot or cool (or hollandaise saucy) depending on its neighbors; nothing’s as qualmish as an empty yellow room.” The do-it-yourself painter steps back, takes a deep breath, and realizes that he has made the right choice in an implication of psychic fulfillment through this, “the yellow his mind’s eye longed for” (Prisant, 1998, p. 205).

Ban Breathnach (1995) was more direct in advising her readers that (quoting Robert Louis Stevenson) “to know what you prefer instead of humbly saying Amen to what the world tells you you ought to prefer, is to keep your soul alive.” She warned that “you betray yourself when you refuse not only to call forth your authentic gifts, but also to revel in them with thanksgiving” (2001, p. 16). Her work, however, is not exclusively about realizing and celebrating the self. She also wrote *Mrs. Sharp’s Traditions* (2001), a book she intended to serve as *Simple Abundance* for families, to teach them how to use “Victorian joyful simplicities” (p. 17) to bring “contentment, encouragement, and inspiration” to each other. The effect would be to “cement” even busy, non-traditional families together “with the mortar of loving memories” (p. 17).

The original 19th-century and contemporary advice literature are intriguing in the way they parallel the principles of human wholeness identified in Csikszentmihalyi’s works, discussed in Chapter 3. In Csikszentmihalyi’s model of the complex person who can create and evaluate optimal life experiences, this *whole* person is balanced by two equally important aspects of personality: differentiation (forming boundaries of difference and separation with family and community) and integration (forming bonds of similarity and interpersonal connection within families, in communities, among generations) (see discussion in Chapter 3, pp. 83-89). When the participant narratives are con-

sidered in light of Csikszentmihalyi's model, they provide some of the richest data in the philosophical category of humanism.

Individuality: Differentiating from Others

Bob, Pat, Steve, John, and Joan have already described childhood memories of independence. Their descriptions of their college experiences have already demonstrated the way they assess the relative importance of individual interest over institutional requirements. The similar paths they took from immersion in a topic of interest to using their expertise to instruct also set them apart from the general population. The interview transcripts revealed other examples of how the participants consciously differentiate themselves from others, examples that create a fuller picture of the principle of differentiation and the ways it can coexist with integration to create a humanist style of living as well as an approach to education.

When Joan and her husband chose where to situate their log home, they had in mind the avoidance of the type of community regulation Steve and John support. Joan remarked,

We wanted to be far enough away to not have covenants like some neighborhoods do. You know, we didn't want people to tell us what color our house had to be, and we wanted room to spread out. So we found a spot that's ten acres and is way . . . we're 18 miles from Boulder. And we're at 8,400 feet in elevation. This [the hotel where the interview was conducted] is 5,400.

Joan described herself as a woman who also goes her own way in the realm of ideas, having immersed herself in an area of history that few in academia and publishing had any interest in at the time.

John and Steve, too, could be considered ahead of their time as old-house restorers; at the time of our conversation, John pointed out that “restoration is a little bit trendy now,” with antique structures featured regularly in the media: “Before, you never saw a TV commercial for butter or anything that showed an old house in it. Now they might show an old farmhouse, or any old house.” In their roles educating about and enforcing preservation commission guidelines, they further set themselves apart from their friends and neighbors with their expertise and their willingness to take on the responsibility of working with city staff to enforce the rules. Steve recalled, “We weren’t very popular at times.” While working hard to gain audiences in other areas of life, none of the participants seems afraid to risk unpopularity and differentiate themselves from the majority as they believe situations require.

Expressing Identity

Another vehicle through which people differentiate themselves from others is through the expression of their uniqueness. Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981/1989) used the phrase to “stamp their identity” in describing the participants in the study *The Meaning of Things*. In describing one of their houses, John and Steve used similar terms to explain how they feel about doing the work of house restoration (italics have been added to emphasize the parallel with Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton’s phrasing).

Steve: It was badly neglected,

John: It was neglected enough that *we could still put our mark on it*.

Putting their mark on material objects is a consideration that far outweighs convenience and speed of project completion for all the participants, as illustrated in John’s description of a recent bathroom renovation:

John: Like, doing our bathroom up there. I don't think anybody would have done it exactly like we wanted it. You know? That tile needs to turn right there, I mean even those little details that we would look at every single day.

Steve: That's not to say that we're necessarily right, but at least we're doing it—

John: In our mind, anyway, the way it should be so we can live with it peacefully.

[laughs] On this house, with the size of it, it does cost more money. So we are slower at it because we do have to wait to do it. And, Steven is probably a little more like this than I am? We will both wait to do it like we want. We would let something sit—even if we could do something in a year to get us by, we'd step over stuff and wait until we can do it like we want it.

Steve: The bedrooms? They're going to sit there like that until we can just do 'em, and then they'll have furniture in 'em, and be painted, and, you know, just be done. When we have the time and money to do it. We have a vision for everything. It's just all prioritizing.

Moreover, as Steve and John's narrative continued, they described their house not just as an outlet for self-expression, but also as an *extension* of themselves, and they extended the metaphor in a way that invested architectural structures with human qualities. Moreover, they explained that in order for their domestic environment to be a good fit as an extension of themselves, it has to make them feel *like themselves*; authentic; like who they really are. In order for John and Steve to feel authentic in their living space, the structure must *be* authentic (must fit what it historically was). Again, italics have been added to emphasize thematic patterns.

Steve: But it was not *abused* like this one, or our first one.

John: Right.

Steve: But we've always had a *very good feeling* in all of our houses.

John: We wouldn't buy a house to keep forever and live in if it didn't have a lot of *the original fabric* in it. That kind of stuff is important to us. So I guess that's part of what we like about an old house is the *original stuff*. I mean, you know, if all this was gone, we wouldn't be here. If it was gutted in here and we had to recreate it, *it wouldn't be right*. It needs to be the old materials.

Steve: *Call it a feeling or a spirit or a vibe*, or a whatever, but it all comes together and *makes you feel comfortable* in it.

John: It's just like when Carolyn and Angela's house that we looked at today was for sale. We could have bought that. We were already into this one; but we still could have probably—Carolyn said, "Well why didn't you ever buy this house?" It's like well, *it wasn't THE house*. For us to move from our last house, it had to be **THE** house. And, that's a great house, but it's not for us. You know, it has a lot of its parts, it's a great house, *it still just has to be the right one for you*.

Steve: It was the right one for them.

In Chapter 3, material objects were discussed in relation to gender identity. As he explained some reasons why their current house was a good fit for the personalities living there, John posed the question of whether or not houses have genders. He and Steve believe that they do:

In the big picture, I think part of what attracted me to the house, probably both of us, was that it was a little more masculine of a house. Our last house was not frilly Victorian but it was Victorian, and the direction we were taking it with our furni-

ture and stuff, we did not want it to get too “old lady.” We wanted something a little more masculine.

Steve: The soul of that house was female; this is definitely a male house.

They described some additional characteristics of the good psychological fit between occupants and structure:

Steve: This house to me, um, is very secure and solid and well-built. It gives me a feeling of strength in a way.

John: A solid base.

Steve: Yeah.

John: We truly loved all of our houses, we truly felt very very bonded and connected with them.

Recalling the theme of house as extension of self, Bob put the connection between domestic environment and psychological health in the strongest terms, suggesting that to lose the ability to choose that environment, to lack a structure worth stamping one’s identity on, would be to *lose* his identity. His comment was offered in response to the “what if?” question about circumstances forcing him to live in a 1970’s ranch-style house:

I’d just kill myself. That would make me feel like the lowliest piece of crap that ever walked the face of the earth. There is nothing worse than living in that kind of environment. It’s generic. It feels like there’s absolutely no texture, no interest, no quality in your life. And being around the warmth and the depth of some of the more historic architecture to me is what life is all about. I have never—I’m one of these lucky people that has done what he loved all his life. No, I just couldn’t do it. Couldn’t do it.

An Example of an Evolving Self

The participants understand their living rooms and their “living room learning” as more than just a collection of things that represent who they already are. As their owners described them, the objects involved in their living and teaching play a role that is dynamic; a role in what the participants have *become*. As Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981/1989) wrote, “The material environment that surrounds us is rarely neutral; it . . . helps to give purpose and direction to one’s life” (p. 17). Joan’s narrative serves as the best illustration of the point. Chapter 4 already described how her girlhood interest in history blossomed as she played and imagined. What hasn’t yet been described is the way material objects helped her change an inhibiting element of her personality and develop potential that changed the course of her life. She described herself “before”:

I was incredibly shy as a child. Terribly, just painfully shy. And um, I was kind of a loner? I had a couple of very close friends; Mary was one of those. And Mary kept trying to get me involved in theatre. I was so frightened, I was so shy, and I didn’t want to have anything to do with it. And yet I would do imitations of Lily Tomlin, doing her, you know, the child in the big chair? Before classes would start or something like that. And uh, but that was it. I did that very well, so I felt comfortable. It was in class before the teacher came in. But, I didn’t want to do anything else.

An elaboration on her earlier description of her first encounter with Old West celebrations in Central City is offered here to illustrate an evolution of self. The event she’s describing, because of the opportunities it provided for costuming and props, gave her a way to *assert* her self and her interests:

I told Tom *I'd like to go in costume*. And I had one that I had made for Halloween, and it was one of these madam things. And I wore it up there, and I just, *I kind of stood on the sidelines*, because it was a local thing, and *people weren't very welcoming*. *Oh, it's terrible. It's a small town thing. Very cliquish*, you know, and all of that. But *I just kept coming*. And it was only once a year. It was only one day. And I was standing on the sidelines, and yet *people were taking notice*. I had *had some training in costuming at that point, and I had an eye for it*. So finally somebody showed pity on me and started talking to me and things, and it was an older woman, who told me how to get involved for the next time. And so *I sort of insinuated myself and just kept persistent*. And then what had happened, I had been doing it for a few years and they had a competition for Madam of the Year. *It was like, Oh my God, this is better than Prom Queen*.

The once-painfully shy Joan refused to perform outside of the classroom or in front of her teacher, yet performance ultimately became her calling. Whereas she once resisted situations where she would call too much attention to herself, she became a teacher (“I’ve worked five hours at one stretch with each of those girls. Five hours alone with the girl doing Belle Starr”); team leader (“That is one thing that I think is the hardest concept to get across . . . You know, when the baseball team is going to play, they need the shortstop, and if she doesn’t happen to be there because somebody’s got a wedding, then, somebody’s got to stand in for them. And theater works the same way”); director (“Memorize [the script] before we come together, because you have to have that part. You can’t be shifting the paper while I’m trying to show you physically how we can bring this person to life.”). Her description of her role in the Shady Ladies group illustrates a significant distance from painfully shy: “I’m a dictator, so there’s never been

another president. Actually I'm secretary and treasurer too, but I have a board so it looks good [laughs]."

From her vantage point as instructor/director/friend, Joan has observed the women in the Shady Ladies group closely, and she commented that some of the women who have committed the time and effort to perform with the group have experienced a transformation similar to hers. The adult women perform in a group that educates, but they are also students who have learned more than just biographical facts about their characters. As they wear the costumes and think about the woman and the historical context in which they lived, and then they become that woman for audiences, they have learned things about themselves and changed in the process:

When there's attrition it's like, half of them go. You know, jobs, or they've got something else, there's an illness, or something. Or an elderly parent, that's getting to be big for us. So it's been interesting that women have been willing to try something. And most of them are, you know, they're over 40 because their kids are grown and gone and they have time in their lives now. And they also are maybe feeling that if they don't do it now, they're never going to. And so they've been good to come in and take on something that's a challenge for them. And public speaking is scary for an awful lot of people. But it's interesting because . . . it's kind of the old dog a new trick thing? That these women have not had any experience in theatre whatsoever. And the women who have been in the group have grown.

Additional interviewing would be required to determine whether or not other participants could speak of any similar evolution in personality.

Building Community: Integration with a Community

Victorian conventional wisdom dictated that each person had a responsibility to her family, community, and nation not just to learn throughout the lifespan, but also to teach. Csikzentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981/1989), approaching the topic from the perspective of psychological fulfillment or “happiness,” used empirical data to argue that individuality needs other people to give it meaning (see Chapter 3, p. 86). This, the final section under the heading “Humanist Learning,” demonstrates how the participants’ efforts to differentiate themselves are balanced and made meaningful by the connections they make with others: these are descriptions of their integrated selves.

When he was asked what restoration does for him, Bob, expanding his answer beyond feeling himself to be “in heaven,” identified “the sense of neighborhood; you have a sense of connection.” John recalled that buying their first home in a historic district was motivated by the active seeking of such a connection. He recalled the progression of their involvement in the Sherman Hill historic district. Choosing that particular neighborhood involved more than aesthetics, more than economy:

The neighborhood—that’s what it was about. Part of it was we wanted to be part of that group, and move up to be a homeowner, and restore, and promote the neighborhood. And then we got hip deep into the neighborhood association. You know, we were both on the board, I was Sherman Hill President for awhile, and we both chaired house tours and did all that and just got very involved pretty quick after ‘91. All the way through the first and second we were real involved with the neighborhood.

Steve and John have taken the sense of belonging and personal comfort they feel within their own city block and have used it to try to instill a sense of pride in place for

others who live in the area and in the larger metropolitan area. For example, similar to their efforts to change the image of both historic districts as crime ridden, in the neighborhood where they live now, they are working to teach neighbors and outsiders to see the neighborhood in a more appreciative way. In the following segment of the transcript, John is talking about a nearby school that is a site for neighborhood meetings.

Art teachers from the school had toured their home and several others in the district:

Steve: Oh I think it's opening people's eyes to the neighborhood, 'cause a lot of people haven't been in any of the houses up in this neighborhood in particular. So . . .

John: It's up by the church; it's just a great school. And so, I think a lot has gone on that way just to try to educate, to let the kids know what's around them here in the neighborhood. The church right across from them is on the National Register of Historic Places, and, that kind of stuff, to try to tell them, you know, that what they walk by everyday is not just a dingy old building. It maybe has some significance right here, maybe it's not the richest neighborhood, or the cleanest sometimes, but there are things here that are important.

Another community-building goal in their teaching is expanding the boundaries of the neighborhood by bringing new residents in, first helping people unfamiliar with the neighborhood get to know it better. At the same time, they work to expand the community of individuals willing to invest time, money, and effort in preserving historic architecture. John identified the house tours he and Steve helped organize, along with teaching people from other neighborhoods how to sponsor their own, as two of the most important teaching tools they have in accomplishing these particular goals:

I think [house tours] are very beneficial, and educational. It tells people that anybody can do this. I mean even if you don't really have the skills, as long as you have

the drive, there are ways to do it, if you want to do an old house and live in an old house. But house tours bring all different kinds of people into your neighborhood; you see people pull up in their Jags and they're looking around, and say "I think this is the house," and then they tiptoe in, but you know, it's everyday people that are here doing this. You don't have to be a major craftsman to be able to do this, or extremely wealthy to be able to do it, and so I think it's very educational. Everybody always wants to see how other people live. You know, and snoop, and look around.

Although Joan chose to locate her own home far removed from conventional neighborhoods, her activities are, similarly, community oriented, not just a matter of individual fulfillment. Figuring out what she loved to do had required mentoring and encouragement from others, and when she recalled the Shady Ladies' early days, she identified the main reason for the group's creation: "the camaraderie of being together; where do you go do this stuff?"; "We just wanted to be out together."

A theme unique in Joan's narrative, in fact, is her sense of belonging and responsibility to community defined by gender. Her fascination with women's history has already been established. As she recalled significant moments in her career and her personal history outside of the Shady Ladies group, she spoke at length about an "incredible woman" boss, and the "wonderful woman" neuropsychologist who assisted her rehabilitation after her car accident. Perhaps most important was the way she described her current position as an advising coordinator for students in an environmental engineering program that attracts a higher percentage of female majors than the typical American engineering college. In describing the role she plays for the students, she said, "It's almost like the female nurturing? And I find it incredibly exciting to kind of be a cheerleader for these students."

Joan and the Shady Ladies have served as cheerleaders for other organizations and towns. The group's original name was Shady Ladies of the Central City Motherlode, which for a time signified the close bond between the group and the Goldrush-era town, which relied heavily on the Ladies to promote itself. The group has reached out to other community entities by appearing at benefit performances to raise restoration funds and pay taxes for historic buildings and by assisting the historical society with teas and cemetery tours, ambitious events that require more participants than any one group can provide on its own. The groups joined forces to work toward a common goal: saving the town's historic structures, celebrating and educating about its history, and revitalizing its economy after a gambling initiative caused a boom in a nearby town and bust in Central City.

Joan and others who devote their time to projects like this illustrate Csikzentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton's (1981/1989) point that material objects represent bonds between contemporary people and their ancestors (by blood or geography). Joan specifically illustrated such a connection when she described her group's involvement in cemetery walks, a popular fundraising activity for historical societies. In her narrative, the people buried within the graveyards of Central City and surrounding areas sounded more alive than dead:

There are 11 cemeteries in this county. Well, it's so interesting in the Western history, they're wonderful. And something that goes along with mining is that there were no unions, and there were tons of mining accidents. Arms and legs would be flying and people were killed. And, belonging to a fraternal organizations like the Elks, the Knights of Pytheus, something like that, they would be guaranteed a burial, and that their family would be supported. The people paid dues that would go

into this fund, and they were brothers, you know, fraternal organization. There were tons of those organizations around. So some of these are you know the Knights of Pytheus, or the Masonics. So it's really rich up there. So the historical society would do this fundraiser which was their biggest moneymaker. But they needed all their active members at the headstones portraying the people.

This sense of connection to the past, particularly with the miners who settled the area in the 19th century, is activated every day for Joan because of where she lives. "Something that to me harkens back to miners living in these structures is, boy they had some rough times. They were living at *ungodly* elevations, at 10, 11, 12,000 feet. Which is winter most of the year. You know we have winter for nearly three months." Regardless of how long the miners have been dead, Joan conveyed several times her belief that there is much to be learned from them: "Coming to Colorado and seeing the log cabins that the miners had built that were still standing after a hundred years, I thought was a really . . . It was ingenious of them to use the materials that were there and they fit the area, because it was natural to that area."

Joan also talked at length about the one-woman shows she sets in later historical periods to represent American culture, not specifically the American West. Nursing homes are frequent venues for these shows, and the anecdotes Joan offered about performing for this audience provide explicit examples of the link between material objects—her instructional props—and their humanist function as described by Csikzentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981/1989). One way their study approached the connection was to examine the lack of connection, or alienation, between human beings and objects of importance to them, as in institutional settings such as nursing homes. Csikzentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton raised the question of whether or not life in such

a setting can result in the slow erosion of a secure sense of self. Joan's narrative cannot prove that case, but it does present strong anecdotal evidence of material props helping to reawaken connections to the audience's personal past and their meaningful memories, and in turn, helping them connect with other people in the present. This is a difficult challenge from a formal therapeutic perspective because the audience members Joan was describing have literally lost a part of themselves to Alzheimer's disease. Italics have been added to the description of these shows to highlight the multiple elements of the theme present in the narrative: object/audience perception/audience response/suggestion that authentic objects helped the audience reconnect with their authentic selves.

In my own shows, my solo programs that I do, *that's real important too, to have antiques*. And it's amazing . . . I do a lot of work in nursing homes with Alzheimer's patients. And uh, I do a program called *On the Homefront* about a woman during World War II. In the 40s show, my Rosie the Riveter is going to go off to the factory, and she's packing her lunch. The *lunchbox* I have is from my great aunt, who, it's actually a turn of the century vintage? And it has its *original paint*. But just as people would do in that time and in Iowa especially, to reuse what's around. It's still good. And I had had some experience with *psychologists there who work with the patients, or social workers who come up to me afterward and say, "You know that lunchbox, it really turned on a light for people."*

There's something so familiar about that. They remember—because it's the kind a child would have carried to school when there were country schools and one-room schools and things like that. Little metal, oval-shaped bucket with a wire bale handle; I'd pull that out and put my sandwich in it. And all of a sudden these people

that they have a hard time reaching, with Alzheimer's—and I think the social workers are finding that once these people have experienced my shows, *they're in a receptive mood to talk with people. But it's the item that does that.* What I enjoy is that I can bring it into them and it's going to go with me, but for the time I'm there . . . that I can bring that. And I do *vintage costumes* as much as possible, and I use *music of the time*, you know to help. And I use recorded things as well—spoken word. So I'll have *radio programs*, you know, Eddie Cantor, *that they would recall. To just transport them back.* And I know it works that way because in the story, this woman that I take through five years, 1941 through 1945, through the years of World War II, has a child, and you never see him, you never see the man that she married, you never see the in-laws that she lived with, but she talks about them, and has *pictures* of her child, and she shows the audience; someone of that actual vintage. But after, somebody said, “How old is your little boy now?” [laughs]. And I'd look at him and I'd go, he's probably about 60. It's amazing! Then I feel like I've done my job; *I've transported people*, you know, back to that time or something.

Joan's own answer to the “what if” question posed to all the participants may also lend support to the idea that connections to objects of value may play a role in shaping a “sturdy and resilient” self (Csikzentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981/1989, p. 104).

Joan was asked a variation on the question that focused more on “what if” she could no longer perform and immerse herself in local history rather than on where she would live. She said, “History doesn't go away because I move to another place. It just offers another opportunity. Cool stuff happened in Alaska, you know?” In answer to a different question related to her transformation from loner to teacher, she also noted about her-

self, "I think what's cool is that I've really learned to go with the flow, and to change things."

Returning to John and Steve's response to the "what if" question may serve as an effective summary for this section. It ties domestic environment to both individual personality and integration with the community, equating structures devoid of quality, permanence, and uniqueness with people devoid of personality and fulfilling relationships. Furthermore, they suggested that if they were forced to live in such a structure, they themselves would change.

John: I'm glad some people want to live in them. 'Cause there are a lot of them out there [laughs]. But I'm glad that they want to live there so we don't have to. You know? [laughs] No. I guess because for us, our sense of what home is is more than just a place to sleep and eat and leave to go to work from. It's more about everything about it. It's what we have structured our life around. You know. Our friends, our social life, all that has been around old houses and how we've met people and what we've done . . .

Steve: Those 70s houses to me have no life; it's just a structure.

John: And the people who live in them probably aren't that interesting. I mean as friends. [Steve laughs] No, I mean seriously! No and I don't mean that in a really bad way, but do we have any friends who just live in a 1970s ranch?

Steve: No.

John: We don't.

Question: You think houses and personalities tend to go together? Do you think you would change if you were forced to live in an ugly house with no character?

John: Yeah! I think we would, because all we would do would probably be to watch TV, and that kind of stuff. We wouldn't be working on the house, we wouldn't be socializing a lot at our house, . . .

Steve: Unless we were remodeling it . . .

John: But it would still make me sick. [laughs]

Progressive Learning

Acting on a political agenda; challenging existing social and economic structures; challenging power relationships; solving social problems

Chapter 3 showed 19th-century women's progression from enacting household hints to targeting their household knowledge toward various forms of progressive activism and community betterment. Csikzentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981/1989) demonstrated that in their study, the families who invested a high degree of psychic energy in their homes and their contents did not "use up" this energy and withdraw from the larger community. On the contrary, they tended to invest a high degree of psychic energy in their ties to a community by participating in "the wide world of political action" (p. 157)—most fundamentally, involving themselves in changing the community in some way.

Among the participants in the present study, several connected overtly political themes with their preservation, performance, and/or teaching endeavors. Bob, Pat, John, and Steve have been involved in political campaigns for the Democratic Party as well as AIDS charities. Steve and John expressed an admiration for the politically liberal feel of the first historic district in which they lived, as compared to the greater conservativeness of the second. They observed a difference between the neighborhood preservationists and those who had simply lived in the neighborhood a long time: John

said, “To them it’s not about liberal politics,” to which Steve added, “Being in a historic district at all—it just happens to be where their house is.” John noted that their first experience as community activists required getting to know city council politics, “you know, people that were being elected to city council, to try to foster change in the city.” John’s intention was to educate and persuade city officials “to be more sensitive to concerns that older neighborhoods were having. From crime, preservation, street widening concerns, all of that kind of thing. Curbs, historic street lights were a big hot button” at the time. The commitment of time and energy to political action eventually became overwhelming:

John: You could be in a planning and zoning meeting, go to a city council meeting, you could go to a Board of Adjustment meeting, *all* the time.

Steve: You’re balancing that with the rest of your projects and your full-time jobs.

John: So we just decided, you know, we had been involved in all that crap for so many years that maybe it was just time . . . we wanted to . . . and our house was just sitting here. We wanted to work on it, and we were trying to do all that, and it was just like, We’re gonna focus on our own property.

The narratives of some of the political fights their projects involved them in (included later in this chapter) may help explain what caused the sense of exhaustion that had led them to pull back somewhat, to regain balance between public and private interests.

Joan’s one-woman show *On the Homefront* was inspired by events at the national level. It was written, she said during the interview, “as my own personal response to September 11, 2001.” None of the participants was asked directly about political leanings or party affiliations, and Joan didn’t volunteer hers. Her reflections on the attacks of September 11 and the historical connections she made with World War II did cause

her to reflect on several major “social issues” brought to the forefront of American life after September 11 and to describe how they are dealt with in her programs. Her inclusion of these topics reflects her desire to do more than educate in an entertaining way. In that she is motivated to do what she does to affect a social change at some level, her performances can be considered “political.” Joan reiterated that

when I started the groups, I had a place to dress up. But, it wasn't long before I needed more of it than that. And people would say, “What do you do?” And it's like well, We walk around and wave at people and pose for pictures. You know, that didn't seem to have a great deal of importance, or making a difference. That's one of the things that I keep telling my husband, that if it's a paid job, or something I'm spending my time doing, *I want to be able to make a difference.*

In the sections that follow, the participant narratives are categorized according to the social/political causes that are reflected in what they do and what they teach. Some of these issues are a reflection of the contemporary culture that is now dealing with them; others have been debated since the early 19th century and before. The selection of material in this section is focused on participant activism within the context of the topics most relevant to this dissertation, the participants' teaching and their hands-on work with material objects of the past.

Urban Revitalization

Chapter 3 reflected a little of Victorian America's increasing concern about the neurasthenia-inducing stresses of urban life, as well as their potential to unravel the fabric of civilized society. In the writings of William Morris and others, these problems were tied at a visceral, aesthetic level to urban ugliness. The emphasis and length of his responses suggest that Bob interprets his drive to restore old structures in a contempo-

rary context as originating as much from concern for the condition of American cities as from concern with individual self-concept and comfort. Bob commented, “I think we have these resources within our central cities, that have, are blighted and ignored, and that the quality of living when you work in those neighborhoods and turn them around is much better than the quality in new developments.”

Together, Bob the restoration contractor/educator and Pat the social worker/restorer/educator offered a rich description of the condition of urban America, a detailed analysis of problems they perceive as needing to be “turned around.” Because they form a comprehensive plan for achieving a specific social change, several long segments from the interview transcripts are included in order to preserve intact the philosophy of urban revitalization interspersed throughout Bob and Pat’s remarks.

Chapter 3 described early 20th century modernism and the attempt to remake architecture and objects in order to remake the material world, including private dwellings, according to a super-rational, standardized, collective model. The modernist experiment was supposed to end poverty, racism, and other social ills by moving people to large-scale planned housing developments; however, as Pat summarized her perception of the outcome based on her experience as a social worker in various housing projects, “it was jails for families.” Her descriptions created an image of public housing as living spaces with all the humanist elements evacuated. Pat’s perceptions were shaped during her experience as a social worker in two of Chicago’s largest housing projects.

Pat: I spent five years working in the Robert Taylor housing project. Which was the largest publicly-funded housing project in the world. There were 44,000 registered tenants in 35th-55th in a 20-block row. And when I say registered, that didn’t include boyfriends, parents, mothers, aunts, uncles. The Chicago Housing Authority esti-

mated that there were probably closer to 80,000 people. You know, because there were so many sort of, illegal people living there. And the density was . . . it was just *appalling*. And, a lot of my clients in the 70's actually took pride in their little apartments. You know, they were cinder block, but they tried to fix them up, all that kind of stuff, but it was just, you know, it was just no, the dumpsters that were . . . how tall is a three-yard dumpster?

Bob: Six feet tall?

Pat: Six feet tall, by what, five, six-feet wide? Then how long, 10-12 feet, something like that?

Bob: Twenty feet.

Pat: Twenty feet. The dumpsters were right at the front door. So, in the summer-time, you couldn't even go into the buildings without smelling the stench of rotten garbage. Um, the hallways smelled like urine. Um, the lights were always out, you know. And the CHA would say "yeah, but a lot of times the tenants do it." Well, the tenants did some things, but the Housing Authority didn't do its job either. And there was lawsuit after lawsuit. So, and, on the South Side where I worked, Robert Taylor was just one part of my territory. It had been a *grand* place, where the apartment buildings, you know, each apartment would be 3,000 square feet, beautiful woodwork, and all that kind of stuff, and just allowed to fall into disrepair. And so you have to think to yourself, *what manner of person would design—they were almost like jails for families, just to keep them there. Contained. That's exactly what it was. You keep them there.*

At Cabrini, where I also worked, Cabrini Green, they designed the—Robert Taylor was this row, but Cabrini were all these sort of circle drives. A couple of

places they called them The Canyons. And what it meant basically was *there was just like one way in and it was the same way to go out*. Well as the neighborhoods got rougher and as the people who went to the public housing got rougher and people died more often from gunshot wounds and stuff, there'd be gang fights in the Canyons, and the *police wouldn't go in*. They wouldn't go in. That was standard policy. They would not go in until the shooting was over with. *Because there was no way for them to get out*. So, it didn't make any difference if old people called or young children got shot, they were, it was just done. So, you know, I, and we knew after the big projects went up, *after the big social engineering, forget the housing side of it, that it was an abysmal failure guided by somebody somewhere in Washington who knew nothing about people*, and they started experimenting with scattered site housing, which was successful but never had been adopted wholesale. You know . . .

To Pat's description, Bob added an opinion about the spread of urban decay outside the projects and into whole neighborhoods: "We have many many many many houses that have been chopped up into so many apartments that they're *substandard* for poor people to live in. They're not even, you know, safe to live in." He argued that the addition of bigger, more beaureaucratic solutions only contributed to the problem:

But, you see, most of these central city neighborhoods have been so overloaded with every social service agency in the city, really there's no equity. I think we should have some group homes next to where Mayors live, and alderpersons live, and scattersite a lot of this type of subsidized housing so that people aren't all living on subsidies in one place. That model was thrown out years ago. And we really need to

diversify where we . . . throughout the community where people live, instead of piling everybody into one neighborhood. It's just not equitable. We still fight it.

Pat: We still fight it every day. So, it's just . . .

The conversations with Bob and Pat yielded specific illustrations of some of the battles they have engaged in, as well as examples of small battles with poverty and urban decay that have been won. Bob asserted that "if you're going to do downtown revitalization you're also going to have to do neighborhood revitalization in order to get people to come back and live in the central city and have some spendable income." A slogan he uses regularly in presentations is "preservation doesn't cost, it pays." The line is meant to suggest not that preservation is free, but that the benefits exceed the cost:

Historic preservation and neighborhood revitalization is one of the best economic revitalization tools we have in the country today. And it's one of the most underutilized tools that we've got. Mostly out of ignorance. People don't understand; most people think that historic preservation costs a lot of money. The truth is that that's not true; it costs more to build new.

Using their former Rock Island, Illinois, neighborhood as an illustration, Bob pointed out that "the tax base has just gone through the roof, um, because all these houses that were abandoned are back on the tax rolls, historic street lighting has gone in, you know, siding and really bad materials have been taken off back to the original, a sense of pride in the community has come back." The remainder of the conversations with Bob, Pat, and the others constructed a clearer sense of the complexity of educating and restoring communities and the issues that emerge that sometimes give rise to political fights.

Diversity

Diversity emerged as a persistent theme in several of the participant narratives. The term was used in response to questions about historic preservation's benefits to communities. Follow-up questions were asked to get Bob's, Pat's, Steve's, and John's reactions to the term "gentrification," because it is a term sometimes used in association with the preservation/restoration movement to suggest the opposite of diversity. In defining his understanding of the word, Bob expressed strong opinions about gentrification as it plays out in cities and explained how he distinguishes neighborhood restoration from gentrification: "Gentrification and the standard concept of kicking all the poor people out and bringing in white yuppie scum, so to speak, is not the right way to turn neighborhoods around and has certainly never been a part of what I do." John also helped define the concept and expressed some ambivalence about its possible outcomes. He stated that he thought the Sherman Hill district where he and Steve used to live is "very gentrified" in spite of it being a "huge success" for the city. John mentioned two phenomena that help define a gentrified neighborhood for him. First, "Part of that blame falls within the people who are leaving our city I think a lot of times;" second is neglect on the part of governing bodies ("Some of these neighborhoods should never have been allowed to get that bad. And so maybe it shouldn't have been so secluded, or 'Let's push all the minorities into this particular neighborhood because it's in that shape'"). Third is lack of individual responsibility: "I just want people to take care of their property."

Bob explained that gentrification typically occurs in larger metropolitan areas ("If you go into most of the communities that are 300 to 750,000, under a million nationwide, those types of gentrification issues really don't apply. Most of these historic

neighborhoods when they were built had poor people, moderate, middle, upper middle, upper, and rich families all living in the same area. So you have a rich diversity in actual size of home in most central city neighborhoods”). In cities with a population over a million, he described a different situation:

in regard to gentrification, I think it's criminal. Because, all you're doing is dislocating people and forcing them out of the area, instead of making them a part of the area. And Chicago is doing that a lot more. Probably more so integrating different economic levels than ever before. They used to be awful. You take Bucktown in Chicago right now. I'm embarrassed to admit my dad's brother is the financier behind a group of people that go in and kick everybody out and the condo owns buildings instead of working with the neighborhood and working with the good working poor families. They just displace them.

Within his narrative, Bob imagined neighborhood planning that avoids purging one economic class or another.

There are good, solid, low, moderate, and middle-income families that create that—two things that I strive for in working in a neighborhood is to create economic and ethnic diversity. That's what the real world is like when kids leave home, get out of school, they go into the real work world and move into a city or what have you, and there is ethnic and economic diversity. And if they're not surrounded by that growing up, they don't understand it and will have a much harder time of it. It's multi-tiered. If a community is doing it properly, what you have are not-for-profit agencies that understand that just because somebody is poor doesn't mean that they don't appreciate an original gingerbread front porch. Breachmenders, which was a small not-for-profit dealing strictly with the poor, not moderate but the poor people,

was strictly a preservation group—still is. Breachmenders—that’s some sort of reference from the Bible. And that has merged now with the organization in Rock Island that I started called Rock Island economic growth.

Various segments of Bob’s transcripts can be merged to outline specifics of his plan for accomplishing his vision, a plan in which education plays a central role.

1. Bring current residents into the plan. (“Like when I buy a house. If I’m going to convert a rental property back into a single family, I don’t just give everybody thirty days notice and tell everybody to get out. I work with them. I mean, I try to help them out, try to figure out a good place for them to live.”)
2. Downsize and abandon the public housing model. (“Turning [structures] back into single families will bring some middle and upper middle income families back to the central city who have all abandoned the central city. Because you cannot turn neighborhoods around with only moderate and poor families. You need the breadth of all the different income and ethnic levels in order to pull it off and have a holistic approach.”)
3. Create a partnership between private and public entities that can advance different aspects of neighborhood revitalization. (“It’s all about mutuality. And it’s that way in turning neighborhoods around. You know, the homeless organizations, the not-for-profits for low, the not-for-profits for moderate, the not-for-profits that deal with middle income families, and the private developers in the city, all work together to create the diversity and turn neighborhoods around.”)
4. Educate. (“So you really do have a good place for working poor families, train them. We created programs that taught people how to mow yards, how to touch up paint on their houses, how to handle their credit and those sorts of things so

that we can be sure to get the low and moderate income families to be a part of the turnaround.”) In addition, Bob started a class at a local high school where at-risk kids “go to school in the morning, and then in the afternoon they go out and they learn preservation skills, crafts, so that when they graduate from high school they’re not robbing us or working at McDonalds, they’re actually getting jobs for ten and fifteen bucks an hour.”

To Bob, the principles outlined for inner-city transformation are not idealistic abstractions, but practical necessities, “Because gentrified neighborhoods don’t last. Historically, they crash and burn.” Equally at risk in Bob’s estimation are neighborhoods with no remaining elements of a middle class. Drawing from their experiences in the various neighborhoods where they have put their ideas into practice, Bob and Pat offered examples of progressive projects with lasting results, of diversity as a way of living as opposed to an abstract philosophical principle.

Bob: The point is we don’t think that ALL the group homes in the city should be in our neighborhood. We didn’t mind living next door to a group home, did we? There were schizophrenics, and they were trying to live on their own in a group home, and we were happy for them. Pat used them to help gut the house. I use homeless people all the time. I go down to the homeless shelter with my truck, I call in advance, pick up three or four guys, take them over to the project, pay them more than they make at any other job, and uh, it helps them out and it helps me out.

Pat: Hm, it’s—it’s such a sense of accomplishment, it’s taking this really, thing, this structure that, you know, was beautiful, like my little two-flat in Chicago, for example. It was three courses thick of brick; you know, you could drive a battleship through that puppy. They don’t make those things, they don’t make places like they

used to. It just had been neglected. It was in a neighborhood that was the murder capital of Chicago.

To my right were several Korean families that lived in the two-flat, to my left was a woman who was this hillbilly with no teeth who had been living in sin with a guy who was an American Indian; um, next door to them was this huge apartment with a building full of just all kinds of white trash. There were Asians and Koreans and African-Americans and Latinos, and some of the buildings were abandoned and we used to have guys who were homeless; they would come and sell drugs out in our front yards and drank, and so I was the first yuppie on the block, not that I thought of myself as a yuppie. But I was white, I was young; I wasn't poor; I wasn't rich, but you know . . . There had been a gay couple who had renovated a house about mid-way in this two-block stretch, and that was it. There was just a lot of—um, there was this hotel, like a single-room occupancy hotel, beautiful old building, and you know, people were drunk and oh, disorderly, and it was just unbelievable. So the whole block was really just a trip. And, my neighbors to the right had lived there for 20 years and my neighbors to the left had lived there for 20 years and they had never spoken to each other.

And so, being from Illinois, from downstate Illinois, it's like, I met them each immediately and struck up friendships, and to make a long story short, the nature of the entire block, the whole two-block, ended up changing. And I certainly didn't do that by myself, but it got the Korean families and they did some stuff—they had a really nice two-flat that had been well maintained, but you know, they hadn't really . . . you know it wasn't, like, jazzed up, and they did that. And the woman from Appalachia used to have junk sales out in her front yard and she stopped do-

ing that; and some guy bought the SRO, the single-room occupancy hotel, and we became friends, and so by the time it was all done, you know, we planted all the green spaces, we mowed everybody's yard, and if they weren't mown we mowed, we had little street festivals, and this all happened really very very quickly. And so it was not only my house, but *it was just this whole sort of building of community . . .*

Bob: Snowball effect.

Pat: The snowball effect. People didn't sit out on their front porches in Chicago because it was dangerous, and you know, we started sitting out on our front porches, and so we asked the guys who were selling drugs politely to move, and actually they did. We asked the guys who were, you know, drinking out on their front porches and they did.

Bob: We did that here.

Pat: And then, um, when I moved to Rock Island, the house I bought there, the whole block was abandoned. The entire whole block was abandoned, there wasn't anybody, and so that house got done, and then somebody else bought a house, and then Bob and I got married, and then we finished the second house, and so, now the whole . . .

Bob: I'd done 11 houses before we got married.

Pat: And so the whole block is now occupied, half of it, over half of it by people who actually live there, they're not like tenant landlords, and then we started down the street and up the block and so, it really is, and you have such a sense of pride.

An additional example of transformation through diversity came from John, who said that his own neighborhood at one time was "the largest slum/blight area in the state of Iowa, proportionately." Many new low-income houses have been built in the

neighborhood in the last two or three years, mixed in with many in-progress old-house restorations. John and Steve plan to stay in the neighborhood because “we love the cultural diversity.”

Sexual Orientation

Steve and John discovered in their second historic district that there were limitations to the neighborhood’s affection for diversity. For them, the personal became political in a direct way when they became part of “some internal politics that we did not really care for” in the neighborhood association. John explained,

Um, like Steven had mentioned earlier, we’re very—some of the people here were not very liberal and they were more concerned about our private lives more than anything else. And in front of everyone at meetings I’m like, this is about neighborhood restoration. It’s not about what I do in my private time or who I spend my life with.

Disappointment was evident in John’s and Steve’s recollection of these events, their enthusiasm for the neighborhood having been diminished somewhat when they felt forced to respond to other committee members’ focus on their sexual orientation:

John: You know, we came in whole-heartedly, I mean “Here we are!” We thought they would be—some of them were; our friends were very excited to have someone come from Sherman Hill who had been past Sherman Hill president, on the Sherman Hill board, and Sherman Hill is a success story. We’re like, “hey, we’re here, we’re not trying to tell you what to do, but . . .”

Steve: We’re not here to hurt ya. We want . . .

John: We want our neighborhood where we’re at now to be . . . to move up. We want our property value to increase. And you know, at committee meetings they would

talk about us being gay and things like that, and we would hear about it. And, we would confront it head on, and call those people and say “that’s extremely inappropriate at a neighborhood meeting. You know, that’s not why we’re here, and I hope that’s not why you’re there. We’re talking about neighborhood revitalization.”

John and Steve attribute some of the reaction they received from committee members as a form of guilt by association.

John: Part of, you know, to really go back, the person who really spearheaded saving this neighborhood was a friend of ours, Terry Toy. She had a sex change in the early 80’s, and came back, we didn’t know her then, we really knew her mother in later years and then met Terry, and became good friends with her because, not for any reason other than we loved the old houses, loved them. We liked the same antiques, and we loved the old houses, the same kinds of old houses, and she had the vision. We shared the vision. And, a lot of people had found out that she had had gender reassignment surgery, and they held that against her.

Steve: And then held it, the fact that we were friends with her, against us.

John: And now she’s bringing gays in, you know? [laughs] And so, that was really kind of what some of that was about. And she was passionate about what she did. She did not always approach it correctly, but she was very passionate and selfless in what she did for the neighborhood. But they have since moved, and some of that unrest I think has settled down. And maybe time helps, and maybe—‘cause there are other people that are involved, our friends are involved; our friend Carolyn is a lesbian and she’s on the board right now, and she seems to get along just fine. And so part of it was that, and, I don’t know, what else? But I think that really was a lot of it, don’t you?

Race

Because of the emphasis on diversity in their comments, I asked Bob and Pat whether or not, in their experience, their audience included students from ethnic minority groups who believed that an education in house maintenance and preservation has relevance for them. Bob answered “yes and no,” suggesting that because of the social and political legacies of the past, appreciation of the material objects of the past can be an elective that is hard to sell: “A lot of African-Americans don’t feel it’s their heritage. They feel that the heritage comes from rich white people.” On the other hand, he offered examples of enthusiastic reception to the preservation message, as in workshops he has facilitated in Chicago.

Chicago’s changing somewhat too, I mean bungalows are a big part of Chicago’s whole architectural scene. There were millions of bungalows built after the fire, and they’re brick. And so Mayor Daly has this big initiative called the Bungalow Initiative I think it is, and they’re offering help for people to renovate their bungalows. The Bungalow Association of Chicago brought me in to do a talk, and 80% of the people that came were black, from the South Side of Chicago. They *love* their old houses. You see, a lot of people are very property-rights oriented. You take a family that’s moderate-income that works hard, manages to figure out a way to get a house. They don’t want somebody to tell them what to do, what not to do with their house. But they bought the old house and they appreciate what they have. So if you show them the economics of preservation, which is always cheaper than replacement, then they get it immediately, and they start to appreciate what they have even more, retaining original materials.

The connection Joan made between events at the national level on September 11, 2001, and other events in American history merge in the script of her one-woman *On the Homefront* program in a way that confronts the issue of race. After September 11, racial profiling became a topic for national debate; Joan recalled taking particular note of journalists' use of the phrase "rounding up" to describe concerns about how citizens of Middle Eastern descent would be treated in the wake of 9/11. She herself had concerns at the time: "I have a lot of students from the Middle East, and to think of these good kids who are here and are serious about their studies, and I know there are some bad ones somewhere. But the thought that just summarily . . ." In post-performance discussions, Joan raised the issue and linked it to the past: "One thing that I sometimes talk with my audiences about . . . after the 40s program, because people want to talk and they usually do, is to point out that we have made improvements, and where we've made mistakes, and something else comes along, like . . . a good example that I like to use is the concentration camps, or internment camps that we had for the Japanese." Considered in the context of history, Joan believes that there is a distinction to be made between the two situations. In 2001, unlike in the 1940's, she argues, "our leaders were saying 'We can't do that. We did that once before and it was wrong.' When I point out that we just did that, that we just rounded up people just because of their look and their race, and we know now that wasn't right, we've made an advance."

In her *Tour of the 50's with Lucy*, program, her object is to make history entertaining, and as part of that effort she introduces props and costumes the audience will associate with revered popular culture icons such as Marilyn Monroe and Elvis. However, she has chosen Civil Rights as a thread tying her broad tour of the decade together, choosing smaller turning points to reflect broad changes in social direction.

My Lucy takes us on a bus tour of the Fifties. And the places we stop are post-War prosperity, beginnings of television, the suburbs, a Tupperware Lady shows up there, and then, but we go to the Cold War. Because that colored an awful lot of life in the Fifties. From there to the Red Scare, from there to the Korean Conflict, from there to the beginning of Civil Rights, you know, that I've kind of segued everything from the Korean Conflict, that was where the military had been integrated. That was the first institution that said we're going to get blacks and whites together whether you like it or not. And that it really was a turning point for our country. That is really where a lot of pieces of the civil rights movement came from to say this can happen successfully? And so it just led me right into talking about Civil Rights. And then I end the show going into a diner where a roller-skating waitress comes out and a poodle-skirted teen and she introduces Elvis; I have a cardboard standup Elvis; and then Marilyn comes out and sings "Diamonds are a Girl's Best Friend," and she's at the Diner too and she met Lucy in the bathroom, you know. Then it's time for me to get back in my tour guide outfit and say "Oh my gosh, an hour's up, but look how quickly an hour or a decade can go!" And there's so much more we could have seen if we had had the time, and then I wrap it up.

Consumer Advocacy

Pat mentioned that a frequent comment from audiences at Bob's educational events is "Why didn't we ever—why did nobody ever tell us this before?" As he has listened to their stories and observed the home improvement industry, he has developed another platform around which much of his education revolves: teaching adults who own homes how to protect themselves from the replacement siding and window industries Bob argues will work to misinform and overcharge them, as well as encourage them to dispose

of the original fabric of the structures they live in. Thus, Bob uses his research to form an opposition: "I do a lot of research on preservation, to try to dispel a lot of the crap that you hear." During the interview, Pat urged Bob to talk about a seminar in Detroit where he presented to an African-American audience and "how ripped-off they felt."

The truth is that in Detroit, the African-American community is starting to embrace the historic nature of the home. More and more, that's absolutely true. [But it] happens everywhere I go. They were feeling ripped off because . . . the replacement industry spends tens of millions of dollars on advertising to convince homeowners they should side their houses, replace their windows with vinyl windows, get rid of everything and start new, ok? And almost to the industry, that's a bunch of crap.

The truth is that you can make your house more energy efficient for less money by retaining original materials. But the problem is that the methodology isn't out there how to do it cost-effectively. So whenever I do these seminars for people that are moderately into their old houses but not preservationists, they're very angry at the end of every talk I give no matter where it is. They're not angry with me, they're angry because "Why have we never heard this information before?" It all makes perfect sense, it doesn't take a brain surgeon, but why have we never heard this before? And the truth is because all the objective research being done all over the country in regards to home and dwellings is done by not-for-profits, universities, and nationwide not-for-profits that don't have any money to get the message out.

Bob sees the significance of seminars such as these in participants' beginning to reflect on, and sometimes verbally express, regret for decisions they have made about their homes and their intention to decide differently in the future ("If we had this in-

formation, we wouldn't have spent the money and ruined our house"). Pat argued that this type of consumer education is most relevant for minority and lower-income homeowners: "I think it's been particularly telling though, particularly for folks in the African-American community, and more moderate-income kinds of people, that they're the ones who feel the most betrayed." Both Bob and Pat further elaborated:

Bob: Yeah, cuz they're spending the most . . .

Pat: Their disposable income is less and so when they spend \$50 to do something wrong as opposed to spending \$50 to do something right, that really is a big deal, whereas somebody that has a little more income, if you spend \$50 and you screw it up, well, you just go and get another \$50.

Environmentalism

Ever since William Morris described his disgust with sandwich papers littering the ugly, industrialized countryside and Catharine Beecher detailed how to bring nature inside the home for economical interior decoration, the topics of domestic aesthetics, architectural preservation, and concern for protecting the natural environment have been kindred interests. The participants in this study structure their lives around the reuse and remaking of materials others in American culture are most likely to throw out when they perceive them to be worn out, out of date, or simply unwanted. Each of the 21st-century participants in this study reflect some part of the "let's make do" tradition of the 19th century.

Steve and John educate in part for the purpose of helping people see that restoration doesn't always have to mean the expensive purchase of new things. John commented that "some of restoration can be just maintaining and keeping what you have" or using salvaged materials that are "much cheaper than new materials, and can always

be reused and a lot of times look more appropriate.” Bob explicitly linked this stance to environmental care by calling restoration/preservation “the ultimate in recycling,” a variation of which he is considering as the title of his new book. His position on architectural recycling was shaped by a statistic he cites during his presentations, that “our landfills are approaching 30% of demolition debris.” He uses practical and economic arguments to promote saving, rather than disposing of, old architecture, such as the benefits of using existing infrastructure (sewers, water, street lights, streets themselves) over the cost of building entirely new housing developments. He speaks about faddish, careless construction practices in new building and renovation, using Chicago as an example; Chicago is where “most of the brickwork on the 70’s and early 80’s restorations, the buildings are falling apart because they used hard mortar and they sandblasted, and they did all these terrible things, so people are moving out of those particular neighborhoods.” He constructs his argument to advance the theme that decisions about material objects have human consequences, such as when shoddy construction gives “slumlords” the key to city blocks, slumlords who will not look “into the future, and what’s best in the long run.”

As Bob talked about restoration/preservation as recycling, it became clear that for him the issue is not so much a matter of looking back at the past, but of looking ahead to future generations, of looking outward to “society” and not simply inward to the self:

In this country . . . you know, we’ve been McDonaled. And you know, we want to make it fast, we want it quick, we want to pay very little for it, and we don’t care about the next person. You know, that attitude is saying “Screw my kids, screw my grandkids.” I’m going to put this crap on my house, I’m only going to live here seven years, I don’t care about the next guy. The huge cost to society down the road to re-

verse all that is going to be phenomenal. And it's going to be the grandkids that are going to pay for it.

Patriotism

The narratives offered one final example of how a participant's generational concern connects with her use of informal education to "make a difference" in contemporary society. Joan's narrative was unique in its reflection on her personal sense of belonging to, and her beliefs about responsible citizenship within, the American nation. Her sense of patriotism was inspired at a personal level—a relationship between a father and a daughter—and shaped by her research and witnessing of events beyond individual control: World War II and the attacks on the World Trade Center. Joan described the confluence of those factors and explained what she meant when she said she wrote *On the Homefront* as "my own personal response to September 11, 2001:"

I was working with my dad on a book that he's written about his experiences as a medic in the Pacific during World War II, and at the time that the Towers were hit, you know, I was immersed in that experience with Daddy, and my mother was a resource you know, and friends of his, and he has all this memorabilia. His letters that he sent to Mom and his mother are where he began writing the book. And they're all in the book. And then, he wrote in between, like where they cut out those spaces that were censored? He now, 60 years later, was telling more of his story that he remembered. So his book was published, last September, and I was really immersed in that.

Her immersion in family and national narrative, both historical and contemporary, has shaped two themes in her performance scripts. One is cultural critique and the weighing of contemporary events with the benefit of illumination by the past:

I'm all for dissenting views and examining things from every angle. I mean this 9/11 Report is fascinating, just what I've seen in the papers and heard on the radio. And I think it's wonderful that our populace is being given that information. If they want it, it's available to us, whereas a lot of things in the 40s were definitely kept under wraps. With Pearl Harbor, if we had heard out in the public what was going on, we might have foreseen it a little better. But it's also a thing of learning from the past if that's possible.

From her father, Joan learned more about the nature of war than she could get from books alone: "You know, with Vietnam, our country was bruised in a way that we've never recovered from. And . . . and it's always the old men sending the young ones to war, and you know Daddy felt that too."

As Joan reflected on her representation of the 40's and 50's, she acknowledged, "I make them sit through a lot of serious history." At the same time, she mocks some cultural mythology in a lighthearted way:

I make it fun 'cause I have a teacher come on the bus; there are different characters, but a teacher comes on the bus and she's taking her children to Rocky Flats Nuclear Weapons Facility down here in Denver—it was built in Denver—you know, to talk about the Red Scare. And then, a siren goes off and she goes, "Duck and cover everybody!" So the people who were there remember that. What on earth good—would a duck and cover have saved any of us, you know?

The second theme in these scripts is that along with cultural dissent should come a degree of cultural cohesion, which Joan defined in terms of the culture's diverse elements setting aside differences to participate in a common cause. Interestingly, the idea

of reuse is mentioned again, this time as an example of service not just to a local environment or a historic neighborhood, but to the national welfare:

World War II to me provided an extreme example of how our nation was able to come together to meet a challenge of the magnitude represented by September 11. It's very very different to have a Hitler that we can just go after. But. In World War II, people went, willingly. You know, it was their duty. They felt that patriotism. The populace did as well, to support those who were fighting. It's just amazing 'cause I talk to my audience and little kids were picking up gum wrappers from the gutters because gum wrappers had real foil at the time? And that could be separated from the paper and that paper could be reused for the war effort. You know, it was to that level. Grandmas were donning helmets to go do Civil Air Patrol? You know? So, that to me was a shining example of a nation coming together in a time of hardship. And we saw that after September 11, but not for very long. And so part of the purpose of my doing this story about the 40s is that we have done this before, and we can do it again.

Performativity

Gaining or improving competencies related to specific modes of making a living; functioning in a "lifelong learning" mode; contributing to the growth of the general economy.

Chapter 4 described the participants' college educations and their common concern with making a living. They were also asked what jobs they held before they began doing what they do now and whether or not they had any jobs they particularly liked. As their lives have taken shape since then, making a living for all has become secondary to doing what they love to do; in some cases, they are one in the same. Social work for Pat, for

example, is not what she does, but who she is. When asked about jobs she had had throughout her working years, her first response was “Well, I’ve been a social worker ever since I was born.” Considering his early experiences with woodworking and home buying, Bob could be said to have been a builder and renovator all his life, though his narrative suggested that a “calling” may not take a definite shape before considerable job experimentation takes place:

You know, well, it was the early 70’s. And uh, I lived in a commune in Tennessee for a year, and worked in a soy dairy down there, was a midwife’s assistant, did handy-man stuff down there, built lots of log cabins out in Oregon, up in the coastal range [tape unclear]---- hippies that we ran into hitchhiking around the country. When we’d take off hitchhiking around the country, you know we’d just go into some town and I’d just get a job working for some contractor. One time I got a job in an Armenian cabinet shop in San Francisco, which was kind of interesting, because I didn’t know that they all spoke Russian or something. They couldn’t speak English, so we were communicating with hand signals, which was kind of wild. Worked in a steel mill for awhile until I had an industrial accident and blew out my knee. Started doing a column called “The House Doctor” in the *Des Moines Register*.

Some of the participants were not making their primary living from the activities they loved to do most, as in the case of John, Steve, and Joan. None, however, expressed significant job dissatisfaction. Steve and John are moving toward creating a closer merger between their restoration interests and their working life, but both are in occupations compatible with these interests. Only the financial aspects of John’s job in publishing were mentioned as a less appealing aspect of his work, and both recognized that their employment was necessary and allowed them to pursue the work they find most

pleasurable. Joan similarly expressed a sense of satisfaction in her past work in marketing and especially her current work with her engineering advisees. Her paid positions are clearly distinct in her narrative from her passion for history, theatre, and costuming, which she had to pay to pursue on many occasions.

Bob's recollection of his parents' work lives provided the only real profile of workers dissatisfied or living a sense of entrapment in their jobs. Bob's mother disliked the trappings of her husband's job, but did work she personally enjoyed. Bob's father disliked his job, but he was able to live some part of the advice he gave Bob, as are all the participants in this study: "It's like my dad used to say, don't go into corporate life. Do what you love, do it well, don't worry about making a living. Do it well, you'll make a good living, and then you have a responsibility to teach what you've learned."

What lessons can be learned beyond mastery of the unique specializations the participants teach so enthusiastically? Both their beliefs and their actions are examined through various historical and theoretical lenses in Chapter 7, the dissertation's final chapter. Adult education has become closely identified with education in professional settings, and a body of literature argues the disconnection between learners doing what they love and doing their job/learning about their job. The final chapter pays particular attention to possible meanings and implications of the participant narratives at the intersection of American work life and education.

CHAPTER 7

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In his landmark 1938 lecture *Experience and Education*, Dewey introduced an assertion of his educational philosophy this way:

Man likes to think in terms of extreme opposites. It is given to formulating its beliefs in terms of *Either-Ors*, between which it recognizes no intermediate possibilities. When forced to recognize that the extremes cannot be acted upon, it is still inclined to hold that they are right in theory (1938/1963, p. 17)

Forty-three years later, Wedemeyer (1981), whose concerns about adult education programs introduced this dissertation, acknowledged his philosophical debt to Dewey as he challenged adult educators' polarized beliefs about the purpose of education. Wedemeyer argued, "There is nothing in our history that remotely justifies the derogation of any kind of learning as second class, when undertaken with purpose, initiative, energy, and resourcefulness" (p. xxii).

This dissertation has examined methods and topics of learning that have been ignored and derogated in published scholarship, even though in describing and demonstrating what they do, the participants clearly exemplify purpose, initiative, energy, and resourcefulness toward learning and teaching. Where this kind of passion for learning exists, regardless of topic, my presumption was that important implications for adult educators follow. Because educators have different answers to the question "Why educate?" I chose this basic question of philosophy, as it is understood from four major philosophical perspectives (liberal arts, humanist, progressive, performative) as the framework for understanding the participants' experiences. An additional motive for the selection of this philosophical framework was to offer a counterpoint to the presump-

tions that only formal education can motivate action based on philosophy and that one philosophy is superior to another. Philosophies—understood most simply as one’s reasons for believing, writing, and acting in certain ways in the context of a particular discipline—can be so much at odds that an author aligned with one philosophy may not simply critique, but also implicitly question the right of another philosophy or pedagogical practice to exist. Phenomenological methods, including semi-structured interviewing and observation, were used as a way of bringing to light what routinely escapes attention between poles of extreme belief and pedagogical trend. The result was a collection of participant narratives that demonstrate the possibilities of self-directed, informal learning, learning that is motivated by the harmonious co-existence of multiple philosophies about life and learning.

Contexts for Interpreting the Participant Narratives

What can educators learn from the participant narratives, and how can the “value” of these lessons be assessed? Chapter 1, via additional citations from Wedemeyer (1981), raised the issue of value in adult education, pointing out that the scale of privilege has tipped heavily in favor of formalized, institutionalized educational programming, not the self-directed learning projects of individuals, no matter how highly motivated they may be. Chapter 3 provided additional historical background that illuminates the progression of the trend. Van Manen’s (2001) phenomenological methodology (see Chapter 2 for discussion of applications in this study) was shaped in response to the increasing bureaucratization and “technologizing of educational institutions, research, and knowledge forms” (p. 157). Van Manen argued that these trends have tended to “erode our understanding and praxis of pedagogic competence in everyday life” (p. 157). A question Van Manen posed in light of the patterns he perceived in

research and practice serves as the foundation for the organization of Chapter 7: “What is the significance of theorizing and research and scholarly thought if they fail to connect with the bodily practices of everyday life? What does it mean to stand for something if it does not make a person stand out?” (p. 148).

The purpose of this chapter, then, is to connect theory with lived experience as described in Chapters 4 through 6; to explore how the individuals who provided the description stand out against various theoretical backgrounds. Van Manen argued, “the meaning and significance of pedagogy remains concealed as a consequence of the theoretical overlays and perspectival frameworks we construct in the paradoxical effort to see more clearly the significance of certain pedagogic practices” (p. 149). Phenomenology can serve as a remedy in that it prescribes no particular organizational structures or patterns of argument; a researcher has options. One possible analytical approach described by Van Manen is the *exegetic* interpretation of data: engaging the description dialogically with the literature of the field, holding it up to *various* other incomplete “scripts” or depictions of philosophies, theories, and lived realities. This approach seems particularly appropriate given the theme of pedagogical polarity that helped give rise to the study. As Sokolowski (2000) described (metaphorically) phenomenological perception and the nature of any given study, “at a given moment, only certain sides of the cube are presented to me, and the others are absent” (p. 18). This chapter serves as the practical equivalent of Sokolowski’s metaphor: “I can . . . walk around the cube or turn the cube around and the absent sides [different theoretical perspectives] will come into view, while the present sides go out of view” (p. 18). Because perception is dynamic and because even at the level of depth Van Manen (2001) recommended phenomenological reporting should go, descriptions and analyses are never complete and therefore can “in-

roduce a kind of searching mobility” (Sokolowski, 2001, p. 18) as the reader examines finished products of research.

This “dialogic” analysis—turning the research around to examine it from multiple perspectives—is divided into four parts. First, the chapter considers Western thought and beliefs about human nature that frame the animosity among intellectual traditions. This is the context in which educators’ ideas about “mainstream” and “marginal” forms of instruction have been formed. This context also demonstrates that all the educational philosophies explored in this study—liberal education, humanist education, certain forms of progressive education, and education for performativity—*have* been derogated in one way or another, more and less so at different times in history. Therefore, against certain theoretical and philosophical backdrops, the individuals described here would not stand out, and as the second part of Chapter 7 shows, the educational experiences described in Chapters 4 through 6 might be viewed as education for nothing.

Part three of the chapter returns to some of the themes identified in Chapter 6, “Educational Philosophies in Action,” to view the participant narratives from other theory and research perspectives that might view them as exemplars of education for *something*. Ultimately, Van Manen (2001) argued, researchers have to stand somewhere in relation to what they have researched; to decide an overall orientation toward the researched. For me, the “searching mobility” created by the participant narratives caused me to focus most intensely on one element of justification for this study, summarized in Chapter 1: the convergence of adult education and the idea of performativity. This dissertation creates a contrast between working at what one loves, versus working at formal education and working for a living. Part three of the analysis explores the contrast and its implications and favors works by authors from various disciplines: Mihaly Csik-

szenzmihalyi (1981/1989; 1990; 1996), a professor of psychology and human development, Director of the Quality of Life Research Center at Claremont University, and member of the National Academy of Education who has gained renown through his research on creativity and optimal experience (flow); Mechthild Hart (1992), a professor of adult education who writes from a critical feminist perspective; and Richard Florida, professor of regional economic development and author of the book *The Rise of the Creative Class* (2002). All but Florida entailed returning to each author, mentioned in earlier sections of the dissertation, for a “strong reading” (Van Manen, 2001, p. 172) in light of the narratives provided by the participants. Joined with these authors, examples and themes that emerged in the participant narratives do stand out. Together, the analysis of theory, philosophy, and lived experience in the third part of Chapter 7 illuminates aspects of the disconnections between home, school, and workplace learning, as well as the possibilities for individual and cultural progress that might be realized if these fragmented domains were better unified. The final section of the chapter briefly reviews how a study of this nature might contribute to such a goal and concludes the dissertation.

Intellectual Enemies, or “Literary Darwinism”

Frey (1990), analyzing the discourse of professional literary criticism, described the prevailing tone in published scholarship as sarcastic and condescending, reflecting “different kinds or degrees of adversarial relationships . . . from the very mild adversarial stance . . . to outright hostility” (p. 512), i.e., “literary Darwinism . . . survival of the fittest theory or the fittest scholar” (p. 512). Frey, interpreting “Darwinism” as competition that favors (verbal) attack on weakness or error over cooperation, limited her analysis to one academic discipline and the implications for women researching and writing in the profession. How-

ever, the climate she described pervades other areas of intellectual life where any theory or set of conventions has come to rule as *the* description of the way things are, the way things should be. According to Pinker's (2002) observation of academic discourse across domains, "elementary distinctions—'some' versus 'all,' 'probable' versus 'always,' 'is' versus 'ought'—are eagerly flouted . . . the analysis of ideas is commonly replaced by political smears and personal attacks" (p. x).

It is not surprising, then, that a parallel exists in the domain of self-help discourse. Some of the "shelter experts" (Talbot, 1996) mentioned in Chapters 1, 3, and 6 have gained wide name recognition for producing bestselling books, magazines, and other products; some, such as Martha Stewart, have gained status as popular culture icons while at the same time being targets of sarcastic, personal critique. Because their home-caring curriculum is delivered via popular culture (TV, magazines, Web sites, etc.), so is the opposition; it can be found in a few works of published academic scholarship, but is expressed mainly in public opinion polls, Internet chat rooms, and the popular press.

The discourse of opposition is worth examining briefly for two reasons. First, the self-help educator can only succeed if she garners interest from self-directed learners; others in the potential market can choose not to subscribe, purchase, or watch. However, educational philosophies freely consumed or ignored in the marketplace are subject to a phenomenon similar to what Frey and Pinker described, attacks on the instructional (the content of Stewart's "curriculum") mingled with attacks on the personal. It can be difficult to separate critiques inspired by audience reaction to Stewart personally from the content of her message. She has often been criticized for her temperament; at the time of her trial in 2004, some commentators suggested that an abrasive personality was grounds enough for incarceration. However, debates about Martha Stewart as icon

of education in living (eating, organizing, decorating, collecting, etc.) are important because they echo the gender-focused debates about public/private-sphere superiority dating back to the early 1800s (see Chapter 3). Popular culture parodies of Martha Stewart, such as the books *Is Martha Stuart Living* (Connor, 1995), and *Martha Stuart's Better Than You at Entertaining* (Connor, 1996), and more recent Internet-circulated photos of how Stewart might make over a jail cell, focus not just on Stewart but also on the idea of domestic life as a topic for instruction and improvement. Postings to an Internet discussion group in response to a query from a college student writing a paper about why women like Martha Stewart, along with several popular press critiques of Stewart's curriculum, were sorted into thematic categories identified below with representative excerpts.

Martha Stewart as Symbol of Oppressive Gender Roles

"It sounds very much like what Betty Friedan identified in "The Sexual Self" (in *The Feminine Mystique*)—it serves as brain-washing to keep women stupid and uninterested in larger issues beyond the home."/ "Hers is a slave to your home, family and guests, do not even start to sweat it and make yourself much more attractive while you are at it femininity"/ "I think she is a bane to real women who juggle kids, jobs and marriages across this country. As if we don't have enough guilt living up to our own mothers' or mother-in-laws' methods of housekeeping" (Martha Stewart Discussion, 1997)

Martha Stewart's Violation of Traditional Gender Roles

"If she is as perfect as she states she is as a wife . . . why is she divorced?" (Martha Stewart Discussion, 1997)/ "She may dispense the kind of homekeeping advice that a mother would, but she does so in tones too chill and exacting to sound "maternal" . . .

There is nothing especially June Cleaverish, or even motherly, about Stewart. She has taken a drubbing, in fact, for looking more convincing as a businesswoman than a dispenser of milk and cookies. . . . Despite the ritual obeisance that Martha pays to Family, moreover, she is not remotely interested in the messy contingencies of family life. In the enchanted world of Turkey Hill, there are no husbands (Stewart was divorced from hers in 1990)" (Talbot, 1996)

Martha Stewart as Anti-Progressive

"Cultivating your own walled garden while the world outside is condemned to squalor."

(Talbot, 1996)/ "She is making big bucks modeling behaviors for other women who will fill their time with house-y projects, rather than imagining they might have a role in making the world a better place for women." (Martha Stewart Discussion, 1997)

"Martha Stewart uses home entertaining the way Madonna uses sex—for power. But what can she have power *over*?" (Lippert & Ferguson, 1996, p. 98).

Martha Stewart as Media Construction/Fraud

"People who think that the MS empire is meant to convey how Martha Stewart actually exists are probably the same people who believe that Kathie Lee Gifford has ever set foot in Wal Mart"/ "Martha Stewart as the public knows her is a façade."/ "She ripped off her recipes from Julia Child"/ "Like the cheerleader you hated in high school, she seems perfect, but you know she's not. If you're insecure, it just makes you hate her more"/ "She's a manufactured commodity . . . "/ "Nobody believes she does everything by herself" (Martha Stewart Discussion, 1997)

When her handling of a stock transaction led to Stewart's incarceration in 2004, discussions about the meaning of Martha Stewart were revived, with many of the same issues of gender and domesticity attached to new questions of her guilt or innocence in

the government case. One additional category of reaction against Stewart is reflected in the remarks of a juror who found her guilty, Stewart as synonymous with corporate greed (the verdict was a “victory for the little guy;” a “message to bigwigs”) (Blodget, 2004). Postings to the 1997 discussion group also criticized Stewart’s advice as indoctrination into middle class or upper class consumption habits.

Particularly in the gender-based readings of Martha Stewart and domestic life, vestiges of traditional views are evident, as well as more contemporary ones that shape the interpretation of past and present realities. The cultural foundations for some of these interpretations are explored in the following section.

Beliefs about Human Nature: Parent of Popular Polarities

Chapter 3 has already described the shift in Western thought that shaped the polarities examined in this research, along with some of the intellectual and visual representations that pervaded all areas of life, including the disciplines tied together in this research: education, philosophy, psychology, and domestic design. Pinker (2002), a professor of psychology specializing in visual cognition and psychology of language, has offered a comprehensive examination of the phenomenon in *The Blank Slate: The Modern Denial of Human Nature*. Views of human nature have been discussed only briefly in this dissertation so far, first mentioned in Chapter 3’s definition of humanism (see pp. 67-68). Theories of human nature are relevant to the study in that they are constructed to explain what human beings are like and what they can become; therefore, they lie at the root of all the views of education explored here, from the belief in fixed human capacities based on gender (Chapter 3, pp. 73-80) to the belief that human nature is pliable and society perfectable (Chapter 3, pp. 93-94). The latter view depends on an understanding of human nature as a blank slate. Pinker explored the origin of the theory,

its contemporary variations, and its entrenchment in intellectual life in the form of the “Standard Social Science Model or social constructionism” (p. 17).

Implications of Blank Slate Theory Across Domains

Pinker (2002) reflected at length about the historical misuse of biological essentialism, which supported racist and sexist psychology and education and created excesses that the Blank Slate theory has had considerable success in erasing. Pinker’s argument, however, was that once any intellectual trend—currently the Blank Slate—takes hold, its adherents then try to “safeguard [it] as a source of meaning and morality” (p. 121). Once “moral heft” is attached to an idea (recall the earlier discussion of the *virtue* of simplicity over ornamentation), the idea becomes “second nature to people and few are aware of the history behind it” (p. 16-17). Working from this central assertion, Pinker described the Blank Slate and its “takeover” (p. 17), as evidenced in the sometimes vitriolic exclusion of other perspectives in the academic milieu. Pinker argued that this “poisoning of the intellectual atmosphere has left us unequipped to analyze pressing issues about human nature just as scientific discoveries are making them acute” (p. x). Examining some of the implications of the Blank Slate theory will help put both the historical and contemporary elements of the present research into perspective.

Evaluating the Present Study through Blank-Slate Frameworks

Pinker (2002) pointed out the link between the Blank Slate’s reign and the privileging of science over philosophy (“many scientists use the term as a synonym for effete speculation,” p. 11). Chapter 3 of this dissertation explored the evolution of humanism into progressivism against a backdrop of urbanization and professionalization. The chapter described some examples of the parallel ascent of scientific (“expert”) knowledge over household wisdom, evidenced in women’s struggles to gain public sphere recogni-

tion—and create formal educational programs—for household expertise they believed to be socially important. During the reign of positivism, women could only achieve progress and programs in the domestic science domain when the words “domestic” and “science” were merged. With its limited sample, its qualitative methodology, and its focus on matters domestic and philosophical, this dissertation could certainly be dismissed as lacking empirical significance; it fails to offer any findings generalizable to large populations; it simply offers words and descriptions that represent a “microcosm” of several individuals’ consciousness (Seidman, 1998; see Chapter 2).

With its intense focus on a few individuals, the dissertation runs afoul of conventional Blank Slate wisdom in a different way. Pinker (2002) pointed out that behaviorism, the original scientific modus operandi for Blank Slate theorists active in social re-engineering, has been thoroughly challenged and no longer exists in pure form; however, certain tenets of behaviorism have lingered as Blank Slate social and educational theory have evolved. In vintage behaviorism, a person’s “talents and abilities [didn’t] matter because there was no such thing as a talent or ability” (p. 19). These concepts were unmentionables in behaviorist thought along with ideas, beliefs, desires, and feelings. In more recent social constructionist thinking, “beliefs and desires are located in cultures and societies rather than in the heads of individual people” (p. 24). Herein lies a central theme in Pinker’s critique: that “*Every aspect* of human existence must be explained in terms of culture” (p. 23), so that the over-application of the Blank Slate construct relegates the individual human mind to largely irrelevant status. In spite of social constructionists’ opposition to positivist excesses of generalization and their inclusion of qualitative methodologies in the family of empiricism, this dissertation’s

focus on individual interest and achievement could be dismissed on the grounds of poor fit on the constructionist quadrant of the Blank Slate.

On the other hand, it should be pointed out, the narratives in Chapters 4-6 also situate the participants in the rich context of their interactions with families, colleagues, audiences, and communities. Integration (with community) was argued to be as essential to human life as differentiation (individual difference) in the works of Csikszentmihalyi (1981/1989; 1990; 1996; see Chapter 3, pp. 82-88) and in the participant narratives. It may be interesting to note that this facet of participant experience was made visible by an application of the old construct of humanism, with its emphasis on individual identity, potential, and self-actualization.

Because individuals are inscribed by experience and culture, according to Blank Slate theory, we can conclude that social problems such as violence and poverty exist because social institutions are corrupt (Pinker, 2002). Individuals are “free to choose and improve the human condition” (Pinker, p. 31). Chapter 3 surveyed some evidence of progressivism taking hold in 19th-century American culture in kitchens, living rooms, and living room learning resources while academic, artistic, architectural, and other sources of cultural authority eventually deemed “living room” progressivism invalid and treated it as invisible. Contemporary incarnations of progressivism tend to focus narrowly on macroenvironments (a term used in Csikszentmihalyi’s 1990 discussion of creative consciousness); some scholarly publications have argued that any research that resists explicitly taking on corrupt institutions (including the capitalist economic system) is complicit in the corruption. This dissertation does not take up such an argument as proscribed by current critical pedagogy. On the other hand, it does offer a space where five individuals who have taken up causes they see as potentially transformative

for their communities as well as themselves could describe how they have acted, not theorized, in the course of their everyday lives—in the spaces where they perceive change to be needed, not confined to the pages of a publication.

If social problems are symptomatic of corruption within institutions, it follows that they are prevalent only in societies that are most complex (that have created the most institutions). The Blank Slate construct of the “Noble Savage” thus enters Pinker’s (2002) discussion. The Noble Savage originally referred to native peoples and later, by extension, the impoverished classes as opposed to the middle and upper classes (see discussion on pp. 141-142 as the concept was reflected in 19th- and early 20th-century architecture and design). John Dryden and Jean-Jacques Rousseau helped craft the Noble Savage archetype in the late 17th and early 18th centuries from European colonial narratives; it portrayed indigenous people as naturally egalitarian and peaceful and used selected examples to advance the notion that social problems such as poverty, greed, and violence are unknown in those cultures (Pinker, 2002). The concept still holds sway in what Haiman (1998) called a “cult of the commoner” influential in some contemporary literature in education, social science, and other domains. It assumes the “the moral superiority of the oppressed” (p. 101) and, ironically, influences the intellectual class as well as anti-intellectual popular culture (Haiman).

This application of Blank Slate theory has helped shape current views of subjects worthy of research. This dissertation may appear to attend inadequately to the middle class identity of all five participants, who work at the margins of American education but still promote middle class values such as home ownership, stewardship of property, and appreciation of Western history. In many critiques of the reproduction of middle class norms in education, the phrase “middle class” has become a tacit pejorative, as it

was for artists in the 19th century seeking to distinguish themselves from the everyday, the domestic. Interpreted from this perspective, domestic artistry as promoted in the 19th-century ladies magazines to 21st-century resources like *Martha Stewart Living* is symbolic of privilege and greed rather than thrift and ingenuity, although that theme is repeated in both.

In this research, a conscious choice was made to let individuals tell their stories rather than passing individuals through a prism that reflects them solely as signifiers of class membership. However, as this chapter progresses, additional sources are incorporated to critique conventional purposes of education as they relate to the American mode of economic production. With its attention to singular experiences in domestic life and education, this research uncovered examples of individuals carving out—albeit within the existing system—satisfying lives as both workers and learners while reshaping neighborhoods and, potentially, the experience of class inequity.

Some additional postmodern relatives of Blank Slate theory create lenses through which to interpret the study. The Blank Slate theory was the product of an increasingly relativistic way of understanding individuals and cultures, manifest currently in theories of reality as a social construction for which the language and images of mass media and social/political institutions serve as architects (Pinker, 2002). Relativism forms the core of constructivist educational theory, contemporary social science, cultural studies, critical theory, postmodernism and deconstruction (Pinker). Relativist research practices both enable this dissertation to exist as well as serving as a potential source of rebuttal. This dissertation can be considered a product of relativist research orientations in that it concerns a small group of participants describing for themselves their unique perceptions of beauty, meaningful work, and identity, and the places they have forged

for themselves as instructors outside traditional educational institutions—a topic and small sample that once would have had no place in so-called scholarly research.

Hemphill (2001) reviewed the extent to which adult education has made room for relativist theories and concluded in 2001 that they had moved into the mainstream, albeit recently. Although postmodernism invites consideration of diverse thought patterns and modes of expression and examines how they shape consumers' (multiple) identities, this dissertation ventures into still-less charted territory in its examination of material objects themselves as modes of expression as well as agents of identity construction.

Postmodern discourse posits that along with multiple identities, people experience multiple forms of marginalization “that for differing reasons push many away from the dominant center of cultural, political, and economic power” (Hemphill, 2001, p. 19). This dissertation is compatible with a postmodern framework in that it gives voice to “others” who are in some sense marginalized. All the participants are experts in a field; one has published and one aspires to publish in the self-help market (Joan); yet two lack college degrees, and one has experienced the rejection of relevant life experiences in a job quest as the wrong kind of credential. All but one (Pat) expressed a sense of detachment from their college experience and varying degrees of success as conventionally measured in grades. They described formal higher education as the thing to do in order to make a living, but not a thing they loved to do. Though she did not in any way suggest that she defined herself as “marginalized,” Joan grew up the adopted child of parents significantly older than the average. Steve and John have faced implicit disapproval and some overt conflict—and distraction from their vision of neighborhood revitalization—because of their sexual orientation. With the exception of sexual orientation, these are not forms of marginalization typically addressed in race-, class-, and gender-conscious educational

critique, so several questions arise. If researchers and educators assume the authority to pronounce who may be classified as marginalized or marginalizing, what types of marginalization are worthy of discussion in research, and how marginalization should be defined for participants experiencing it, can researchers exempt themselves from classification as marginalizing? The phenomenological approach in this dissertation may indirectly broaden discussions of the concept of marginalization that may themselves sometimes become—marginalizing. As the historical review demonstrated, well past the time when legal, social, and institutional barriers excluded women from public life, domestic life has been interpreted as marginal (less significant, less fulfilling in terms of intellect, human development, social transformation, and participation in the economy) when compared to public life. The accuracy and desirability of that conventional wisdom is called into question by this dissertation, as later sections of the chapter will argue.

Postmodernism as attributed to Foucault (Hemphill, 2001) offers another useful way to view the experiences of the participants in an adult education context. In his explorations of learner-generated knowledge and its implications, Foucault questioned the way knowledge is organized and dispersed through formal schooling. He wrote of “mental force,” or the “development, naming, and operation of knowledge” as a form of power (Hemphill, p. 25) that makes it possible for minorities to influence majorities as knowledge generates action and participation.

Though not minorities in terms of their ethnicities, the participants in this study are in the minority in what they believe and what they do: the close connection they cultivate with the past in a culture commonly referred to as a youth culture and a one-generation society, and with material objects in a culture commonly referred to as

“throwaway.” As they have demonstrated their skills and presented their views to audiences, changed the visual landscape with architectural restorations, and directly taught others how to do their own architectural projects or assume a greater ethic of care for their own homes and neighborhoods, they can all claim to have motivated some degree of action. Steve and John have confronted stereotyped beliefs about sexual orientation and may have thus caused perceptions to change. Joan has inspired audience members to “get off their butts” to pursue a new curiosity, to consider their role in national life, or in the case of the Shady Ladies, to immerse themselves in women’s history and perform it for audiences. All of the participants have inspired some segment of their audiences to think about what they consider disposable, or how they live inside their own domestic and work spaces. All the narratives thus can be considered to represent unique forms of instructional power.

The participant narratives in this study might be considered incompatible with the relativist conceptions of human identity at the core of postmodernism. Pinker (2002) opposed extreme forms of relativism because they recognize “no mechanisms designed to grasp reality” and posit that “all [human beings] can do is passively download words, images, and stereotypes from the surrounding culture” (p. 198). To understand this facet of the postmodern view of human nature is to understand postmodernist discourse about multiple and shifting identities (as language and media images shift, so do human identities). According to Pinker, relativism joined on the Blank Slate with the Noble Savage archetype also help explain why the discernment of the middle class has been disparaged by the artistic and intellectual classes. In contemporary cultural theory, human beings are sometimes categorized as “dupes of an insidious commercial cul-

ture” (Pinker, p. 198) who may not understand the origin of their own desires. (See pp. 126-127; 140-142 for discussion of the 19th- and early 20th- century version of this idea.)

This dissertation’s participants serve as exceptions to some postmodern assumptions about the relationship between culture and individual identity. Bob, Pat, Steve, John, and Joan don’t fit the model of identity as formed and re-formed by ever-shifting tides of consumer culture. They have in fact created instructional niches to challenge certain segments of commercial culture, and they represent a broader population interested in preservation, reuse of building materials, and general homecaring. The participants have relationships with material objects that defy the stereotype of Americans as faddish consumers and disposers of cheap, poorly-crafted goods. Traditionally, escaping the sway of insidious material culture has been thought to be the province of artists (not decorative artists, craftspeople, and homemakers as Chapter 3 showed) and educators/theorists writing from an academic vantage point. Most of the narratives offered little to connect the participants’ aesthetic sensibilities and environmental ethic to their formal academic training or degrees.

On the more general question of identity formation and the stability of identities or lack thereof, it is interesting to note the presence of thematic unity in the narratives of their early and present lives (such as the attraction to particular types of architectural spaces). In contrast to the randomness of human experience emphasized in postmodern discourse, personality changes participants described (Joan’s being the most detailed) can be likened to architectural restorations; the “structure” (the person) had become more or less of what it once was (Joan transformed from “painfully shy” to assertive director/ “dictator” of her educational performance group) while certain structures (similar

to load-bearing walls) remained intact (Joan continuing to immerse herself in essentially introverted activities such as research).

Similarities among the narratives, as illustrated in Chapters 4 and 5, also contradict the stronger applications of Blank Slate relativism that are used in arguments against any discussion of human “universals.” Pinker (2002) argued, “People have inherent desires such as comfort, love, family, esteem, autonomy, aesthetics, and self-expression, regardless of their history of reinforcement, and they suffer when the freedom to exercise the desires is thwarted” (p. 169). Pinker drew from decades of cognitive science research to demonstrate that people are also “equipped with sophisticated faculties that keep us in touch with reality” (p. 217), faculties that are “complex and have vulnerabilities.” This point of view is consistent with phenomenological philosophy and methodology as described in Chapter 2. What Pinker proposed, then, is that cultural influence should be given its due across disciplines but not to the exclusion of all other sources of information about human beings. To take this approach is not to threaten progressive ideals, but rather to better illuminate factors that contribute to human suffering and satisfaction as researchers foreground “forgotten downsides” (p. 427) of even the most popular ideologies.

The “downside” woven throughout Pinker’s (2002) discussion of Blank Slate theory is that the preeminence of the theory has created more than a dichotomy between science and philosophy. He described

a wall standing in the landscape of knowledge . . . it divides matter from mind, the material from the spiritual, the physical from the mental, biology from culture, nature from society, and the sciences from the social sciences, humanities, and arts.

The division was built into each of the doctrines of the official theory: the blank

slate given by biology versus the contents inscribed by experience and culture. (p. 31)

As the remainder of this chapter argues, these divisions create the implications of greatest significance for educators.

Implications of the Study for Adult Education: Reconciling Polarities and Solving Problems

The lived reality of the five participants interviewed and observed for this study contradicts conventional wisdom of various kinds and serves as concrete evidence that different philosophies—value placed on broad knowledge and competence; self-actualization and individuality; critical/political activism; and satisfying, profitable work performance; can all get along.

Csikszentmihalyi conducted research across cultural, age, and occupational groups over a period of 40 years and reported his findings in the book *Creativity* (1996). His conclusion, the result of a search for commonality among Nobel Prize winners and others identified for culture- and domain-changing achievement, at first appears to be an oxymoron. He wrote that his study participants were individuals, but each was also “a multitude. Like the color white that includes all the hues in the spectrum, they tend to bring together the entire range of human possibilities within themselves” (p. 57). In other words, in going about the creative work that was thoroughly integrated into their daily lives, they exercised contradictory facets of personality that in most people remain segregated through education that favors/experience that rewards one pole of various personality dialectics over others: assertiveness over cooperation (or vice versa), extraversion over introversion (or vice versa) or whatever family, school, work, and culture determine to be the better end of the pole.

According to Csikszentmihalyi (1996), the inevitable outcome of the segregation of potentials is that some aspect(s) of the “human repertoire” atrophy. Referring to teachers broadly (teachers within formal schooling venues as well as informal teachers within families and popular culture), Csikszentmihalyi identified a central symptom of this problem: “They make serious tasks seem dull and hard, and frivolous ones exciting and easy. Schools generally fail to teach how exciting, how mesmerizingly beautiful science or mathematics can be; they teach the routine of literature and history rather than the adventure” (p. 125). Moreover, Csikszentmihalyi noted, it is simply harder to “learn to *enjoy* doing things that were discovered recently in our evolution, like manipulating symbolic systems by doing math or science or writing poetry or music, and learning from doing these things about the world and about ourselves” (p. 125).

Enjoyment, a key concept in Csikszentmihalyi’s research, is defined as an outcome of optimal experience (flow). To realize optimal experience is to engage in an activity without regard to compensation, external attention, or threat of punishment; to accept risk, difficulty, even pain in meeting a challenge; to experience a process of engagement so total it is characterized by an “automatic, effortless, yet highly focused state of consciousness” (1996, p. 110). Optimal experience as described by Csikszentmihalyi “stretches the person’s capacity” (p. 110) by involving some element of novelty and discovery. Additional interviewing would be necessary to describe precisely what characterizes the flow experiences of the participants while engaged in their activities, but for the purpose of synthesizing the present study, it is fair to point out the surface compatibility of Csikszentmihalyi’s definition and the information the participants volunteered about their experiences. Flow, and the creativity it sometimes helps fuel, are concepts that will be woven throughout this discussion. Flow is a state of engagement very dif-

ferent from the clock-watching resistance, anxiety, or boredom that seems to characterize school learning experiences for many students, who are later expected to enthusiastically perform “knowledge work” and experience the workplace as a “learning organization.”

Csikszentmihalyi’s creativity research has demonstrated a strong correlation between flow and creative achievement. In other words, subjects who could describe high levels of creative achievement throughout their lifespans—the type of achievement that has changed the culture or specific domains such as art, music, physics, literature, business, and economics—seek out and regularly experience flow. No claims have been made to suggest that flow causes creativity, or that individuals who experience flow in work or leisure will necessarily produce creative outcomes such as those described in Csikszentmihalyi’s work. It has been well established that creative individuals do not do what they do without the experience of flow. Csikszentmihalyi posited that creativity cannot thrive in a context of segregated human potentials. It is important that it thrive because as theorized by Csikszentmihalyi, creativity is the central source of meaning for human beings, one that makes us feel more fully alive (fulfills us as individuals). At the same time, the outcomes of creativity add to “the richness and complexity of the future” (moves the culture forward) (1996, p. 2).

Hart (1992) contributed another dimension to the definition of creativity and the discussion of ways educators can promote creativity and create environments in which it will thrive. In Hart’s conception, which uses the central metaphor of “motherwork,” creativity is a basic life force that can and should be nurtured throughout the work force. Through this lens, she critiqued the “distortions and limitations” (p. 214) of contemporary adult education and work, implicating adult education as an instrument in

reproducing sterile workplace norms that are destructive to cultures as well as individual psyches. Education should connect “human work or production and the preservation and improvement of life” (p. 213). Csikszentmihalyi, Hart, and others illuminate the possibilities of creativity as a desirable focus of adult education, desirable because it bridges the divide between liberal arts rationalism, humanist principles of self-actualization and social constructionism/progressivism.

As suggested by various authors in Chapter 1, education for adults has become virtually synonymous with organizational training. This dissertation was produced in an academic program once called Adult Education (with its eclectic implications); the program was transformed and renamed Organizational Learning and Human Resource Management. Hart (1991) noted how, at the time *Working and Educating for Life* was published, discussions about crisis in higher education focused on the relationship between academia and society, with society already coming to be understood as “largely equivalent with business or the corporate world” (p. 59). Gouthro (1999), beginning with an analysis of rhetorical specifics that underscore this academic/corporate symbiosis (student “customers,” adult education “products”), aligned herself with Hart in a critical feminist challenge of the constriction of current conceptions of adult education. The critical feminist focus on the polarity between “production for profit and accumulation of capital” and “production for life” (Hart, 1992, p. 8), along with the positive psychology of Csikszentmihalyi, has played an important part in exploring a question posed in Chapter 1: What can be lost, and gained, as various types of learning dominate individuals and cultures? The following section will examine elements of life and education which, evacuated from workplaces and workplace-oriented education, contribute to dissipating creativity. These sections will juxtapose elements of the participant narratives to illus-

trate how ordinary people may escape these constrictions and thrive within a domain of interest.

Liberal Education and the Consequences of Various Knowledge Forms

Ironically, while the basis of the U.S. economy is more and more commonly recognized to be knowledge work, critics have targeted the value the marketplace attaches to fewer ways of knowing. The contemporary workplace is organized primarily around the type of knowledge Csikszentmihalyi (1990) noted is difficult to “enjoy”: abstract forms of reason. Hart (1992) argued that in the idealization of knowledge work, high technology is privileged as high skill and, often, high intelligence. In this “informed” workplace, inference, abstract thought, and procedural reasoning have replaced “skills” in the workplaces experienced by white-collar workers (which the majority of workers now are). Symbolic representations of reality are deemed to be better than concrete reality.

The study participants represent the type of skilled manipulation of concrete reality Hart argued has been increasingly devalued in Western culture. Chapter 6 explored the “training of the mind” (p. 224) that occurs during the participants’ activities. The following paragraphs explore the idea of broad knowledge and competencies (liberal arts) and the mental training that occurs—and cannot occur—in informed workplaces.

Liberal learning as explored in previous chapters has been attacked from multiple directions. Dewey recognized early in the 20th century that “even though a . . . general philosophy may be sound, the abstraction, the principle, alone will not keep human beings from carrying them out in negative ways” (1938/1963, p. 17). Liberal learning’s centuries-old tradition was once reserved only for members of the ruling class, statesmen, and clergy in training. As democratic forms of governance and relativist theories of social science and individual psychology ascended, the liberal arts came to be associated

with “elitist bias” (Hart, p. 60). Liberal education in American formal education was exclusive at times, during the institutionalized denial of education during America’s slaveholding past and later in the “class-biased vocationalism [that] explicitly excluded aspects of a liberal education because it would ruin a good field hand” (Hart, 1992, p. 60).

The elitist connotation sometimes obscures the realities of alternate uses of things in different social contexts. This dissertation has already revisited the 19th century, but it is important to point out that the Victorian era, particularly the antebellum period, is often called the age of educational democratization (Kett, 1994). Social and educational constraint was giving way to the increasingly visible proliferation of improvement societies for manual laborers, libraries, academies, Lyceums, and of course the books and periodicals that punctuated the peak in women’s participation in self-improvement in the second half of the century. Kett noted that although messages differed somewhat for men and women, popular culture conveyed a relatively unified message that self-improvement could and should be everyone’s domain, in order to improve chances of vocational mobility as well as collective political power and individual character development.

In educational discourse, liberal arts as elitist is an idea that has had staying power. The value of the liberal arts became the subject of intense debate during the 1980s and 1990s due to the publication of E.D. Hirsch’s *Cultural Literacy* (1987). A liberal arts *content* as advocated by Hirsch was implicated alongside objectionable *methods* of instruction and sometimes referred to interchangeably with basic skills, rote learning, and social class reproduction. The debate was characterized as a clash between under-

standing vs. memorizing, deep learning vs. shallow, progressive vs. regressive education (Glazer, 1998).

Hart (1992) addressed the issue of liberal arts as basic skills in her discussion of organizational learning discourse in crisis mode. The crisis (see also Chapter 1) is defined as the imbalance between the demand for sufficiently literate workers who can read, understand directions, add and subtract, think clearly, and communicate verbally and in writing, and the supply. Hart sided with the premise that these essential skills are in fact the least required in order for someone to enter the work force of a complex economy. Her contention, however, is that as knowledge forms and skills have been classified as “higher” and “lower,” corporate culture enforces a tacit policy of segregating workers and their need to know. Therefore, the problem is not in the content or idea of liberal arts (broad knowledge) in adult education, but in the way knowledge has been rationed.

Hart (1992) evaluated several popular trends in liberal arts education for professional settings. Liberal learning is currently promoted as a tool for dealing with the overwhelming volume and flux of information in the knowledge age; as a key to cultivating cross-cultural understanding; as a method of improving communication skills; as a way of developing a sense of self situated in a social-historical context; and as touchstone for clarifying values and reinforcing personal integrity within complex systems. Hart questioned not the applications of the liberal arts, but why they should be deemed an appropriate domain of training only for the assumption and maintenance of positions of power rather than the benefit of the workforce as a whole. Other authors have argued that liberal arts are neither wasted nor repressive when applied at “lower” echelons of corporate hierarchy or socio-economic status. These authors have explored the poten-

tials of liberal arts for empowering and developing creativity and critical perspective for disadvantaged and minority students at junior high level (Goode, 1994), college level (Lazere, 1992), and in adult education programs (Goldberg, 1951; Greene, 1990; Thomas, 1992). Csikszentmihalyi's (1996) research also contradicts views of liberal education as repressive, pointing out that "A person cannot be creative in a domain to which he or she is not exposed" (p. 29). A commonality among the participant Nobel Prize winners in his creativity studies, in fact, was that creativity often happened when the participants crossed boundaries between domains. The participants in the present study can be considered support on a small-scale for these findings, in the way they describe living and working at intersections of theater and history, history and marketing, decorative arts and social work, social work and architecture, politics and preservation, and others. Recall that Csikszentmihalyi's research in *Creativity* (1996) was limited to creative achievement that changed domain or culture, thus providing a substantial body of evidence that "memes [objects, recipes, narratives, concepts, beliefs, laws, symbols, behavior patterns that shape culture] must be learned before they can be changed" (p. 8). Or, as Hart put it, "It is hard to find examples in education history of people being kept in their place with liberal arts" (Hart, p. 64).

Hart's (1992) work was valuable in its consideration of specific conditions under which liberal education might enhance everyday creativity for both personal and social progress. Hart reflected on incarnations of liberal education that were popular before they were subsumed to the demands of the marketplace. As further counterpoint to liberal education's elitist connotations, Hart argued that the liberal arts enabled universities to take on a social-corrective role and served at the center of "the social-Utopian tradition of Western intellectual thought with its emphasis on critique of the status quo,

and on speculating about what could be and what ought to be” (p. 60). Drawing extensively from Dewey, Hart recounted how these contrary views of the purpose of liberal arts jockeyed for position until the market orientation gained the upper hand. If liberal arts were applied in the marketplace as envisioned in Dewey’s democratic philosophy, they would prepare workers to critically analyze the world of work: “Instead of simply asking ‘are our children good enough for industry?’ Dewey posed the equally important, and truly liberal-critical question: ‘Is industry good enough for our children?’ Only an education that would seriously address this question could be called an education that sets people free” (Hart, p. 62). The present study in a sense describes real-life incarnations of this philosophical principle. The five participants—one who specifically identified the liberal arts core as the part of the college curriculum in which he felt most free—model the love of liberal learning; all arrived at adulthood with a clear sense of the work they wanted to do, work that in their minds is synonymous with their leisure. Thus they become rare examples of what Csikszentmihalyi referred to in a lecture as those who “refuse the regimented routines most of us have to live with” (“The Creative Person and the Creative Context,” 2005).

In Hart’s (1992) view, one way of knowing, one that has played an important part in shaping the participants’ *self*-knowledge, has been so thoroughly disparaged that educators and students alike tend to be unaware what’s missing. Would the disappearance of knowledge derived from skilled crafts and trades have consequences? Hart argued that when knowledge and practical action are intertwined through “prolonged involvement . . . over a lengthy period of time . . . this model of knowledge and skills represents a certain unity of mind and body, of distance from the material or substance by way of critical judgment and control as well as ‘mimetic’ nearness through developing a ‘feel’ for the

unique qualities and possibilities inherent in the subject matter” (p. 129). Body and mind were separated as factory owners came to control workers’ use of their skills through scientific management models that separated workers from craft and tradition and located all work of true importance in “management practices;” “brain work” thus became privileged over skilled manual work. When “the worker literally loses touch with the concrete material of her work . . . it is a process where the sensuous involvement in production is discarded” (p. 133). According to Hart, the result is an alteration in workers’ sense of what is real and what the relationship is between knowledge and reality, which “consequently changes the worker’s view of where knowledge is located or where it comes from” (p. 133). Often, knowledge is something to be given the worker through a computer or down the hierarchy from others in the know (and in control) rather than created by the worker. Nevertheless, organizational learning resources complain of the learned helplessness of the work force.

The participants in the present study demonstrated a strong sense of the origin and purpose of the knowledge they apply and create in their avocations and vocations. Though Pat expressed uncertainty about the origin of her avocational interests, she was able to articulate in great detail how that interest and ability deepened, as well as how an insight enabled by a common piece of household apparatus (TV and a cable connection) led to an insight that changed staff approaches to client communication within her social services organization. Pat, Bob, Steve, and John described the increasing complexity of skills and expertise they acquired over time by using tools and engaging themselves with a variety of material objects, always to the end of building something or changing something (a structure, a neighborhood, a city, an understanding of history). Because other researchers had not yet laid a trail, Joan’s inquiry into the lives of

Western women required resourcefulness and persistence and culminated in the creative realization of her research in performance scripts, sets, costumes, and interaction with audiences. All of the participants transform what they know into written and performance formats for teaching. Their narratives demonstrate how knowledge can be purposefully pursued and created independent of organizational positioning or status.

In qualifying her arguments, Hart (1992) called for a unification of knowledge forms, not a reversal that would simply privilege manual forms of production and suppress abstract instrumental ones. Consistent with that principle, it should be noted that the participants in the study described themselves as comfortable navigating an informed society. Computer-assisted knowing plays a part in the participants' paid occupations as well as the inquiry they do to support their avocations. Moreover, without formal education, they *might* not have developed such facility. Tempering Hart's bleak characterization of white-collar workplaces *in general*, only one of the participants works for himself, and none of the others expressed dislike for the service-sector jobs they hold to make a living. Informal learning/educating enables four of the participants to escape office routines part of the time and exist comfortably in settings where they are not in complete control of their own activities and schedules. They certainly can serve as models of how one can create what Hart (1992) called space for autonomous production and organization *in spite of* "oppressive situation spaces," autonomous spaces which can become "pockets of resistance and independent thought" (p. 169). The more difficult question to ask may be, Is it possible to bring these principles inside corporate spaces? Some literature in the management and learning organization genres use the liberal arts as a model of well-roundedness for transformed workplaces.

In education narrowly focused on workplace competencies, perhaps meaningful learning and problem-solving could be encouraged if workers were encouraged to bring their broader knowledge, their “living room learning”— their hobbies, group memberships, family life, etc. to bear on the learning and problem-solving required within organizations. A few published sources of self-help for managers suggest changing workplace culture along these lines. One book in the learning organization genre, *Ten Steps to a Learning Organization* (Kline & Saunders, 1993), makes specific reference to the generally unquestioned disconnection between home and work lives. The authors cited a Director of Manufacturing at Kodak who initiated a project in Integrated Learning (the approach advocated by the book’s authors): “It’s interesting . . . that all of those fun things we learn to do at home with our families don’t easily translate to the workplace . . . the workplace of the future is one where people can feel the same way they do at home, where they can enjoy working with people, where they can share things, be creative” (p. 11).

The simplistic sound of the book’s title belies the complex systems change the book recommends; the recommendations are based on the liberal arts principles of celebrating the process of learning for its own sake, cultivating self-directed minds, and managers taking on roles of “teachers, coaches, and facilitators” (Kline & Saunders, 1993, p. 13). A recurring theme is that “There’s no predicting how information or skill in one field may become relevant or useful in another” (p. 18). It is interesting to note how authors arguing for integration among domains model their own advice. Kline and Saunders employed Aesop’s fables to illustrate principles of communication; Pinker (2002) concluded his argument for reuniting science with psychology and education by citing poets and novelists: “They capture some of the morals of the science of human nature.

They underscore that the discoveries of those sciences should be faced not with fear and loathing but with the balance and discernment we use when we reflect on human nature in the rest of our lives” (p. 423). Kline and Saunders suggested ways in which readers could use writing as a tool for self-analysis and reflection. Finally, in perhaps one of the most radical suggestions in a corporate environment of greater and greater use of in-house, company-dictated adult education curricula, where the corporation shapes ever more facets of employee life, Kline and Saunders applauded corporations offering education vouchers without restriction on what employees choose to learn or where they learn it.

Self-help resources in this genre typically model the kinship between the liberal arts and humanism. Apps (1996) critiqued the idea of “just in time learning,” in which employees are encouraged to learn only when they absolutely have to and in order to produce for the company, and he posited learning for its own sake as synonymous with respecting the whole person, or emphasizing learning while not ignoring *being*. Kline and Saunders (1993) expressed the same message as a matter of recognizing that all people within an organization add value.

History and the Personal Experience of Time

This dissertation has shown how five individuals who model the love of learning share a common fascination with historical subjects/artifacts, the stories attached to these objects, and what they tell about the context of the artifacts’ creation. This body of knowledge has been shown to influence their everyday lives in practical and affective ways. Hart (1992) argued that historical consciousness is an essential part of both theory and lived reality. She wrote,

Neither externally-given, objective knowledge, nor the knowledge contained in individual experience, are sufficient for arriving at the truth about the whole of society. . . . This necessitates the shaping of a historical awareness, or an ability for historical thinking, where the present is examined in terms of its roots in a reflected-upon past, and of the possibilities and potentialities yet to be unfolded in the future. (p. 197)

Yet, traditional workplaces tend to sever a sense of connection with the past, making consideration of the future more difficult:

The experience of work which is organized mostly or entirely by an objectively-given, non-qualitative structure of time should be of prime concern for educational theory because it contributes to the formation of a sealed-off, ahistorical consciousness whose capacity for critical reflection, and for autonomous production of knowledge about self, others, and society has been seriously weakened. (Hart, p.169)

This dissertation has suggested, by way of historical review, some contexts in which an ahistorical perspective is valued. For example, Chapter 3 explained how modernists came to equate the “historical” with the “feminine.” Women were charged with safeguarding tradition during the 19th century; by the 20th, women were equated with tradition in a pejorative sense and modernity was privileged as superior to backward-looking, feminine principles of domestic life and design. Gender issues at the heart of Hart’s (2002) critique of adult education are more fully explored later in Chapter 7. For now, history can simply be identified as essential knowledge portrayed by Hart as largely absent from Western work life.

The need for continuity in learning contexts gives practical significance to historical consciousness, or awareness of the “ongoing movement between the ‘before and after’ of

limitations which become possibilities, which, once realized, become the ground on which new possibilities and limitations grow . . . a situation where the ‘past absorbed into the present carries on; it presses forward’” (Hart, 1992, p. 156). Learning in the context of historical continuum—or not—also shapes the personal experience of time, “how time unfolds, what rhythm it assumes” (p. 156) and thus the experience of time is determined by, and shapes the understanding of, the quality of experience.

Csikszentmihalyi (1996) has argued that few people have insight into the rhythms at which they work best. Within the constraints imposed by work environments, rhythms of work and learning may become normalized to the point that they are never questioned. Some self-help management publications advise how individuals can change “brain-antagonistic” work patterns to improve learning and production performance, such as Kline and Saunders (1993), Fobes (*The Creative Problem-Solver’s Toolbox*, 1993), McCarthy (*Mastering the Information Age*, 1991), Hall (*Jump Start your Brain*, 1995), and Nierenberg (*The Art of Creative Thinking*, 1982). However, Hart (1992) and others have characterized brain antagonism (without necessarily using that term) as inscribed in cultures: “In reality, it seems that practically all our experiences are rearranged under the spell of quantitative, objective time, no longer allowing us to linger or simply move along with the task, and to assume a stance of ‘it takes as long as it takes’”(p. 164). In Hart’s characterization, work—and schooling which reflects similar factory-style behavioral regimentation—is designed to minimize slacking no matter how boring the task and often requires just enough attention to avoid mistakes, not the thoughtful contemplation or creative use of information. More complex levels of information work may prove even more problematic in that the computer now organizes much of the total work experience. The virtual world is timeless in that it bridges time

and distance instantaneously to retrieve instant data; it “liquidates the historical dimension of experience, human memory and remembrance” (p. 165). Therefore, people are often working and learning in a “series of ever-present moments, where nothing needs to be remembered because nothing needs to be anticipated” (p. 165). Hart suggested that the speed with which computers process information also contributes to “a sense of human inadequacy in the face of such a tremendous capacity for speed” (p. 168), besides evaporating appreciation of any experience in which time passes more organically/more slowly.

Work and life, then, are commonly experienced as a frantic juggling act, an endless to-do list of items to be crossed off. Csikszentmihalyi’s (1990) flow research was motivated by his observation that in the 20th century, people commonly experienced life and work structured this way as an endless cycle between boredom and anxiety.

The study participants illustrate a very different orientation. For example, the participants involved in recycling buildings are subject to some deadlines and economic pressures, but the activity and materials involved largely determine how long the work takes. Consider Steve and John’s willingness to wait years if necessary to finish certain rooms in their house (to “do it right”) and Joan and her husband’s incremental saving of funds and preparation of land for the eventual construction of their log home. Preparing even one architectural element for reuse can require an investment of days, weeks, or months depending on the condition of the materials. Window restoration is an activity always included in Bob’s projects, and it is an example of a job in which the materials control more of the timetable than the worker. One storm window may involve an hour to more than three hours to remove deteriorated window glazing, which may be weakened and cracked but also very hard; to cut new glass if old glass is broken in the glaz-

ing-removal process; to apply fresh glazing compound in an even strip around the glass; to insert tiny glazier's points into the wet compound to hold the glass pane in place; to remove old paint on the window frame and smooth the surface for priming (perhaps the old wood frame needs epoxy products to solidify rot or construct missing pieces, epoxy products that must be mixed in precise proportions and allowed to dry); to wait for the glazing compound to dry sufficiently to make the next step possible; to prime the wood frame and the narrow glazing strip without painting the window glass; to apply one or more coats of paint to the wood frame and the narrow glazing strip; to wait until the paint dries; to install the storm windows, some of them at dangerous heights. For the average old house, these procedures may have to be duplicated dozens, even a hundred or more times if the structure has many windows.

Yet, in spite of the passage of long periods of time and sometimes strenuous labor, the participants expressed deep satisfaction about the results of their labor. Their attachment to historical artifacts permits them to feel that they are in touch with centuries of knowledge and experience, not just the data bite of the present moment. As a secondary tool of their work, they use computers to help them connect with the past. Several participants' contact with agricultural life and work, as well as the fact that work like exterior restoration and outdoor presentation must be synchronized seasonally, may also influence their ability to function according to a "qualitative or biological rhythm of time" (Hart, p. 168). According to Csikszentmihalyi (1996), highly creative people find ways to be "masters of their own time" (p. 145).

According to Hart (1992), the standard workplace, with its inorganic regimentation of time, cannot effectively teach workers to tie experiences "into coherent, analytical insight" (p. 171); that is, lack of awareness of the genesis of individual experience and so-

cial structures leads to inability to reflect on what meaningful experience is and evaluate the context in which it is experienced. Csikszentmihalyi (1990) has made a similar case that a culture “glued to immediacy” (p. 171) has difficulty understanding itself and moving forward.

Using the Physical Body or “Losing Touch”

When Gautiér wrote disparagingly of the useful objects that signify man’s “poor weak nature” (see Chapter 3, p. 40), he couldn’t have anticipated the technologized places of work and education that have been forged from the aspiration that human beings can eventually be “free’ . . . from the ties that bind us to nature” (Hart, 1992, p. 8). Almost a century removed from the “rationally-constructed beehive” or Corbusier’s landscape planned according to economic law and mathematical exactness (see p. 147), Hart argued for a re-evaluation of work for use and life versus the “sci-fi scenario” of pure knowledge “purged from any embarrassing corporeal vestiges” (p. 127). By the time Hart published her book in 1992, her perception was that technology had already mostly fulfilled the “promise of work stripped of physical exertion or effort” (p. 127).

In the “sterile, air-conditioned environment of the computer laboratory” (p. 139), an image Hart (1992) used to represent the essence of the contemporary workplace, life seems easy and controlled on the surface, and thus by extension, so does death. According to Hart, this fact helps account for the relative ease with which a work force can be trained to accept the conditions of their work passively. Ironically, office life frequently entails confinement and immobility, which can lead to a variety of physical syndromes discussed in connection with contemporary life and work (repetitive motion syndromes; spinal problems due to computer-dictated posture; obesity and disease). Catharine

Beecher's (1841) complaints about the sedentary aristocracy might well be directed at the sedentary working class today.

Hart's critical counterpoint used subsistence cultures as a basis of comparison. Acknowledging the sometimes harsh conditions of geography, government, and economy under which members of subsistence cultures must survive, Hart also acknowledged the danger of idealizing this mode of living (she escaped the limitations of the "noble savage" stereotype discussed earlier in this chapter). Hart's work intersects again with the work of Csikszentmihalyi by posing the possibility that Western educators and psychologists can learn valuable lessons in the human interactions and processes of life and work observable in these cultures. In *Flow* (1990), Csikszentmihalyi described European and other agricultural communities that are aware of technologized society, but remain relatively untouched by the industrial revolution. While noting that the experiences of these cultures cannot be generalized to all pre-industrial cultures, Csikszentmihalyi found that the subjects in the research "can seldom distinguish work from free time" (p. 145). The assessment was not meant to suggest workplace control of their thoughts; on the contrary, subjects expressed that in their work, they felt free. In lives structured by engagement in crafts, preservation of language and traditions, and agricultural subsistence, they identified the most demanding physical tasks as those they most "enjoy," for example pasturing and milking cows, maintaining the land, and performing other tasks that keep them tied to nature. Csikszentmihalyi drew parallels with American blue-collar workers (such as welders) in his flow research who similarly felt total engagement and freedom in their daily work, though these subjects represented a small fraction of the total, or just one individual within a work place.

Csikszentmihalyi (1990) observed that most people are no longer engaged in production but are instead part of the service sector, working at jobs “that would surely appear like pampered leisure to the farmers and factory workers of only a few generations ago” (p. 154). Yet, the present study offers examples of middle-class participants who are not bound by constraints of poverty, family tradition, or geography but still *choose* to place difficult forms of physical labor at the center of their existence. Old house restoration commonly involves considerable dirt, inhalation of dust and fumes, heavy lifting, long periods of engagement with loud, motorized equipment such as power sanders and saws, repetitive cleanup, and the repetitive motion of painting and staining. Apparently, participants in these activities have learned for themselves what Hart (1992) posited in her theoretical work, that “intimate (bodily) knowledge of work materials can be a source of pride and personal power” (p. 127).

Accepting Difficulty

Strenuous physical labor and allocating attention on one subject for long periods of time are the centerpiece of the participants’ activities. However, in the culture at large, they are often associated with difficult work to be avoided. Learners’ response to difficulty is an area of great significance for educators of all kinds, who will eventually discover how well students are prepared to deal with difficulty, to invest attention, sustain it, and make sound judgments about what they invest attention in. Briefs-Elgin (1999) drew from Csikszentmihalyi’s flow research (1990) to argue for the place of this question at the center of educational research, because two concepts central in teaching are difficulty and mastery.

Martha Stewart’s projects have been criticized for being too difficult, too complicated, involving too many ingredients, taking too much time to do. Others consume

them enthusiastically, even if only vicariously as spectators. Sharlet (1999) summarized a panel presentation called "Martha Stewart, Friend or Foe?" at a conference of the American Studies Association. One panelist, an architectural scholar, speculated on the presence of a potentially broad cultural current in consumers' interest in complex homekeeping projects, or even in the desire for greater consciousness of domestic environments: "There is something going on . . . something about being aware of what's in your own cupboard." A capacity crowd heard speculation about the attraction to Martha Stewart as the panelists posed questions such as the following: (a) Is Martha Stewart selling "mass-manufactured neo-Luddism" appealing to people's yearnings for pre-technological living?

(b) Is she serving an important psychological need for domestic fantasy by "authorizing [people] to dream"? One panelist suggested that Stewart and other shelter experts had tapped into a universal human instinct that may be carried out in an infinite variety of ways: "Even the *idea* of making may be enough to satisfy some people's desire for ritual experience."

Briefs-Elgin's (1999) article "Happiness and the Blank Page" explored the idea of "making" in the context of formal college composition classrooms, proposing that "composition, more than most other college subjects, requires the astonishingly difficult and ultimately exhilarating creation of something from nothing, the very opposite of consumption" (p. 83). A variety of theoretical frameworks, whether they are cognitive-based, social constructionist, or critically conscious of consumption in the context of class, gender, and race, agree that passive consumption is not a worthy instructional goal, though as Hart (1992) argued, in practice adult learners are mortared into that role. Briefs-Elgin framed her argument historically, pointing out that Western culture

affords fewer and fewer opportunities to make from scratch, industrialization and technology having taken away people's need and ability

to create manually—our own houses, furniture, food, clothing—and the media revolution has virtually taken away our ability to create mentally—ideas, music, stories, images, entertainment, adventure. In a society where agribusiness, corporations, and the media meet every need, making is severed from any relationship to necessity and reduced to mere hobby. (p. 83)

TV has replaced most of the activities that authors like Beecher once taught, such as home carpentry, gardening, informal scientific experimentation and naturalism, home maintenance and cleanliness, etc. Western affluence affords more people more leisure, and Csikszentmihalyi (1990) observed, “an astounding panoply of recreational gadgets and leisure choices” (p. 83). With effort, free time can be shaped into something to enjoy, and something that instructs: “Hobbies that demand skills, hobbies that set goals and limits, personal interests, and especially inner discipline help to make leisure what it is supposed to be—a chance for re-creation” (p. 162). He discussed at length the more common squandering of leisure time:

The energy that could be used to focus on complex goals, to provide for enjoyable growth, is squandered on patterns of stimulation that only mimic reality. Mass leisure, mass culture, and even high culture when only attended to passively and for extrinsic reasons—such as the wish to flaunt one's status—are parasites of the mind. They absorb psychic energy without providing substantive strength in return. . . . Their purpose is to make money for someone else. (p. 163)

Detached from its draconian-sounding moralism, the old expression about “Idle hands” mentioned in Briefs-Elgin (1999) is now being reconsidered, in the educational

and psychological literature cited here, along with conventional wisdom about human happiness. Csikszentmihalyi's body of work on flow as the nexus of attention, difficulty, skill, and enjoyment has recently received attention in psychological literature and the popular press for its insights about happiness, such as a *Time* magazine cover story ("The Science of Happiness," January 17, 2005). The conventional wisdom about happiness that Briefs-Elgin's article referenced (which she used Csikszentmihalyi to contradict) is happiness as ease and freedom from care. Some definitions of happiness offered by students in a survey Briefs-Elgin conducted in her composition classes included "no worries," "no troubles," "feeling carefree" (p. 87). Only 17% of the students mentioned challenging themselves as something that brings about happiness, "and yet we want every university student to say, I feel like I'm walking on air when I take on a really laborious project, struggle with it, make it my own. What is a university if not a place for people who find happiness in the rigors of discovery and creation?" (p. 87). As an instructor of composition, Briefs-Elgin reported more often encountering dread, avoidance, tension, and boredom.

If no living room learning has occurred, it's difficult to see how a learner can enjoy the work of discovery and creation in formal schooling, where such principles may or may not be encouraged; if not in formal schooling or domestic life, how in the work place? Briefs-Elgin (1999) has attempted to reconnect students with the acceptance of difficulty in exchange for mastery and creation. Csikszentmihalyi (1990) and Hart (1992) have argued that this is possible and also essential. In Hart's utopian vision, "By dissolving the rigid opposition between freedom and necessity work emerges as an experience which contains the *elements of burden as well as enjoyment* in an inseparable dialectical unity. These elements remain integral to the experience of work itself, and

they are neither sectioned off into sterile opposites of leisure and work, nor do they become the basis for hierarchical divisions of labor” (p. 178). The photos on page 322 suggest the degree of difficulty of some of the projects completed by participants in this study.



Figure 8: Condition of Bob’s project house after removal of an inappropriate addition.



Figure 9: Exterior of Bob’s project house after completed restoration, one year later.



Figure 10: Steve uncovering a hardwood floor.



Figure 11: Shady Ladies performer assembling the set.

Self Knowledge: The Ability to Evaluate Experience

Chapter 3 (pp. 132-134) described an ironic finding by Csikszentmihalyi in his flow research (1990): at work, subjects utilized their skills the most and reported feeling most challenged and most strong. Csikszentmihalyi collected 4,800 responses, 44 per subject throughout one week as they received 8 random beeps per day with a pager and used 2 pages in a booklet to record what they were doing at the time of the page. If the level of challenge and skill they reported were above the mean level for the week, the subjects were considered to have experienced flow. Subjects associated flow with feeling skillful, challenged, happy, strong, creative, and satisfied. While Hart's (1992) and Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) analyses of workplace conditions tell us much about the potential atrophy of skills, lack of variety, feeling of psychic energy wasted, experience of oppression, and feelings of alienation commonly experienced in the workplace, there is another perspective to consider: "When it comes to work, people often do not heed the evidence of their senses. They disregard the quality of immediate experience, and base their motivation instead on the strongly rooted cultural stereotype of what work is supposed to be like" (i.e., thinking of work as imposition or drudgery) (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p. 159). Work may well provide opportunity for flow experiences and enjoyment. Yet, according to Csikszentmihalyi, opportunity for flow is not enough: "We also need the skills to make use of them. And we need to know how to control consciousness—a skill that most people have not learned to cultivate" (p. 23). Opportunities for satisfaction and growth are wasted if they are not perceived as such. Once again, Hart (1992) elaborated on a similar point:

The individual learner must be able to recognize and actualize the educative potential contained in experience; to organize her experiences in such a way that they are

or become educative. The capacity for experience therefore indicates a practical and critically reflective involvement in social reality from the centre of one's own subjectivity. The latter likewise has to be reflected upon and understood in a process of critical and creative engagement with one's own inner nature. (p. 191)

As the participants in this dissertation illustrated, those with the strongest sense of what they know and why it is worth knowing may decide to teach.

Self knowledge may be the most difficult to transmit, because it may require a life transformation, not situational ("just in time") training: "To gain personal control over the quality of experience . . . one needs to learn how to build enjoyment into what happens day in, day out" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p. 163). Evidence of the wisdom of this argument is the quantity of time human beings spend doing maintenance activities, the area of life that requires the greatest number of daily attentional investments, as Csikszentmihalyi called them (eating, traveling, washing, fixing things, etc.), 50-60 hours per week. Next is work at 30-40 hours per week and leisure at approximately 20. Csikszentmihalyi (1990) argued, "Like everything else, work and leisure can be appropriated for our needs" (p. 163). He revisited the past to demonstrate that work has been transformed at will many times in history, such as when slavery was abolished in the United States and when the length of the work week became a matter of law as well as custom.

This chapter concludes with descriptions of workplaces Florida (2002) would classify as appropriated to enhance creativity. First, it is necessary to explore additional obstacles to creativity and optimal experience in comparison with the relative freedom from obstacles enjoyed by the study participants.

The fragmentation of knowledge forms makes the assessment of experience difficult enough; a deeper problem is the fragmentation of self engendered by formal structures

of work and education. Hart (1992) argued, "Because workers lose touch with the concrete, material, but also contextual and personal aspects of their work they feel disoriented and disempowered . . . they suffer from a disruption of identity" (p. 134). The following section reflects on some of the humanist principles of education explored in this study to see how factors of knowledge, time, and physical involvement/detachment can converge to make both differentiation and integration of identity, and therefore meaningful learning, more difficult.

The Loss of Humanism in Sites of Formal Work and Learning

Humanism was discussed in Chapter 6 in relation to how activities and objects both express and shape identity (participants' sense of individuality, or differentiation) and their connection to community (integration in terms of support from larger community/involvement in addressing community needs beyond self interest). Hart (1992) has challenged some self-proclaimed humanist resources in organizational learning; although they talk of team approaches, cooperation, and the dignity of individuals within organization, are they really just "the latest, more refined, and more intimate form of controlling every single aspect of the worker and the workplace"? (p. 152). Certainly evidence suggests that as the influence of various theoretical approaches waxes and wanes, people's lives outside the organization are still largely ignored. The positivist, efficiency-focused model can only make use of certain fragments of the whole person living the institutional life. Some social constructionist theory may be unable or unwilling to put the pieces of human life together, instead focusing on the irrelevance or non-existence of individual identity within institutions, or the political undesirability of seeing individuals as unified wholes. Csikszentmihalyi (1990; 1996) indicted social coercion to act against one's own will as an obstacle to optimal experience. However, another potentially power-

ful inhibitor is the destruction of cultural values (too much uncertainty about boundaries; erratic and purposeless behavior). The following sections pose alternative ways of reconciling identity dichotomies perpetuated by all-or-nothing theory and philosophy.

Division by Gender

Other sections of the dissertation have already suggested that gender lies beneath other visible fissures in the economic, educational, and domestic landscapes. Hart (1992) called this fact the process of *housewifization*. Her reasoning is as follows. Housework and mothering are biological extensions of female identity. In addition to the connotations artists, architects, and others have attached to the creation and nurturing of life by women, there is an important economic one: anything naturally available—anything one can get for free—tends to be appraised as worthless in Western culture. Hart connected this principle to the confinement of women and their desires in the 19th century; housework was necessary (somebody had to do it), and for a time, having a housewife was an emblem of status for male breadwinners. As the century wore on, housework acquired a stronger stigma as socially unnecessary, unpaid, and, consequently, “invisible” (p. 54), at least after the dissipation of the cult of womanhood and the efforts of authors like Beecher to elevate respect and understanding for the work of the house. Production for profit, which creates future buying power, was perceived as better than production of life and creative maintenance of life. Some readings of Martha Stewart (see pp. 286-288) suggest that understandably, the baby has been thrown out with the bathwater. That is, skills associated with creating and sustaining life in the domestic sphere cannot be divorced from a historical context that limited women to domesticity as a profession, even though those limits were dissolving and the use of domestic knowledge for public good was expanding (see Chapter 3, pp. 101-112). There-

fore, according to Hart, “The ease with which these equations are made by personnel managers and feminist analysts alike points to a shared view of skills and abilities such as patience, attention to detail, care, or manual dexterity, as well as of the context within which they are produced, as being of less or low value” (p. 33).

Gauthro (1999) proposed that feminine difference should be recognized and cultivated to seed principles like inclusion, equality, communicative competence, and respect for complexity in the public sphere. Gauthro, Hart (1992), and others envision the re-making of institutions according to feminine design principles that would restructure the use of time and the connections between organization and community. Hart used the reality and metaphor of motherhood to characterize the relativism she advocated as a desirable organizing principle for workplaces. That is, objective reality, like parenting, is something known through multiple sources and is “forever attuned to the particulars of the situation . . . It is knowledge that is alive, contracts and expands, alternately adjusts to the contours of its object . . . this kind of thinking endures ambiguity and provisionality” (p. 190). Because women are uniquely experienced with life complexity, in male-dominated fields complexity

should come to be seen as a strength, rather than as a deterrent . . . If educators can focus on the needs of their own families and children without threat of reprisal, they will be comfortable with being more attuned to the needs and interests of their students who may also have family responsibilities. They may also explore and become aware of the important potential for informal types of learning that take place in the homeplace. To take this approach would help provide a balance for the dominant marketplace discourses. (Gauthro, 1999).

Csikszentmihalyi (1996) has formulated a model of psychological complexity from his research on flow and creativity, i.e., complexity as the outcome of optimal experience. In examining uses of the human repertoire as reflected by his research subjects, Csikszentmihalyi developed a working catalogue of personality polarities. People who move comfortably between the poles move among extremes as situations require; they do not rest at nondescript, static middle positions. Csikszentmihalyi observed that his participants exhibited a greater degree of androgyny than the average, navigating between what the culture defines as traditionally feminine and masculine behaviors. A complex personality will have a strongly-rooted sense of reality as well as the ability to imagine and deal with abstraction; will nurture as well as exercise assertiveness; will experience passion as well as detach to look at things objectively; will cultivate community as well as individuality; will sometimes engage in creative play as well as apply critical judgment; and will combine openness to experience with observation of boundaries.

While most academic and popular publications describe the workplace as a site of gender and other tensions, the self-help discourse of the daily-living domain offers interesting glimpses of gender unification. Some readers interpret Martha Stewart as a departure from old essentialized models of female domesticity. Strecker (1997) pointed out her androgynous approach to self-help: "There's something fascinating about the way Martha upsets our expectations of the masculine and the feminine. She deals with the traditional, limited women's world of kitchen, home, and garden in a thoroughly 'masculine' way: with confidence, expertise, drive, and entrepreneurship" (p. 2). *Living* magazine typically keeps much of the photography focused on objects and its text largely gender-neutral. As opposed to the ladies' magazines with the narratee instantly

identifiable, contemporary domestic self-help discourse invites participation that isn't necessarily proscribed by gender identity. Some have suggested that criticism of Martha Stewart as gender role model is actually based on the fact that she is a successful woman:

Why don't we chastise [Bob Villa's] empire and the greedy anti-PBS commercialism he represents? . . . Bob Villa is THE face of home improvement. He IS Craftsman tools. Yet no one blames him for 90s domestic guilt. No one suggests that he is responsible for men's (or women's) feelings of inadequacy when they BUY an entertainment center instead of making one from a fallen oak. . . . (Martha Stewart Discussion, 1997)

The contemporary domestic self-help oeuvre, furthermore, reflects attitudes toward sexual orientation changing perhaps more quickly than in other cultural domains. In an article posted on America Online (1996), "Martha Stewart and her Gay Friends" a self-identified lesbian activist reflected on Stewart's TV visits to "good friends" who are male couples, and ponders if she is really "a radical social engineer disguised as a brilliant businesswoman. Is her goal to subtly indoctrinate upper crust America with the gay male aesthetic?" The spirit of the article is playful, but raises a serious question. Could the normalization of domestic images of same-sex partners help create new social realities? The historic preservation movement openly acknowledges same sex partnerships as a domestic reality while honoring the gay and lesbian community's contributions to the domain. Stonewall, a Manhattan bar, was the first site listed on the National Register of Historic for its significance in gay and lesbian history. Gay patrons' resistance to law enforcement efforts to evict them from the establishment in 1969 "has become an event of such significance that chronicles of gay and lesbian history routinely divide

their narratives into 'before Stonewall' and 'after Stonewall' eras" (Young as cited in Evans, personal communication, November 12, 1999). Historic Landmark designation, articles in *Preservation* magazine, and social events and field sessions at preservation conferences have openly acknowledged gay and lesbian "urban pioneers" contributing to neighborhood revitalization. Young's article in *Preservation* (as cited in Evans, 1999) suggested that "The don't-talk-about-them-and-maybe-they'll-go-back-to-being-invisible attitude is fading."

On home improvement television such as the programs featured on HGTV, same-sex homeowners are featured with increasing frequency. They discuss their joint efforts to create a home space and are introduced as each other's "partner." In the past, it was rare to hear same-sex homeowners identified as anything other than roommates. *Queer Eye for the Strait Guy* has become a cultural phenomenon. In the show, five gay men perform an intervention for strait males with chaotic living spaces and hygiene challenges. As the "Fab Five" inspect the participant's lifestyle, the show communicates a powerful message about the consequences of inattention to domestic life and regularly connects inattention to domestic life with inattention to relationships. Regular rituals on the show include cleaning up; decorating with color and furniture with the input of the student; and a makeover of personal grooming and wardrobe. Each participant is required to be involved in his own remodeling by *making* something, a meal, a speech, a poem, a gift. In almost every show, the feature's purpose is to produce an action or material symbol of kindness for a significant other, a family member, or a group the student is trained to understand a bit better. At the same time, the student expresses how he feels about the new visual and tactile environment, and always how he feels about himself in relation to those objects.

A common reaction from the strait student is the expression of greater confidence and enthusiasm about new beginnings. April 5, 2005's participant thanked the five for "educating me in so many different ways and making our house a home" (Collins, Williams, & Metzler, 2005b). March 29's participant, a college student, thanked the group for what they had done for him and credited the experience with changing his beliefs about "what gay people are" (Collins, Williams, & Metzler, 2005a). More systematic research might investigate how in certain contexts, homecaring self-help can be a point of entry for the normalization of relationships once excluded from mainstream approval.

In a new historical context, the apparent gratitude of the beneficiaries of *Queer Eye* instruction, the implied narratees in Martha Stewart's print and broadcast media, the inclusion of both spouses in HGTV decorating and remodeling decisions, and of course, the participant narratives from three males and two females in this study suggest that domestic aesthetics can be meaningful regardless of gender identity and may in fact contribute to mitigating gender hegemony and keeping polarities in balance, whatever part the domestic arts once played in circumscribing identity and activity based on gender.

Division of Competencies

The segregation of knowledge forms and competencies, whether driven by gender, class, socioeconomic status, or other forms of polarization, has consequences for human identity that are perhaps felt most intensely at work. According to Hart (1992),

It seems that it is to remain the privilege of the professional to develop a sense of self through his or her work experience, to a sense of creativity and purpose, including the experience of accumulating, developing and deepening her or his competence . . . to be sure, under the conditions of corporate industrialism and of gener-

ally alienated labor, these aspects of good work have long since been eroded for the majority of the working population. (p. 87)

Competence itself has become the subject of crisis-focus in discourse and practice that contributes to fracturing workers' sense of self. Competencies can no longer be developed over time. The rhetoric of professional education emphasizes mobility over community, warning against "built-in obsolescence" and posing "constant career change" as the norm: "The new and universal emphasis on flexibility and mobility seems to add . . . the finishing touch, extinguishing the last traces of the traditional work ethic which stressed the integration of work and personal development" (Hart, 1992, p. 87). Adult education discourse and programming intensifies workers' sense that they are emotional if not physical nomads,

packaging the curriculum and . . . fragmenting the educational content into individual, disconnected competencies which confront the learner as externally given, objectified behavior, dissociated from subjectivity or unique experiential background. In many ways, the generic worker of the future, this "human capital virtually immune to obsolescence," is strangely disembodied.. (Hart, p. 88)

In reviving structures and ideas from the trash heap of obsolescence, the participants in this study have created a continuity of competency because of the integration of work ethic and personal development; because they do what they enjoy, they seek the continuation of the flow experiences their work provides. The idea of stamping one's identity, which the participants in this study value so highly, is not an option for some workers who never see tangible "fruits" of their labor, "the concrete object which is worked upon, shaped, and created, but which the knowledge worker no longer sees, hears, or touches" (p. 158). In the "fixed and finished" (Hart, p. 158) environments of

work and school, workers have to deal with little unpredictability; there may be few opportunities to feel pride of mastery or that mastery of work-required skills is any reflection of who they are. The participants in this study experience a magnitude of tasks that almost always leaves something unfinished. Moreover, as they encounter rainy weather during construction season, termites underneath floor boards, or missing pieces in a structure, there is always an element of unpredictability to deal with, always a different audience, a unique structure, a different way of living history. In a way, the participant narratives answer Hart's call for more discussion of models of work that "preserves rather than destroys" (p. 90) and that somehow contributes to human well-being. If work is to produce more rather than less self-awareness, less rather than more alienation from the purpose and products of work, more research would be done to closely examine how students/workers actually experience what they are doing, as this dissertation has done.

Hart (1992) observed that individual learners' subjectivity is often dealt with mechanically and superficially by managers, instructors, and researchers, even though understanding individual subjectivity should be considered a "structural requirement" for successful educational practice (p. 193). Researchers in the past tended to ignore unique modes of knowing that don't lend themselves to scientific investigation and control, or presumed that workers can't articulate what they know and why they are doing what they are doing. In this study, some participants' lack of a college degree or preference for working with their hands has in no way affected their ability to articulate those facts about themselves.

Summary: The Meaning of Things

This dissertation has ranged widely over theoretical and philosophical meanings of things. The dissertation concludes by returning “to the things themselves!” as some phenomenologists say (see Chapter 2, p. 34). I have used the participant narratives and published research to support the position that the cognitive dimension of things is important, but that to say so is not to diminish the significance of psychological, social, and political dimensions of meaning. The final section of this chapter reviews some significant implications of the findings in each category.

Cognitive Lessons: Allocating Attention and Controlling Consciousness

Csikszentmihalyi’s (1996) research has supported the contention that “No one is immune to the impressions that impinge on the senses from the outside . . . Even the most abstract mind is affected by the surroundings of the body” (p. 127). Perhaps the reason is that, as Pinker (2002) has suggested with findings from cognitive science, “Visual perception is the most piquant form of knowledge of the world” (p. 201). Both researchers have demonstrated that physical environment affects thoughts and feelings across cultures, of course with significant differences in the way the effects are experienced. These authors and others create a convincing argument that a relativist interest in abstract, socially-constructed conceptual categories is not sufficient in itself for understanding how people learn most effectively.

Csikszentmihalyi (1990) succinctly explained the cognitive function of things: “Without training, and without an object in the external world that demands attention, people are unable to focus their thoughts for more than a few minutes at a time” (p. 119). Hart (1992), writing from a self-identified relativist standpoint, understood the relationship of human minds to objects in the world in a similar way: “The capability for

mimetic nearness, for an existential dwelling in the object of work or cognition is founded on a fundamental respect for empirical reality. In other words, a close contact with reality is sought rather than shunned" (p. 187). She envisioned objects, organic material, and living organisms as respected "co-equals" in the labor process, a relationship whose prerequisite is discovering the "voice" of a substance, which is different from simply "fashioning an inert 'natural resource' into desired objects" (p. 187). In this way, anyone can do what Hart described artists doing, which is experiencing cognition as a blend of both power over and submission to an object.

Theoreticians and learners who have never experienced this type of connection with the material world through art, labor, or other means may find little meaning in Hart's words. The narratives offered in Chapters 4-6 show examples of how the words can be lived, and may have a chance of penetrating readers' consciousness. Everyone lives somewhere; the narratives have the power to tap that universal domain of meaning and interest. What does it mean to dwell existentially in the object of work or cognition? The narratives answer the question by describing the physical properties of things as well as the existential meaning of working with those things/living surrounded by them. What does it mean to discover the "voice" of an object? The participants have provided concrete examples in their description of the "soul" of a house; the gender of a house; the quality of an object hidden beneath surface grime or decay; how structures "speak" and "tell" the restorer what to do; and what those structures and objects tell the viewers/workers about themselves.

The literature incorporated into the study has implied that participants' experiences could resonate with others who are not immersed all of the time in the same kinds of objects of work and cognition. Many authors have connected environment with pro-

duction of ideas and ability to think (including the self-help management publications discussed on p. 313). Csikszentmihalyi (1996), in his multiple studies, found “When persons with prepared minds find themselves in beautiful settings, they are more likely to find new connections among ideas, new perspectives on issues they are dealing with” (p. 136). Yet, at the preparation and evaluation stages of meaning-making, familiar, comfortable settings were identified as more productive than exotic, beautiful ones. Simple unstructured free time regardless of location played a significant role, with significant numbers of subjects reporting connections they had made “below the threshold of conscious intentionality” (p. 138) as opposed to when they were consciously working on a problem.

Unlike some of the participants in this dissertation, most people work in formal office settings they have no input in designing, spaces where choice of location for different learning and thinking contexts is limited. Csikszentmihalyi’s (1996) subjects’ descriptions of the spaces where they are productive are significant because they suggest how important a personalized work space is. Csikszentmihalyi’s description of the work space he occupied as he was writing the book *Creativity* reinforced the point. Research could examine the degree of personalization allowed in office spaces. Training could be developed to assist workers in personalizing within space, safety, and other organizational regulation. Consideration of aesthetics could in turn trigger critical examination of the utility and desirability of existing regulations. The key point is that a sterile work environment is often symptomatic of “affectless routine” (p. 140). Popular culture has lampooned life in the cubicle, most famously the Dilbert cartoon series, but few seem to have seriously examined the question the participants have answered for themselves: should life in sterile work or living environments be accepted?

Csikszentmihalyi (1996) suggested that people can “gain control over the immediate environment and transform it so that it enhances personal creativity” (p. 140). The prerequisite may be redefining creativity to make its democratic potential more apparent, as Florida (2002) has attempted to do in his research on the American economy: “Creativity draws crucially on our ordinary abilities. Noticing, remembering, seeing, speaking, hearing, understanding, language, recognizing analogies: all these talents of Everyman are important” (p. 32).

This study has described objects as tools for the development of everyday cognition. Objects can inspire reflection or necessitate work that creates time and opportunity for reflection. Objects can bridge the past and the future and so facilitate new connections and discoveries. In manipulating objects, learners experience how limitations are “recognized, shaped, or created in the process of learning” (Hart, 1992, p. 156). Through the cognition of objects, people learn discrimination of the type that is sensitive to difference, to uniqueness; this learning may help disable routines of discrimination in its opposite sense, making judgments based on unsupported generalization and neglect of detail. However, Hart (1992) characterized the stance of traditional education toward the consideration of material objects to be neglectful at best, hostile at worst. In this study, I located educational literature with much to say about cognitive capacities that are desirable but not always exercised among various student populations, but few contemporary sources that seriously consider the instructional resources that are most familiar and plentiful to most people, the materials and processes of daily life, to see how they are utilized or ignored as tools for growth of the mind.

Optimizing Experience: Enjoyment and Intrinsic Motivation

Most educators regardless of philosophical orientation agree that the exercise of cognitive function alone is insufficient to characterize an educated person. Most educators would prefer to see passion, not passivity, toward learning. Most would hope that learners experience education as part of who they are as opposed to an *imposition* on who they are. Hart (1992) and others have suggested that when educational experience splits the head from “sensuous involvement with the world,” active involvement becomes “passive undergoing” (p. 157). Passive undergoing precludes creativity, and Csikszentmihalyi (1990; 1996) has been most useful in identifying the skills and products generated by creative activity.

One is adaptability. The subjects in Csikszentmihalyi’s (1996) research were able to “Make do with whatever is at hand to reach their goals,” (p. 511). What set them apart specifically was that “regardless of whether the conditions in which they find themselves are luxurious or miserable, they manage to give their surroundings a personal pattern that echoes the rhythm of their thoughts and habits of action” (p. 128). This dissertation’s narratives support those findings as they describe participants moving from temporary housing to home ownership and from house to house disrupted by demolition and reconstruction, always restyling some element of their housing to suit their personalities and purposes.

Further research should investigate possible correlations between human relationships with material objects and emotional resilience needed to cope with difficult tasks. Research of this nature could have important implications for educators interested in helping students overcome limits of financial, cultural, and emotional capital. If as Csikszentmihalyi (1996) and others have suggested, it matters what/how much material

is available in daily life (cultural capital such as objects, art, books, conversation, expectations, role models, etc.), important questions arise about the potential for adult education programs to address “making do with what we have” in homes and offices where having more (new material capital) isn’t possible, but rearranging, remaking, and remodeling are possible and conversation, expectations, and role models are free. Csikszentmihalyi’s research points to creative achievement of greatest cultural significance originating mainly at the lowest and highest rungs of the socioeconomic ladder, additional reinforcement for the idea that *what* is available is less important than how people interact with what they have.

Some self-help resources are addressing the phenomenon of parents with adequate to affluent resources raising helpless children. These are children who, as adults, cannot or will not deal with basic life skills, having come to rely on parents—most often mothers—to do things for them. Parents are placed in a servile role as they attempt to protect children from physical exertion, want, disappointment, and failure while children learn inadequate coping skills and lack self reliance (see, for example, Medhus, 2004).

Adaptability, when combined with curiosity—the drive to know—enables invention and problem solving. “Without a good dose of curiosity, wonder, and interest in what things are like and in how they work, it is difficult to recognize interesting problems. Openness to experience, a fluid attention that constantly processes events in the environment, is a great advantage for recognizing potential novelty” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996, p. 52). Research has linked early experiences with the material world to later inquiry and creativity, and inquiry/creativity with self-awareness and satisfaction. One subject in Csikszentmihalyi’s creativity research was John Wheeler, who as a child loved “toy mechanisms, things that would shoot rubber bands, Tinkertoys, toy railroads,

electric light bulbs, switches, buzzers” (p. 52). Wheeler also recalled how his father regularly took him to NYSU and left him in the library, where he amused himself with office machines. At age 81, he related these experiences directly to his adult achievement as a physicist. The dissertation interviews provided similar examples of early enjoyment and awe inspired by objects and spaces—Lincoln logs, dolls, fabric, woodwork, farm animals, antiques, tools, bookcases, attics, alcoves, front halls, and more.

A question arises about the potential significance of variables. It has been well-established in this research that the participants enjoyed a high degree of independence in using objects for play and purposeful making, but other people helped create those conditions: Joan’s father taking her to the research farm, her uncle taking her on antiquing runs, her parents salvaging old things to furnish the house; Pat’s and Bob’s parents creating art and functional objects at home; Bob’s father demonstrating for Bob how to use tools to create functional objects; Bob, Joan, and Steve’s surrounding the family with agrarian implements and rituals; John Wheeler’s father spending time with his son by taking him along to distinctive places, but also leaving him alone to decide how to spend his own time. It seems unimportant in this study to assign greater or lesser importance to time spent with the objects or time spent with family; evidence seems adequate to say that both are important and to suggest that material objects can facilitate family members spending time with each other.

Joan’s passion for women’s history and the West has motivated her to instruct beyond that particular content area and address the issue of motivation itself. She is planning a book that would expand upon motivational speaking engagements she sometimes takes on in addition to her historical performances. She has already chosen a title: *All Dressed up With Someplace to Go*, a how-to book to help others discover what they

are passionately interested in. In an interview preceding the 2005 Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development conference, “Unleashing the Power, Passion, and Promise,” Csikszentmihalyi expressed his own lifelong purpose: to explore successful ways to nourish curiosity and intrinsic motivation to learn throughout the lifespan. Flow is the “motor, the engine, that keeps people wanting to do something which they experience as enjoyable.” His life’s work has led him to conclude that some things lead to passionate interest and curiosity, others don’t. The things that do are things he has called “not usually taken seriously enough . . . things that seem peripheral. They involve the arts, music, drama, anything where the child can do things essentially by trying to find their own best mode of expression and control over what they are doing. . . . It’s very difficult, except for a tiny minority of students, to get excited about abstract learning.” A question raised in Chapter 6 (see p. 222) was what comes first, general curiosity or passion for a topic. Csikszentmihalyi has suggested that “once people have energy, curiosity, and interest, they will find the information, the knowledge, on their own.” Though his comment doesn’t exactly answer the question definitively, it is compatible with the findings in the present study, whose participants say that once they discovered what they were meant to do, they found a way to learn what they needed to learn and other avenues of interest opened. Although having a passion may imply a limiting, one-dimensional pursuit, the participants are at once living room learners, professionals, and progressives. Perhaps broad knowledge is a bulwark that not only can help one find a passion, but also keep passion from becoming self-absorption.

Formalizing “Living Room Learning”

The present research appears to reinforce the importance of asking a question in a systematic way: without early stimulation of the mind and senses via material objects,

is it possible for most people to find interest in abstraction? Can adults who never developed an existential “feel” for objects or clear preferences of surroundings be taught to connect with the senses and reap the benefits explored here? Csikszentmihalyi (1996) suggested that adult educators could learn much from childhood education that incorporates art and everyday material objects to educate the senses. Several models of instruction were reviewed for this research.

Montessori education was originally staged in what Maria Montessori (1912/1964) called “children’s houses,” which were filled with “didactic objects” (p. xxix). Montessori acted upon the credo “Things are the best teachers” (p. xxix) in tenements in Rome where her students lived. Montessori education was a complex sociological experiment tied to Maria Montessori’s beliefs about the liberation of women and their practical needs as working parents as well as the potential of education to help disadvantaged children overcome limits defined by social class and other circumstances. Montessori also tied her curriculum to children’s futures as professionals. About the value of early whole-person education focusing on sense acuity, Montessori reasoned, “Since professional work almost always requires man to make use of his surroundings, the technical schools are not forced to return to the very beginnings of education, sense exercise, in order to supply the great and universal lack” (p. 223).

Bailey’s (1915) observation of the purposes and activities within a children’s house emphasized Montessori education as liberation. As children engaged in an act as simple as waiting for a flower to bloom, they learned to focus their attention, to notice detail, to learn patience. In the intricate system Montessori developed for training the senses through visual differentiation of colors, tactile differentiation of textures, etc., Bailey saw education satisfying “beauty hunger” (p. 93) as well as “starting [children] on the

road to logical thinking” (p. 93). As the mind and senses were developed, the body was to be fully engaged in practical tasks and age-appropriate projects (for example keeping school rooms clean and helping their mothers with household chores, building, drawing, caring for a doll or a pet), games, and gymnastics. In the context in which Montessori’s methods were first introduced, more conventional educators saw lawlessness. Montessori advocates saw children developing intellectual independence, hand-eye coordination, poise, muscle control and strength, mastery of life processes, and most important, self-direction. In addition to knowing things in the liberal arts sense, the child would “know himself” (Bailey, 1915, p. 38). Children would learn the potentials and limits of their own bodies while learning ethical limits, realizing with the teacher’s assistance when they had reached the limits of freedom: when they interfered with the freedom of others, acted immorally, or endangered themselves. In advocating the Montessori method, Bailey argued,

Education to be vivid and permanent . . . should be worked out along lines of experience. To say to a child, “Don’t do that; it isn’t right,” is to make a very inadequate appeal to one, only, of his senses. . . . To put into the child’s hands the blocks of the Montessori tower so carefully graded in dimension that it takes exquisite differentiation to pile them is to give him a chance to learn through experience the difference between right and wrong by means of three senses. (p. 52)

A for-profit corporation has involved itself in childhood education by applying Csikszentmihalyi’s theories and principles of the Montessori system to the product it manufactures. The Lego Learning Institute was created in 2001 and headquartered in Denmark to study and influence the way children play and learn, and the institute sponsors an entity called the Playful Learning Panel of noted researchers from various domains.

The institute sponsored a study of Scandinavian school systems—“Optimal Learning Environments at Danish Primary Schools”—where intrinsic motivation and the experience of flow appear to be a norm that co-exists with State educational directives, one of which is that schools will create environments where children will experience flow. The system is based on applied project work and flexible instructional methods. Anderson (2004) found that flow experiences correlate most often with students’ engagement in practical and creative subjects like art, music, gymnastics, and model construction. The system balances child-initiated and teacher-initiated learning, top down and bottom up, so that during each class period, the teacher moves from “mediator to counselor. From the knowledgeable professor to the consultant.” Differences of emphasis were observed between schools in Finland and Denmark, Denmark performing particularly well at achieving sense of well being and motivation both in technique and outcome, Finland quality of achievement and social class equity. Anderson found the common denominator in both school systems to be “warm, home-like, and personal” environments that connect creativity with the experience of flow. It is important to note that home-like institutions are not seen as a replacement for home; cultural consensus is that school shouldn’t begin until age 6 or 7 so that childhood can remain a less structured realm of “play, fantasy, and creativity” until that time. The institute has also initiated a study of children’s use and perception of time while engaged in play with material things.

Relevance for adults. A few models of whole-person engagement are being adapted for adults. One example is a Web site marketing a human resources trainer/ consultant’s application of the Montessori method for adults (Hamilton, 1999), using the principles of prepared environment and didactic materials. The stated purpose of the course

is to develop creativity by helping participants connect the social self and the “center,” the core of the person consisting of the intellect, soul, and passions.

A small body of scholarly literature is developing the idea of an “aesthetic approach” to human resources and adult education. Gibb (2004) reviewed the literature and advocated an aesthetic approach from a social constructionist standpoint. He described a technical institute for adult learners where poor attendance and negative evaluations for the science curriculum were commonplace. Negative student opinion combined with poor performance forced a change, and instructors initiated a studio-based approach that was student-centered and structured around project teams’ manipulation of concrete objects, combined with Web-based instruction. Student performance improved markedly, and performance and attitude (students recognizing and enjoying the quality of the experience) were most improved where instructor engagement and creativity were exceptional. The anecdote launched Gibb’s argument that imagination/creativity (the intersection of memory, perception, emotion, and metaphor; capacity to think of the possible; and ability to nurture this capacity in self or others) define an “aesthetic” approach and that functional and aesthetic considerations should merge in HRD and adult education.

Gibb (2004) advanced some additional key definitions that merge many of the concepts discussed in this dissertation. (a) aesthetics: how design gives pleasure through beauty. (b) pleasure: Similar to Csikszentmihalyi’s (1990; 1996) definition of enjoyment, Gibb defined pleasure broadly as “the simultaneous, and unified, engagement of the mind, body, and sensibilities.” The engagement of mind and body was of most interest to Gibb as he discussed the theory and practice of developing people and organizations and showed how some elements of aesthetics are already naturalized in the HRD domain.

They include use of metaphor, especially concepts drawn from architecture. Aesthetics is essentially architectural “design thinking” that combines both qualitative and quantitative thinking, structural and material, informal and formal components to assess the influence of physical environment on communities of practice and the ingrained norms that inhibit or even punish creativity. Organizations must adopt a new norm by recognizing forms of personal knowledge that are “neither exclusively mental nor logical-rational,” that are “sensory, tacit, and influenced by their aesthetic judgment.” (2004) interesting propositions is that sensory awareness and interest can be nurtured— and artful, even beautiful learning spaces created—not just through architectural thinking and actual physical objects but also through the use of narrative. Another avenue of research might be to pursue the use of narrative to enhance aesthetic approaches (the idea has already been incorporated into literature on learning organizations mentioned earlier), and to explore Csikszentmihalyi’s (1990) reminder that words are symbols not objects, and that abstraction is more difficult to connect with human senses.

Gibb (2004) argued that the payoff for organizations pursuing aesthetic principles of HRD is this: “By being attuned to what is appreciated as beautiful, what is repellant and ugly, what is seen as tragic, and what is amusingly grotesque, that an organization, and its functioning and its performance problems, can be more clearly perceived.” The complexity of achieving the payoff lies in the necessity of approaching it dialogically: after all, beauty is in the eye of the beholder; different interpretations of what is beautiful, the personal nature of knowledge forms, all are acknowledged by Gibb and reinforced by the present study’s participants. They have a taste for the historical in common, along with clear perceptions of what beauty is to them. Beyond the commonalities are significant differences in what they would choose to fill their surroundings, just as the pub-

lished literature displays differences in ideas about the significance and value of material objects in learning. Gibb's argument for aesthetic thinking in the HRD domain captures both human commonalities and complexities.

The everyday physical environments we inhabit, our buildings and homes, the furniture we use, and even the food we require for nourishment are all naturally informed by aesthetics; they are made to be functional and beautiful, to engage the mind, body, and sensibility simultaneously. Aesthetics also shape and inform our sociocultural environment, which is intended to satisfy and please rather than offend and disgust. If that intention is often not realized, that does not negate the basic acceptance of an aesthetic dimension; it highlights only the difficulty of achieving aesthetics. The carnival of sensory experience, of sound and vision, of information and experience that we encounter everyday and come to depend on participating in the complex choreography of modern life, is equally evolved to satisfy and please rather than offend and disgust. HRD also exists and lives in physical and sociocultural environments, which should be made to please and satisfy.

Designing Work Environments to Support Creativity

Florida (2002) is a regional development specialist who, based on interviews, focus groups, and application of various statistical indicators across the U.S., has suggested that cultural change happens slowly and incrementally. He argued that the intense gaze on the destructive potential of the technologized marketplace has caused a major cultural shift, the rise of a creative "class," to go largely unnoticed. The creative class consists of engineers, artists, musicians, designers, and various knowledge-based professionals, 20-30% of the workforce by his estimates. Akin to Csikszentmihalyi's (1996) description of each of his subjects as a personality multitude, Florida reported that his

subjects identified with “a tangle of connections to myriad creative activities” (p. 13) as opposed to organizational membership or occupation alone.

In arguing that culture change has already begun, Florida (2002), consistent with other theorists cited in this study, argued that many forms of labor involve greater creativity than is commonly thought, particularly jobs associated mainly with a female workforce. Therefore, the problem as he defined it is that the creative achievements of a few are rewarded while the creative capacities of many are ignored. This creates inequities of both compensation and enjoyment that need to be addressed within communities and organizations using creativity, “the great leveler. It cannot be handed down, and it cannot be ‘owned’ in the traditional sense. It defies gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and outward appearance” (p. xiv). (See discussion of Florida’s Tolerance Index, Florida, 2002).

Florida’s (2002) research began in the post-1990’s aftermath of the collapse of new, nontraditional businesses designed by young technological entrepreneurs. Florida’s central premise is that in the aftermath, “In my travels around the country I do not find people strapping on suits and ties and going back to Organization Man-style work. People are still striving to be themselves, to find meaningful work, and to live as complete people” (p. xix). Thus the formation of an identifiable creative class began with the personal, the microenvironment, at the level of “knowing what you prefer” (see Chapter 6, p. 237). The themes that emerged from Florida’s data form a list of common concerns or desires that creative class members express about where they live and work. They include (a) Independence, the major factor influencing responses in a poll Florida did about participants’ preference to work in a tenuous position at a hair salon versus a secure position in manufacturing. Participants strongly rejected the idea of regimentation

and said they were seeking autonomy. (b) Opportunity to “express our ideas” (Florida, p. 13) at work. (c) Work that is as much as possible integrated with life at home; breaking down of strict segregation between the two. (d) Opportunity to structure one’s own time; less strict separation of time for work, time for leisure (creative class members tended to report regularly blurring those boundaries because creativity can’t be “switched on and off” (p. 13). (e) Working in a stimulating creative environment with tangible symbols such as relaxed dress.

One of Florida’s (2002) themes helps synthesize the elements of the present study dealing with places, objects, and structures. Florida posited that creativity as economic force is driven by people, but also significantly by place; the community, urban center, or town center becomes “the most important organizing, collecting unit of our economy” (p. 14). Attachment to a place enables people to function in the “ever-mobile, hard-working, stressful world” (p. 14) and helps them stay resilient when facing potentially frequent *job* change, which can destabilize human identity and culture as Hart (1992) argued. Florida’s research found a clear preference for communities with active art, music, and street scenes; diversity of population (including ethnicity and sexual orientation); and most important, authenticity, a concept so central to the participants whose work is the restoration and preservation of places. In a presentation to the National Trust’s Preservation Conference in 2003, Florida (2004) reiterated a catchphrase popular among preservationists, “new ideas require old buildings” (p. 10). He had made the connection with preservation as a result of his conversations with “creative class” members involved in occupations *other* than preservation/restoration but valuing authentic places highly. Authenticity of place was described as “a sense of credibility, something to connect with . . . we don’t want to live nowhere” (Florida, 2004, p. 10). Bob, Pat,

Steve, and John have described the power of the preference for authentic personal living spaces as well as participation in achieving macroenvironments that nurture creativity.

Csikszentmihalyi's (1996) research concluded something intuited in the 19th century and experienced strongly by the participants in the present study:

We need a supportive symbolic ecology in the home so that we can feel safe, drop our defenses, and go on with the tasks of life. And to the extent that the symbols of the home represent essential traits and values of the self, they help us be more unique, more creative. A home devoid of personal touches, lacking objects that point to the past or direct toward the future, tends to be sterile. Homes rich in meaningful symbols make it easier for their owners to know who they are and therefore what they should do. (p. 142).

In such an environment, there is a better chance that one will *act* on one's uniqueness. Florida and others have attempted to demonstrate that the truth of this proposition is being enacted in public life, more so in some communities and organizations than others. Hart, Florida, and others have been more detailed in their depiction of problems than in describing how more pervasive change can be initiated and sustained. However, collectively they suggest that it is in the living room, so to speak, that truly substantive change in the public sphere may begin, particularly if formal learning environments become more an extension of informal ones rather than a replacement. Individuals who have *felt* the importance of environment to their individuality and creativity may be more likely than others to demand change in traditional, regimented workplaces, or to simply reject them outright, which may itself precipitate change.

Conclusion

This dissertation began with general questions of educational philosophy, focusing on answers to philosophical questions as they are acted upon in both incidental learning situations (as people go about their everyday lives) and in somewhat more structured informal instruction. The participants' experiences, considered in the context of additional research woven throughout the dissertation, suggested several themes of significance to educators.

1. In contrast to the disconnection often experienced between contemporary learners/instructional systems and workers/workplaces, this study's participants approach learning and working with a sense of joy. They illustrate the *integrated* engagement in multiple spheres, the integrated activities of multiple subjectivities, and, as this study has emphasized, the integrated engagement of the senses. Therefore, the study lends additional weight to research that suggests effective learning depends on the engagement of the whole person.

2. Whole-person engagement includes the too-often neglected tactile and visual senses. Bodily and aesthetic forms of engagement with the material world have been disparaged for both economic reasons (as incompatible with the "knowledge age" and high-tech performativity) and political reasons (as incompatible with some forms of progressive dogma). The study demonstrates that moments in a culture's history era can be oppressive, but it can at the same time be progressive. The participants reach back to the Victorian era, for example, for aesthetic reasons as well as wisdom about maintaining balance between the worlds of work (and institutional life in general) and home.

Similarly, strongly held educational philosophies must be considered carefully for contexts in which they can be oppressive in spite of educators' best intentions.

3. Engagement of the senses should extend beyond the use of technological or other “visual aids.” The study has suggested ways in which people may develop a fully-realized aesthetic sensibility that incorporates self-knowledge as well as engagement with the external world. Consciousness of the quality of both environment and experience, in terms both of individual and community good, is an essential part of lifelong learning and creativity.

Because they have evacuated many elements of domestic life and individual taste, institutional settings where people work and learn are limited in their capacity to develop such a sensibility, or may create conditions that stifle the aesthetic sense—and thus the possibility of full engagement in these environments. The study provides some suggestions for better integrating these elements into sites of work and learning.

4. Formal education can help equip students with some of the capacities they need for lifelong learning, such as research skills. Formal education can create opportunities for mentoring and inspire interest in particular content areas. However, the participants in this study illustrate how personal enthusiasm for a topic eventually collides with formal education. In these participants’ experiences, formal education could not longer accommodate, reward, or in some cases allow, these pursuits.

5. Whole person-engagement in an activity, defined as flow in this study, can be encouraged within a system, especially if the system allows for some expression of the purely personal within an environment responsive to general human preferences for visual beauty. Although the study focused much more at the level of individual activity, these descriptions can be used to construct additional research or point to elements of design that affect human emotion and performance, two factors central in the experience of flow.

6. Educators must attend to the level of engagement students experience if they are to help students develop critical competencies including sensory acuity; control of consciousness; and persistence with difficult tasks.

Because so much of the interview data described hard work the participants say they enjoy, Chapter 7 has fixed the dissertation's focus primarily at the intersection of education and work. Hart (1992) argued that placing those elements in the same field of view with everyday life is itself significant: "A transformed perspective on work and life not only changes location, but enables the seer to move about, to move from 'margin to center' (Hooks, 1984), and outwards again, to assume the view from below, and to scrutinize the view from above. Such a view brings entirely new issues, questions, and problems to light" (p. 202). Theoretical works have described issues, questions, and problems of alienated relationships between people and objects, while the interviews have described real people experiencing appreciation for the intrinsic value of things (their beauty and usefulness) and modeling what Hart called for: "different kinds of rationality which could organize our ways of seeing and knowing the world" (p. 137).

The participants' descriptions of work, production, and education as joyful lends theory a concrete realization of how appreciation for the quality of things can be linked with an understanding of the quality of experience—when it equals fulfillment and satisfaction in domestic, instructional, and workplace contexts and when it does not. There is good reason to believe that understanding of this kind can lead to a clearer conception of "the ultimate meaning and purpose of work and production, and of a useful knowledge" (Hart, 1992, p. 139) for both individuals and cultures.

Work, production, education, life; each is a compendious topic on its own. Yet, examining each in relation to the others is necessary: "In each new epoch —perhaps every

generation, or even every few years, if the conditions in which we live change that rapidly—it becomes necessary to rethink and reformulate what it takes to establish autonomy in consciousness” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p. 22).

Csikszentmihalyi’s (1990) use of the word “we” is important. His research involved creativity in specific domains with clearly defined gatekeepers—people who sort out the millions of data bits trying to claim attention every day to determine which ones are worthwhile (which ones will be published or rewarded in some other way). Csikszentmihalyi has pointed out that the majority grants authority to relatively small groups of individuals to determine which creativity improves human life, and that significant creative production happens in a similarly small segment of the population. Not everyone will teach a course and evaluate student work, choose a Nobel Prize recipient, referee a scholarly journal, choose among economic development initiatives, or even select a property worth restoring, but anyone can make sound decisions about acts of creativity that generate something worthwhile for selves, families, neighborhoods, workplaces, and communities.

It is ironic that the Blank Slate theory has morphed into literature that once again suggests lack of human self-determination, which in turn shapes people’s view of themselves. Florida’s (2002) analysis of various authors’ critiques of contemporary marketplace- and technology-driven culture pointed out that although the essays are different ideologically, the theme is the same:

that forces beyond our control are exogenously reshaping our work, communities, and lives . . . By insisting that these social changes are somehow imposed on us, all of these commentators avoid the real question of our age: Why are we choosing to live and work like this? Why do we want this life, or think that we do? (p. 16)

Csikszentmihalyi (1990) argued that to help others achieve the “autonomy of consciousness” that knows what it wants and why, educators should look at it, at least at first, from the perspectives of those who have experienced it, not through “the specialized optics of a particular discipline” (p. 26). That is what this study has attempted to do by examining similar information through multiple lenses, both historical and contemporary. Theoretical and philosophical frameworks can sometimes become jails. Dewey (1938/1963) wrote, “It is not too much to say that an educational philosophy which professes to be based on the idea of freedom may become as dogmatic as ever was the traditionalist education which is reacted against” (p. 22). Discussion of autonomy in no way precludes discussion of society. As Pinker (2002) argued, the best use of theory and philosophy recognizes that “our potential comes from the combinatorial interplay of wonderfully complex faculties, not from the passive blankness of an empty tablet” (p. 421). The phenomenological theory of the unique recognizes individuals as such, and thus, Van Manen (2001) argued, makes possible a neglected form of pedagogy: “thoughtful learning” (p. 157).

Conventional wisdom among theorists seems to be that social transformation will be driven by theorists. Perhaps a study such as this can help temper overconfidence among authors who fail to consider the aesthetic dimension of research, the importance of at least sometimes presenting ideas on a human scale, which Connor (2000, see Chapter 2, pp. 22-23) grew to appreciate after overindulging in the “numbed,” “ubiquitous,” “compulsory” language of his theoretical school.

In *Creativity* (1996), Csikszentmihalyi described his goal as a researcher. It was not, he explained, to prove general truths about creative personalities; it was instead to disprove some conventional assumptions about creativity by describing a number of in-

dividuals as exceptions to widely-accepted generalizations. Similarly, this dissertation cannot claim to prove anything about human identity, human learning, or failures of theory to connect with these and thus improve them. It is not intended to suggest that a historical aesthetic is the only one of value. It was intended to detail unique experiences that strongly suggest the value in individuals *having* an aesthetic.

Finally, this study suggests that culture change may begin much closer to home than conventional wisdom has for a long time believed. When the personal becomes passionate, it may become political. “Knowing what you prefer” may have the ring of frivolous or even hegemonic materialism, but phenomenology and the human subjects that make it live give it a different meaning:

To become more thoughtfully or attentively aware of aspects of human life which hitherto were merely glossed over or taken-for-granted will more likely bring us to the edge of speaking up, speaking out, or decisively acting in social situations that ask for such action. And while phenomenology as form of inquiry does not proscribe any particular political agenda suited for the social historical circumstances of a particular group or social class, the thoughtfulness phenomenology sponsors is more likely to lead to an indignation, concern or commitment that, if appropriate, may prompt us to turn to such political agenda. (Van Manen, 2001, p. 154)

This dissertation has not called for the demolition of any particular philosophies, theories, or ideologies (theoretical gentrification), only the preservation and allocation of greater attention to one idea:

Educational theory needs to study systematically the abilities, virtues, and sensitivities that are needed for a communal existence, abilities which crystallize around respect and love for life, and which can therefore not be removed from the material

and sensuous dimension of life. This means paying attention to the non-cognitive dimensions of learning which are rooted in such life-affirming experiences as joy, pleasure, passion, and creativity. (Hart, 1992, p. 213)

Many theorists, philosophers, and practitioners have written about the need for learners to feel education emotionally. It is time for greater recognition that learners may also need to *feel* it, literally.

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