

D. Propositions, Counter-Propositions

- Seven examples of teasing out component arguments
- An example of propositions and counter-propositions—the case of disposable vs. washable diapers

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Phase D: Proposition – Counterproposition
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Researchable Question:

What aspects of my ongoing intellectual development become clear as I investigate the visceral impact of 19th Century American Romanticism on post-colonial New England and the importance of revisiting this history to understand who we are today as readers and writers.

Proposition:

American Romanticism had a visceral impact on post-colonial New England.

Counter proposition:

- As an intellectual movement, American Romanticism only impacted the well-educated, wealthier, Anglo contingency of post-colonial New Englanders.

Counter-counter proposition:

- ❖ First, while this movement did attract its share of wealthy, well-educated individuals, many of the contributors to the American Renaissance were home-schooled and/or poor. Hawthorne, Thoreau, The Peabody's, and the Alcott's were constantly engaged in a battle with poverty. Their great faith in their art and learning gave them the power to keep producing literature and/or improving education.
- ❖ Second, those it did impact reached out to others in the spirit of sharing learning and enlightenment – as in the case of Thomas Mann who almost died visiting county schools throughout New England in order to research and develop the best public school model possible – which he did when he established the Boston Public Schools.
- ❖ This movement had a great visceral impact on my family who, while well educated, were farmers and trade workers living in Connecticut. Their concern and passion for 19th Century literature is evident in their letters that remain.

Proposition:

Our intellectual history (as Americans) is important to revisit in order to know who we are as readers and writers today.

Counter proposition:

- How does the past influence who we are today?

Counter-counter proposition:

- ❖ “Re-membering” our intellectual development as Americans is not merely reciting who/what happened, but engaging with our history to give us better perspective of *ourselves*. History, by virtue of being a long *time* ago, provides us with the distance of time – not just to look back *at* but to look forward *from*. By virtue of generating new perspectives, new information is generated that can lead to a deeper understanding.
- ❖ No matter where we are in time, we have a past and are predicated by that past. Understanding an intellectual revolution that happened around 150 years ago in America is important to understand in contrast to the technological revolution we are experiencing now.

Proposition:

Reading books and letters by and from our forebears is valuable.

Counter proposition:

- Since 21st Century educational trends are showing that visual learning is becoming more dominant than verbal learning, why bother reading books and instead skim illustrated summaries on the web?

Counter-counter proposition:

- ❖ Reading a book requires the physical engagement of a reader – to pick it up, turn a page – as well as an imaginative engagement in which the reader becomes as writer while she reads, creating images of characters that are solely the reader's own. These self-created images have more staying power than those imposed by an outside influence.
- ❖ Letters were once written with such care – drafted and re-drafted to create not only a comprehensive, but artistic correspondence. Care was taken with the language, even the colloquial language, in order to communicate both directly and symbolically between reader and writer.

Proposition:

Literature is a tool for self-reflection.

Counter proposition:

- Books tell stories about other people and are a means of escape, not self-reflection.

Counter-counter proposition:

- ❖ The act of reading is one of directly engaging with a text, letter for letter. I am reminded of Derrida "You give me words, one by one, while turning them toward yourself, each one my own, and I have never loved them so...(paraphrased, remembered from *The Postcard*).” Interpretation requires that one etymologically exist *between intention*. The reader has the unique opportunity to glimpse the intention of a writer, view that in light of his/her personal experience, and construct meaning. In other words, even if the reader does not try, in the act of reading, a reader self-reflects to find meaning in the text.

Proposition:

The prominent themes in 19th Century Romanticism in America are universal themes that apply to us today.

Counter proposition:

- 21st Century readers can't identify with 19th Century stories.

Counter-counter proposition:

- ❖ The universal themes in 19th Century American literature of looking inward for guidance, independence, self-reflection, nature, social consciousness and ambition are the same kinds of things we think about today when we assess not only our place in history, but ourselves.

Proposition:

I can learn more about myself through self-reflection on my interaction with literature.

Counter proposition:

- I should be trying to learn more about myself by examining who I am in the context of the society I am of in the 21st Century (or perhaps therapy?).

Counter-counter proposition:

- ❖ On a primary level, I can reflect on who I am directly in the letters of my ancestors – it's where I came from. On another level, literature, especially from the past creates a distancing of my perspective from myself. Establishing distance in perspective is important to not only get the bigger proverbial picture, but to see things in more detail as well. If I can objectify myself through the lens of 19th Century literature, I can get a clearer image of myself as subject.

How can I design a toolkit for writers utilizing Problem-Based Learning exercises and similar strategies to help organize, generate and focus story ideas for both fiction and non-fiction?

1. Problem-Based Learning (PBL) is a structure that encourages self-exploration, self-direction and assessment, which can be greatly beneficial to an individual writer.

Counter Proposition: PBL is geared toward the small group, not the individual. James Rhem, in an article entitled Problem-Based Learning: An Introduction featured in the December 1998 issue of the National Teaching and Learning Forum, highlights this point when he mentions that PBL is successful because of the dynamics of group work, in which students “achieve higher levels of comprehension, develop more learning and knowledge-forming skills and more social skills as well.” Motivation is higher among students working collaboratively. Woods, in his book, Problem-Based Learning, explains another advantage of working in small groups: “Problem solving, group skills and *processing skills* are not developed by observing others nor by providing ‘an unstructured opportunity’ to do the skill on one’s own. Rather, to develop awareness, skill and confidence, we need to break the skill into parts, provide an opportunity to try the skill and provide feedback about that effort (pg. 4-2).” Additional benefits of doing PBL in a group include the ability to have immediate, informal feedback, develop enhanced personal skills in working in groups, working through conflict, improving social skills and building self-confidence.

Counter-Counter Proposition: The PBL process relies upon a structure that can prove highly beneficial to individual writers who are looking for ways to organize material, jumpstart writing, or develop new plot direction. Utilizing the eight tasks that Woods lays out in Problem-Based Learning, or the ten tasks that Nina Greenwald defines in Science in Progress, may lead to the basis of the development of an entire plot or story idea if used by an individual in the creative process. Combine that with the numerous exercises and tools to generate solutions, such as SCAMPER (Substitute, Combine, Adapt, Modify, Put to other Uses, Eliminate and Rearrange), Why-Why Diagram, mapping, K-N-F (Know, Need to Know, How to Find Out), and you have tools that are directly useful to a writer. These methods are ideal for a writer’s toolkit.

2. The resources within this proposed toolkit are useful for writers in directly generating plot and story ideas utilizing their own imagination and existing ideas. This constructivist method helps writers become an active participant in furthering their own plots and organizing ideas rather than responding to examples or outside idea suggestions.

Counter Proposition: There are enough resources on sparking and developing creativity and generating writing ideas. Look at the myriad of books on the market, the numerous “kits” and writing programs. Another method will only add to the clutter.

Counter-Counter Proposition: There is merit in the above argument. There are many “toolkits” and books on the market to help the writer do what I am proposing, however, most of these resources center on giving the writer motivation or specific ideas (e.g. “Write a story about the time you discovered Santa Claus wasn’t real.” One of the best selling books of this sort is What If by Anne Bernays and Pamela Painter) or examples of accomplished writers and what works well for them—basically, examples of how to or how not to. There are very few books and resources

for a writer that helps them develop their OWN existing ideas or to help them extract directly from their own imagination rather than feeding the writer seed ideas to get them started. One of the very few books that breaks from this mold that I have run across is Gabriele Rico's Writing the Natural Way, in which she demonstrates a mapping technique she calls Clustering.

3. The development of a new toolkit which includes a variety of PBL tools and similar strategies will benefit both the advanced and the beginning writer. An advanced writer will find the exercises and methods highly useful for organization and plot generation. A beginning writer will find the process itself beneficial for discovering the path that her story may take.

Counter Proposition: How can adapting a very time-consuming process such as PBL help a writer? One of the reasons that PBL has had a hard time integrating into the traditional school system is because of the amount of time the process takes to help reach answers and goals. This would be detrimental to a writer and could be seen as akin to a form of procrastination.

Counter-Counter Proposition: PBL is, admittedly, time-consuming if you utilize the entire process. I don't believe that many writers will be able to do this, but it could prove useful for a writer who wants to write but needs to work through and develop a plot that is still mostly amorphous (essentially the "ill-defined problem"). A writer of this sort may want to work through the entire process, going through all the steps (8 or 10 depending on if you are following Woods or Greenwald). Most writers, however, will find the individual tools in Greenwald's 3rd step (Pursue Problem-Finding, which includes exercise such as IPF charts, Fishbone diagrams, brainstorming and problem possibility webs) and in the 8th step (Generate Solutions and Recommendations, which includes exercises such as SCAMPER, How-How diagrams and brainwriting) to be the most useful. For example, if a writer is stuck figuring out what is going to happen to a character that has just arrived in a small town and doesn't know anyone, they can utilize one of the exercises to generate possibilities.

Arguments and Counterarguments

Overall Objections

It is hard to object to the basic premise of my project; that is, that one can structure lessons in American History that fruitfully utilize music as a vehicle for stimulating interest and making connections. Further, when the target student population comprises learners who are simultaneously developing English pronunciation skills, the educational value of incorporating songs is even more obvious.

However, it is still helpful to briefly characterize what some “overall” objections may look like anyway for a few reasons. First from a practical, teaching point of view it is good to have constructive responses to all forms of negativity. I’m imagining a resistant student manufacturing reasons for not engaging in the enterprise, but these objections may emerge from skeptical school administrators, school board members. (There’s a scene in the movie *Lonestar*, wherein a Texan parent objects to the school teaching the Mexican point of view on the creation of Texas and insists that “we go back to teaching REAL HISTORY and the truth”) Second, a consideration of these overall objections quickly leads to deeper, more interesting and more debatable topics the exploration of which help to inform the spirit of the project.

Overall Objections:

Name of Objection	Voice of the Objection
1. Misplaced Priorities	“Why are we worried about Music? I want to study REAL HISTORY, like the stuff we need to know for a citizenship test, don’t give me Louis Armstrong, when I need to know about Thomas Jefferson”.
2. Too much extra stuff	“Hey, we’re having enough trouble with the overwhelming amount of new vocabulary in English on our plates already. Now, you want to make us all historical musicologists? Don’t overwhelm us any more than necessary!”
3. Not REAL education.	“Listening to tapes, singing songs, (especially children’s songs) make us feel that we’re not in school. We signed up for school; you lecture and we’ll take notes!”
4. Why music rather than other forms of culture?	“What is that makes music so important? Why don’t we talk about the history of art, of inventions, of technology, of religion, of all the other areas of culture?”

The best response to these objections as a whole, especially if they are coming from students, is to exemplify the educational payoffs of using music in an experiential way. Rather, than confronting each objection with specific counterarguments, it is better to take the approach of “give it a try, then see if you are learning a lot about REAL History from what we’re doing.” This is a pragmatic response in the context of limited time. (This is also the best response to questioning educators – seeing the payoffs is much more persuasive than merely reading reasons.)

Actually, it’s a very good thing if students DO raise these objections in the class. It shows that they are autonomous learners who want to direct their own learning process. (From my point of view, everyone IS such a learner, but they don’t always know it yet. Or, at least, this is a value to be cultivated.) Thus, it provides a great opportunity to engage the student in constructive dialogue around the very questions specified above. Unfortunately, if one spends all of the time doing this initially, then the class has no reference for debate. The context of discussion is empty until the class actually engages in the historical musical learning activities. Hence, we are back to “buying time” to try out the activities, then returning to a consideration and discussion of the objections. But this paragraph suggests a way to phrase the appeal to buy the time to try the activity initially:

Those are good objections and lead us into some great questions about the meaning of history and the role of education, but for now I’d like to ask that we postpone these questions until later. Let’s give this music business a try, and then we’ll see if it is a good thing.

An ongoing dynamic with our immigrant students concerns their conception of school and what school should be. Many of the students come from countries with what I would call, excellent but traditional approaches to education. Their sense of what school is and should be is captured to a degree in Overall Objection number 3 above. Our high school diploma program seeks to maximize the student’s oral participation with group activities, which is sometimes very different than the class’s idea of school. Each cohort goes through a process of acculturation to this style of workshop and, generally speaking, the students come to appreciate engaging in the multiple roles of group participation. The benefits of peer-to-peer help and discussion become quite obvious to them.

Ironically, another element deriving from the students’ traditional educational past helps to “buy time” for instructors to employ nontraditional approaches to classes; that is the element of respect for the teacher. This respect, almost reverence, for teachers as authority figures manifests as initial trust, and does contribute to the students’ willingness to engage in activities that they don’t yet see the point of. On the other hand, cultivating

an independent, autonomous learning style suggests instilling a questioning, “critical”, attitude towards everything including texts and teachers. Again, an explicit acknowledgment of the value of debate about these educational contexts and the channeling of such debate into a constructive forum is the ideal approach. Students should be especially encouraged to articulate their objections in writing which can lead to an extremely valuable written exchange with the teacher. Of course, this can happen verbally as well, and be a great thing for the class to engage in as a whole.

Deeper Objections

The enterprise does lead to a consideration of some interesting controversies at a deeper level. I would like to use this argumentative exploration as a chance to dig into these issues a bit, especially because the issues arose in the context of practice.

1. Which music are you using? What is the political agenda behind the choices you bring? There is a vast amount of “historical” music, so what you bring and emphasize must be biased. The themes you emphasize reflect your own political and moral values, but that is not proper in a History course.
2. Using music to teach about culture is a form of cultural domination; we can’t listen to our own cultural music, only to “American” historical songs. Why are you trying to “Americanize” us?
3. How come none of this music comes from Asian immigrants, everything is either from European or African roots?

These “objections” are clearly great setups for consideration of interesting issues about the nature of historical research and historical education. The questions in objection number 1 can (and should) be asked about everything included in a history course curriculum. Choices of music are not fundamentally different than choices of historical events, movements and people. Good curricula try to present many perspectives embodying different values and political orientations; but it’s dangerous and naïve to think that one can provide “just the facts” in an “objective” way. Rather, one should open up and explore the relation between values and the construction of the facts.

Music is an ideal vehicle for exploring such territory, especially when one considers how songs are explicitly used to promote political ends. Union rallying songs, antiwar protest songs, let’s fight the war propaganda songs, and the inspirational songs of the civil rights movement are the tip of the iceberg. Children’s songs teach values directly, patriotic songs indoctrinate; there are many historically important USES of music and songs imbued with values that can be uncovered and understood.

At the level of historical research itself, the investigations into music collection themselves are great vehicles for understanding the engagement of researchers. This points to parallels with the themes from CCT640 regarding the construction of the object domain in environmental science. Looking at the conditions that made possible the Lomax collection process or the making of Ken Burns History of Jazz provide an excellent context for understanding the role of the historian's activity and situation in their historical constructions.

The 2nd Deeper Objection raises another interesting question that has many domains of application. It asks about the *attitude* towards American music relative to other music assumed by the educational process. The best approach towards this objection is to push for a reciprocal enrichment process whereby students simultaneously learn about historical American culture AND share elements from their native-born country. An obvious example is having the students identify and translate a particularly historically rich song from their original culture and share it with the class. This affords a universal level of discussion regarding the role of music in culture, which helps to understand many factors surfacing with regard to American music in a richer context. Maybe, music is USED differently in other cultures, or maybe there are underlying similarities of function.

It would also be valuable to articulate the musical STYLES and TRADITIONS emanating from outside the European, African and American constellation emphasized in American history. The activity of sharing from outside American would definitely increase the number of interesting connections among musical forms, opening up issues of musical genealogy and how musical cultures have influenced each other. "How did reggae music develop in Jamaica?" and "How did popular rap music in Arabic come about?" are great openings for constructing intersecting process diagrams involving many types of historical factors.

The 3rd deeper objection came up in class as groups were collecting information about all of the musical genres that I had listed on a chart. It's an excellent, historical question in itself that leads to many sub questions. Why is it that Asian music has not influenced American popular music? Or is that assumption simply not true? What about in California after 1880? What effect did the large number of Asian immigrants have on American musical culture? Or on culture in general? Why were some areas emphasized and not others? Does the lack of effect indicate a greater degree of cultural isolation than between ethnic and racial groups down south where musical influence was rampant? These are great questions for students to explore further and they point to many others.

Sub-Arguments Summarization

CONTROLLING THESIS INQUIRY:

From where in the gaps between rationality and imagination does the nature of creativity spring and why would one need to know this?

KEY ARGUMENTS

I. **Creativity is a personal *experience*, rather than an organizable *process*.**

Counter argument: Creative problem solvers and creativity researchers have discussed creativity through working with a chronological process. The process has been broken down into a sequential list, which is then used to achieve a creative vision. Brainstorming, for example, was founded on this idea and has had tremendous success in all walks of life. The process is where creativity is generated.

Counter-counter argument: Sequential lists fail to take in the subjective nature of creativity. Imposing such lists on groups of people has worked to a degree only because it establishes a more promotive environment from which the *individuals* in the group can develop new ideas. The lists are not generating creativity, only a higher level of safety from which the individual experience of creativity can flourish.

Creatives in the arts constantly refer to creativity as a self-expression, a release of internal energy, or simply as something that was fun. It is a rarity when one person's perspective on creativity is the same as another's. Creativity is unqualifiable as a process because the process is different each time a new creative person encounters it.

II. **The nature of creativity involves rational thinking as well as imaginative thinking: the creative experience resides between these two different styles of thinking.**

Counter argument 1: CCT alum Susan McBride Els described creativity as a deep, spiritual experience. The rational mind was certainly not discarded in the experience, but it was relegated to a secondary role. Her experiences and struggles within the creative experience gave her proof of this fact.

Philosopher Gaston Bachelard also said that creativity sprang from an internal soul's imagination. Rational thinking's role in both sources was presented as a boundary-forming qualifier of limitless images. But the soul was seen as having a dramatically higher value.

Counter argument 2: Stephen King, worldwide bestseller of fiction, described his experiences as being almost entirely rational in his book On Writing. There were no infinite images from which to sort through in his perception of creativity—only rational choices originating out of already-lived-experiences.

Philosopher Rene Descartes also discounted the value of imagination when compared to rational thinking. Descartes' view of imagination belittled it because it was seen as doing little more than review objective experiences with differing perspectives.

Counter-counter argument (for both arguments 1 & 2): CCT alum Susan Butler considered the act of creating original fiction as bridge between the rational and the irrational. She described herself as a woman standing on the shore of a sea of infinite possibility. In the creative experience, she takes all the crazy and boundless images from her forever-expanding imagination and converted them to usable words with her rational mind. Both the imagination and the rational mind were crucial for creativity to occur.

Philosopher Bertrand Russell agreed with Butler since his epistemological theory involved the concept of "knowledge by description". Knowledge by description attaches names to sensory information. It requires the use of both imaginative thinking and rational thinking equally. It is in the interplay of imaginative thinking and rational thinking that consciousness occurs, as would the creative experience.

A creative person is working with limited and unlimited elements. He or she is working towards transcendence of current boundaries on various levels. In order to overcome a boundary, one must have knowledge of the boundary itself as well as knowledge of what else is possible. The only way this can occur is if both imagination and rationality work hand-in-hand.

III. **Knowing more about the nature of creativity can benefit every creative person, no matter what creative endeavor they are pursuing.**

Counter argument 1: A significant body of domain-specific creativity research states that there has been little transfer of creative skills from one creative activity to another. Rider University researcher John Baer suggests in the article "The Case for Domain Specificity of Creativity" that one needs to be focused on specific and relevant creative skills for each activity. (So if you want to be a poet you shouldn't take up painting.)

In addition to this point, Baer says that teaching *general* creative skills is a horribly inefficient method of promoting creativity in individual pursuits.

Counter-counter argument 1: Teaching specific skills for various activities only provides the necessary tools for that specific task—it doesn't promote true creativity. Teaching in this manner does provide a more efficient conduit for creativity but it still is not actually an inducer for creativity. One could think of this process as widening the pipes for water to flow easier but not actually pumping the water. The pumping comes from a different source.

In order for the water of creativity to flow forcefully through the pipes of domain-specific skills one needs to know the true nature of creativity. Understanding the exact nature of creativity is the best method of drawing from the watershed of creativity. When the waters are flowing forcefully then it won't matter how wide the pipes are—the creativity will show forth in every aspect of a person's psyche.

Counter argument 2: Susan McBride Els' book Into the Deep states that to know the nature of creativity is to cheapen its imaginative depth. You only need to know how to work with it to receive its benefits.

Counter-counter argument 2: It isn't necessary to understand the entire nature of imaginative transcendence in order to discover the nature of creativity. Creativity lies *beside* imagination and rationality. It doesn't exist *within* any infinite pool of knowledge—it only *takes* from such a source.

The source of imagination is impossible to ever fully digest. Imagination constantly re-sets boundaries. So attempting to encapsulate a boundless topic is a foolhardy attempt and not one I am attempting. A creative person is trying to experience their own slice of transcendence with the faculties available to them and imagination is an important source.

To be consistently successful, a creative person needs to know how to experience their creativity firsthand. Knowing the cosmic depth of infinity is unnecessary. It is only in the *experience* of creativity when relevance occurs. My inquiry is about knowing how to locate the pool of transcendence within and then knowing how to translate the impressions the pool generates. You could say that I'm mapping out the human psyche so that I can find creativity's home easier. I'm not looking to tear the house down once I find it.

IV. **Understanding the nature of creativity will dramatically increase the efficiency of research.**

Counter argument: One doesn't need to know the actual nature of creativity, you only need to know how to encourage it. A passive approach to discovering creativity is better than an active one.

The vast body of personality-based research on creativity adheres to this approach. This genre of creativity research seeks to find the right set of personality traits that most creatives exhibit. This research is identifying symptoms of creativity. This is a passive approach because it doesn't seek the source of creativity directly enough.

Counter-counter argument: Working with an unidentified subject is horribly inefficient. The success of research following Howard Gardner's notion of multiple intelligences is a good example of how researching creativity under an easily identifiable definition of creativity is more efficient than a passive approach. The rapid success of subsequent research under the auspice of Multiple Intelligence Theory is a testament to the necessity of working under a clearly distinguished definition of creativity.

Assignment D – Propositions, Counter-Propositions, Counter-Counter Propositions:

How can I develop an inspirational framework that will empower employees with hope, motivation, creativity and the necessary dynamic communication skills and strategies to present organizations with compelling evidence of the need and creative means to adopt family friendly practices?

I. The implementation of family friendly practices in the workplace will be beneficial to all members, of all families.

Counter-Proposition: Elinor Burkett, in her book “The Baby Boon: How Family Friendly America Cheats the Childless,” makes the strong case that family friendly policies typically only benefit those whom are parents and those whom are in the middle/upper class tier of society. She, and others, claim that flexible schedules and tax cuts for those with children, virtually shortchanges those whom are childless, demonstrating blatant and unfair favoritism in the workplace.

Counter-Counter-Proposition: As pointed out by Jody Heymann, in her book “The Widening Gap,” all people come from families. And therefore, the likelihood is great that everyone, someday, will be called to provide care for a family member; be it a child, elderly parent, sibling or member of the extended family. Therefore, family friendly policies offer the type of flexibility and benefit that most / all employees will need to tap into at different points in their careers.

II. The implementation of family friendly practices in the workplace will greatly benefit the organization, yet there are major challenges in convincing organizations to agree to a such cultural shifts in the way the operate.

Counter-Proposition: Old habits die hard. Organizations are accustomed to operating in outdated cultural norms and are used to being number one in their employees’ lives. The implementation of family friendly practices puts the organizations in an unfamiliar, vulnerable position, as they perceive their employees as less committed to their work. If employees are to have flexible schedules and are therefore not in the office during “normal” working hours, then employees will be difficult to manage; a loss of control will become the norm. Clients may be inconvenienced if their employees operate under alternative work schedules. Productivity will diminish.

Counter-Counter-Proposition: Studies clearly show that employees whom are empowered by the opportunity to elicit control over their work schedules become much more loyal, productive and happy employees. Sue Shellenbarger, Wall Street Journal’s “Work and Family” columnist, even goes so far as to predict that organizations will soon begin to measure employee morale, as an indicator of future profit, based on studies that show a satisfied employee leads to a satisfied customer, which in turn improves profit. It is clear that work performance must be evaluated in a new light. No longer is it true that the employee who puts in the longest hours is the more productive worker. It is time for organizations to value the importance of becoming learning organizations, as outlined by Peter Senge in his book “The Fifth Discipline,” and to realize that an overall change in work practice and work culture is needed, if they wish to remain competitive.

III. The implementation of family friendly practices in the workplace will result in significant improvements regarding quality of life recognized by a happier workforce.

Counter-Proposition: A recent survey issued in Britain looked at this issue several years after family friendly practices were initiated in the workplace. The survey intended on comparing the level of job satisfaction between the “before and after”, if you will. After compiling the data of the “after” snapshot, it was determined that although employees were relieved to have flexibility and empowerment built into their work schedule, the workforce still had high levels of job related stress relating to workload pressures. An overall change in workplace culture is needed for the maximum benefits to be recognized.

Counter-Counter-Proposition: There surely is merit in the above argument. Ideally and optimally a broader, overall shift in workplace culture would result in a happier workforce. Yet, since this is the more difficult and time-consuming challenge, it is still valid for the organization to begin with incremental steps. Empowering employees with control over their work schedules, along with other benefits and perks such as day care subsidization and / or referral programs, greatly assists the employees and their benefits should not be diminished.

IV. It is possible to demonstrate success stories, which serve as working models for those trying to find ways to integrate a balance of work and family/life. These working models illustrate the steps taken to reach an equitable, just and positive change in the system.

Counter-Proposition: Many of these so called working models demonstrate actions that organizations have taken, which in reality, only exacerbates the divisiveness between work and family. The idea that on site fitness centers, dry cleaners, day care, visiting family living rooms will create a more family friendly culture is fallacious. Instead, these amenities being offered right on site, rather insinuates that employees are being discouraged from ever leaving work. Why leave, when everything you need is at your fingertips?! Even the widely heralded concept that technological advances of home computers with network connections, which allow for telecommuting can end up competing with family life. Now that so many of our nation’s workforce is set up to operate from home, the boundaries and limits one sets are becoming more gray and nebulous. It is becoming more difficult to separate the two entities of life; work and family.

Counter-Counter-Proposition: It all comes back to employee and employer trying to work together towards solving this complex issue. Both need to be responsible in determining where and when limits should be set. Yes, the on site amenities often assists the employees, however, it should never be regarded as a “one-stop shopping lifestyle”. Both employee and employer must work together towards making it clear that the amenities are available to help provide some sense of convenience and ease the stress of the employee, but they should never be implied as a substitute for going home. Without an adequate amount of time away from the office, the opportunity for reflection becomes absent, and work quality, in turn, suffers.

Tim Eagan
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BRIEFING
Briefing/CCT 698

DIMENSIONS OF CRITICAL THINKING AS TOOLS FOR DIGESTING AND SYNTHESIZING RESEARCH

I sometimes have difficulty moving myself intellectually beyond what I've read, coming up with my own conclusions based on research and knowledge. What follows is a selection from Richard Paul's "Thirty-Five Dimensions of Critical Thinking" (www.sonoma.edu/Cthink/k12/k12class/strat/stratall.nclnk) which I have put together as a means to help me stay focused.

Paul breaks the dimensions into three categories: Affective Strategies, Cognitive Strategies-macro abilities, and Cognitive Strategies, micro-abilities.

Affective Strategies

Strategy 2

(S-2)

Developing insight into egocentricity or sociocentricity.

In the work I am doing with foreign language curriculum, it is important for me to remember that a large piece of the puzzle is American ego/sociocentricity. I need to keep this in mind, then, to see whether the authors whose work I'm reading have taken the issue into account. If they have, how so? If they have not, why? And how does it impact my reading of their work?

S-5

Developing intellectual humility and suspending judgment.

The opinions I have formed over the years concerning Foreign Language instruction are very strong. While they are based on my experiences and reading, some of them are simply notions. When I stumble across a concept or statement with which I disagree, I need to remind myself to be patient, read the point thoroughly, and understand it. Then, I may decide to disagree.

S-8

Developing intellectual perseverance.

Life is busy and it is hard for me to find enough time to sit down to work. Just recently, the UMass on-line catalogue was not working which caused me more work. I was annoyed, but I care about my project and know that it would not be my best work if I did not just bite the bullet and do what I needed to do. Furthermore, in spite of my high interest in my topic, after three hours of work on a Saturday, I'd rather play with the puppy for the rest of the day. If the puppy were going to write my research project, that *might* work.

Cognitive Strategies (Macro-Abilities)

S-10

Refining generalizations and avoiding oversimplifications.

It's important to look for generalizations and simplifications in authors' work as well as in my own. While it is important to recognize their background and education, I don't want to assume that their work is valid or convincing simply because it's been published. Nor do I want to produce work which is

obscure.

S-13

Clarifying issues, conclusions, or beliefs.

One of the issues I continue to have with my project is its vastness. As it changes form, even slightly, there is a tendency to want to include it all. I need habitually to clarify the scope of my project.

A second issue for me is longwindedness. I need to work on clarity and precision in my writing.

S-23

Making interdisciplinary connections.

Since the focus of my research is on creating meaningful contexts for Foreign Language instruction, I may find information from authors who have written on other topics. For example, I recall working with a teacher who had a sign called "Good Scientific Thinking Strategies." Those strategies transferred perfectly to "Good Foreign Language Learning Strategies," so I borrowed the idea and put up my own poster.

Cognitive Strategies (Micro-Skills)

S-27

Comparing and contrasting ideals with actual practice.

A primary goal of my research is to have a tool for my teaching. It is therefore going to be very important in both my reading and writing to be clear about pie-in-the-sky notions and truly realizable elements. Although, some of these pie-in-the-sky notions might actually be implementable if I can find the gaps between the ideal and something practical.

S-28

Thinking precisely about thinking: Using critical vocabulary.

Paul uses the synonym "metacognition" to clarify the principle. He recommends taking apart thoughts and putting them back together again. "Why do I believe what I believe?" versus "I think what I think, don't ask my why." (Paul, 439). The critical vocabulary allows us to assess our reasoning.

S-10

Refining generalizations and avoiding oversimplifications.

It's important to look for generalizations and simplifications in authors' work as well as in my own. While it is important to recognize their background and education, I don't want to assume that their work is valid or convincing simply because it's been published. Nor do I want to produce work which is

obscure.

S-13

Clarifying issues, conclusions, or beliefs.

One of the issues I continue to have with my project is its vastness. As it changes form, even slightly, there is a tendency to want to include it all. I need habitually to clarify the scope of my project.

A second issue for me is longwindedness. I need to work on clarity and precision in my writing.

S-23

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David M. Gray
2/24/96
Bio&S 300
Argument

A few Items to Consider Before Giving Your Child Ritalin: arguments against stimulant medication of Attention Deficit Disorder

Controlling question: "What do I need to know to influence people who seek to modify children's behavior through stimulant medication?"

I. The evidence linking the behavioral symptoms of ADD to neurological dysfunction is tenuous.

- *counter argument*: Research with ADD individuals has shown under activity in the cortical regions of the brain responsible for inhibition of impulses sent from the regions of the lower brain (Zametkin, 1990).

- *counter counter argument*: This research presumes an optimal level of glucose metabolism in those cortical regions of the brain. Also, perhaps ADD behaviors cause the anomalous metabolic rate, e.g. testosterone levels in male rhesus monkeys are variable with varying social orders. In addition, no research has been able to predict the individuals which do not respond or respond negatively to the medication.

II. If organic dysfunction has not been clearly demonstrated, then a therapy targeting organic mechanisms is not appropriate.

- *counter argument*: Stimulant medication works. It reduces inattention, impulsivity and hyperactivity.

- *counter counter argument*: The response to stimulants is not atypical. Research with military personnel (among other studies) have shown that "stimulants enhanced concentration and performance, especially in repetitive, routinized situations" (Jacobvits, 1990 from Laties and Weiss, 1967). If the effects of stimulants on "normal" individuals are the same as the effects on ADD patients, then they are behavior modifiers and not a unique treatment. If stimulants are solely modifying behavior, then they shouldn't be used as a treatment.

III. ADD is characterized as a life-long disorder. If the disorder is life-long, then long-term strategies for combating the symptoms of inattention, impulsivity and hyperactivity should be implemented. Stimulant medication has demonstrated few positive long-term outcomes.

- *counter argument*: Stimulants allow the ADD patient to learn new positive behaviors and to receive positive reinforcement. This learning experience will carry over after the medication ceases.

- *counter counter argument*: "Children, particularly boys, often feel that taking medication is like admitting something scary is wrong with them . . . They frequently feel embarrassed or humiliated in taking medication" (*Driven to Distraction*, Hallowell). Beyond the potential negative psychological effects of taking stimulants, several studies on the long-term effects of stimulant medication have shown few positive outcomes (Satterfield, 1987; others I haven't read).

IV. The medical model which uses stimulant medication to target organic dysfunction (possibly heritable) preempts the examination non-biological contributions to the symptoms.

- *counter argument*: (?) ADD is rooted in neurological dysfunction, and, therefore, it is unnecessary to further examine environmental markers for the disorder.

- *counter counter argument*: Satterfield has shown that a psychological and drug treatment group (which included psychological treatment for the individual, family, and parents separately) showed marked improvement on positive long-term outcomes compared to a

drug only treatment group. To a small degree, this study implicates family dynamics. Research on learning environments also suggests environmental factors (CEC, 1993). (It is frequently suggested that ADD is a heritable disorder. This line of thinking might preempt research on pre-natal and post-natal contributing factors.)

V. The prevalence of ADD symptoms should be viewed as evidence that existing social structures should be re-assessed.

a. For instance, the evidence that ADD children perform worst on "simple tasks - requiring extended time, repetition of similar motor responses - or in a context of decreasing novelty" (CEC, 1993) and best when novel colors, music and settings are introduced suggests, at least some, causality from the environment.

-counter argument: (?) Social and educational programs haven't been effective in improving learning capabilities or positive long-term outcomes among prospective risk groups. Since social programs have not worked it is appropriate to investigate the physical causes underlying ADD behavior.

-counter counter argument: Once labeled a disorder rooted in physio-chemical dysfunction, ADD has been treated as such and, therefore, has not benefited from a multidimensional analysis. The one dimensional research has been largely funded by pharmaceutical and government resources.

VI. Stimulant medication of ADD functions to homogenize behavior. Medicating behaviors of inattention, impulsivity, and hyperactivity sets a precedent for labeling aberrant behaviors as pathological.

-counter argument: In our society ADD characteristics are maladaptive. The prognosis for an ADD patient is not good. It usually involves under achievement and a series of dead end jobs.

-counter counter argument: The argument that ADD symptoms are maladaptive is fallacious. Since in evolutionary time the phenomenon of repetitive, narrowly-focused mental tasks occurred recently it is incorrect to argue that humans have evolved to engage in such tasks.

Dave,

Your six argument / c-a / c-c-a sequences are strong and clear. What you need to do now is to locate them inside a larger argument, namely one that grabs the attention of someone who is inclined to ~~not~~ apply medication to a child and ^{then} moves that person along to a point where they're willing to try a different approach. Remember your controlling question!

Peter

A

WHICH ARE BEST FOR THE ENVIRONMENT?

Disposable diapers have come to symbolize all things one throws away heedlessly. Like other disposable products, they take up space in landfills at a time when many landfills are just about full and others are getting there fast.

Far from cutting back on waste, Americans are putting out more—four pounds per person per day, up from less than three pounds 30 years ago, says the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. As old landfills have closed, few have replaced them, because of rising land costs, stricter standards, and people's reluctance to have a landfill as a neighbor.

The disposable diaper is often seen as the pariah of America's dumps. Myriad books on environmental themes have recommended cloth diapers, and legislators in at least 20 states are considering proposals to tax or ban disposables or otherwise restrict their use.

Actually, though, disposable diapers make up only 1.7 percent, by weight, of the solid waste that is landfilled or burned. (By volume, according to the EPA, they make up about 3.3 percent.) That's the same share that paper bags have. Plenty of materials account for a greater portion: Paper as a whole heads the list, with a 40 to 50 percent share; plastics, metals, and yard waste each account for a sizable part. Still,

1.7 percent is high for a single product used by a relatively small fraction of the populace.

The larger picture

Cloth would be the clear choice for parents concerned about the environment if overstuffed landfills



were the planet's only problem. But they're not. When you look at cloth and disposable diapers at every stage of their existence, in what's called a life-cycle analysis, you'll see that each has a variety of environmental drawbacks.

In the beginning, when the cotton for cloth diapers is grown, for example, pesticides are used, water is consumed, and soil can erode. When disposables are made, trees are cut and the wood is turned into pulp through a process that can result in air and water pollution. The plastic parts of the diaper come from petroleum, whose extraction and refining also pollute air and water.

Energy is used in manufacturing both cloth and disposable diapers, and the trucks and cars that transport them to stores and homes use

fuel and pollute the air.

At home, when you load the washing machine and dryer to launder cloth diapers, you're using a lot of water and energy. Human wastes from cloth diapers leave the house in wastewater, along with plenty of detergent and bleach. With disposable diapers, wastes usually go to a landfill.

At the end of the line, it's obvious that disposables contribute much more than cloth diapers to solid-waste problems. A child will wear 6000 or so disposable diapers before being toilet-trained, whereas a child wearing cloth will go through about 50 diapers.

Several organizations have already performed this kind of "cradle-to-grave" study on diapers. What have they concluded about environmental effects? That depends on which analysis you look at. In March 1990, Arthur D. Little Inc. released the results of a study commissioned by Procter & Gamble, which makes disposable diapers. Not surprisingly, the report concluded that disposables were no worse than cloth diapers, environmentally speaking.

Four months later, Franklin Associates Ltd. unveiled a report sponsored by the American Paper Institute. It came to much the same conclusion as the Arthur D. Little study: It didn't flatly recommend either type of diaper.

Last January, the National Association of Diaper Services released a study it had assigned to consultants Lehrburger, Mullen, and Jones. No surprises there, either. It favored cloth.

Comparing these analyses is a bit like comparing strained apples and

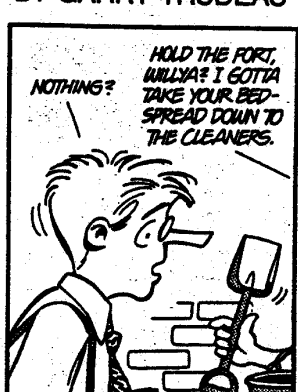
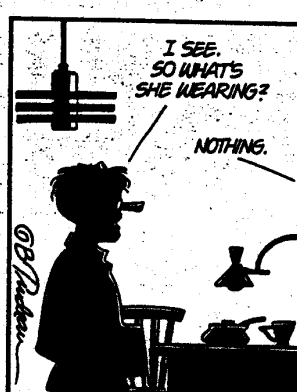
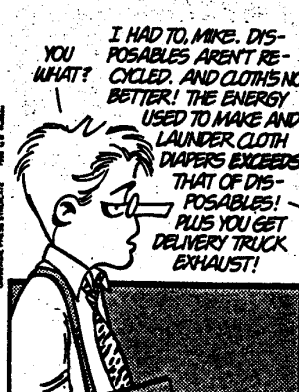
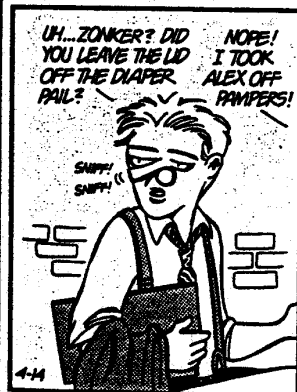


Will the hand that rocks the cradle spoil the planet?

Doonesbury

BY GARRY TRUDEAU

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Cloth or disposable? Each has its faults. In the diaper debate, it seems, the last word is "tradeoff."

orange juice. There is no standard method for conducting life-cycle analyses, so each study was free to make its own—often divergent—assumptions. For instance, for the number of diapers a baby uses each day, the Arthur D. Little study assumed 6.4 disposables or 12.1 cloth; Franklin Associates assumed 5.4 disposables or 9.7 cloth; Lehrburger et al. omitted this factor and simply compared the environmental impacts per 1000 changes.

All three studies also oversimplified complex comparisons. How is a consumer to compare a ton of solid waste produced by throwing away disposables with, say, a million gallons of wastewater produced by washing cloth diapers? Which is worse: 10 pounds of nitrogen oxides or 1500 parts per million of hydrocarbons?

The life-cycle analyses are far better at raising questions than they are at providing answers, but one thing is clear: Consumers won't make a big contribution to the health of the environment by choosing one type of diaper over another. They may, however, make a small contribution to the well-being of their region. If you live in an area where the solid-waste problem has become acute, as it has in many parts of the Northeast and Midwest, consider using cloth diapers. If water is at a premium in your town or city, as it is in California and much of the Southwest, disposables might be the better choice for the environment.

Another alternative: Use cloth at home and disposables at day-care centers or when you travel.

Green claims

Yet another option—the "biodegradable" diaper—sounds sensible but isn't. Among the tested models, "biodegradables" include *Nappies (Green Label)* and *Tender Care*. Such diapers typically contain starch-based plastic, which breaks down faster than the regular kind as long as it's exposed to air, sunlight, and water. But that doesn't happen in a well-designed landfill. And even if the starch in the plastic degrades, the plastic itself persists. So instead of leaving one big chunk of plastic that hangs around for decades, "biodegradables" leave many tiny chunks of plastic that hang around for decades.

In any case, it seems the claim of biodegradability is wearing out its welcome. Last fall, American Enviro

Products Inc., the maker of *Bunnies*, agreed to pay the attorneys general of 10 states \$50,000 in costs and to stop claiming that its diapers would biodegrade within three to five years.

Some disposables cater to the "green" market in other ways. Fewer trees are cut to make *Nappies* than are felled for other disposables, according to the manufacturer. *Nappies'* maker also claims that because the diapers are bleached with hydrogen peroxide, not chlorine, their production avoids the toxic emissions associated with chlorine.

What about composting?

Procter & Gamble has investigated a number of ways to reduce the environmental impact of disposables. Recycling, it concluded, is not economical at this point, but the company is optimistic about composting.

It might sound quixotic to compost diapers, along with milk cartons, plastic wrap, and other solid waste, the way you would yard clippings. But that has been done for decades in western Europe, which has an estimated 200 solid-waste composting plants. The U.S. has only about a dozen.

Composting solid waste is a far more elaborate procedure than the one gardeners follow, of course. A typical composting plant can take in tons of material and sort it, chop or mash it, filter out nondegradables, and nurse the rest to maturity in three to four months. The final product must be tested for heavy metals and other toxic substances.

Depending on the material removed before and during the procedure, up to 70 percent of the waste can be converted to compost. There is a trade-off, though, between quality and quantity. Since the only essential ingredients for compost are organic wastes like food, yard cuttings, and paper, most everything else you leave in—metals, plastics, glass—can lower the compost's quality.

Last October, Procter & Gamble announced that it would commit \$20-million to promote composting worldwide. It has already fed extra diapers into a composting plant in Minnesota; it says the results have been encouraging.

Procter & Gamble may be getting ahead of itself, though. Earlier this year, when it ran ads that showed compost under the headline "Ninety

days ago, this was a disposable diaper," the New York City Department of Consumer Affairs charged the company with deceptive advertising. Most New Yorkers, the consumer affairs department pointed out, do not have access to composting facilities. The outcome of the charge was still pending as we went to press.

Any problems?

If and when composting becomes a more viable option, two major issues should be of concern to the public:

Siting, smells. The not-in-my-backyard syndrome seems to be in force for composting facilities, as it is for landfills. Last year, the same Minnesota plant that performed Procter & Gamble's diaper tests was forced to curtail its processing while officials responded to neighbors' complaints about odors. According to James McNelly, who was operations director of the plant before its recent troubles, a composting facility need not create odors as long as it's run properly and uses the latest technology.

Compost quality. Most plants employ a combination of separating techniques including hand-picking and using magnets and filters to remove unwanted material. But those techniques are far from perfect. As for toxic material, many plants dilute it rather than remove it completely.

Inadequate separation of compost components can be dangerous. Residual toxic contaminants like mercury may work their way from, say, the land along a highway (a common destination for this type of compost) to a farm and into foods. Questionable quality also threatens to undermine the development of a market for the compost.

The road ahead

The EPA can best conserve the nation's natural resources by setting guidelines that require source reduction and recycling to the fullest extent possible.

Solid-waste composting sounds as if it might be a good alternative to those solutions. At present, though, only solid waste that is composted along with sludge is subject to Federal standards. If composting is ever to succeed on a grand scale, and if compost is to find a national market, national standards for both plant operation and product quality will be necessary. ■

HEALTH, CONVENIENCE, COST

DISPOSABLES VS. CLOTH

Performance and environmental concerns aside, there are distinct practical differences between disposable and cloth diapers. Here, some facts about how each can affect your child's health, your life-style, and your pocketbook.

Diaper rash. Because diaper rash usually occurs when skin is wet and irritated, part of a diaper's job is to keep the baby dry. Based on CU's lab tests, an ultra-absorbent disposable should do this better than a cloth diaper does. But if its effectiveness tempts you to leave the diaper on too long, the advantage can be offset.

Disease. The spreading of germs is a concern whenever children gather. A recent study conducted by the University of Texas Medical School in four day-care centers found more fecal bacteria in rooms where cloth diapers were used than in rooms where ultra-absorbent disposables were used. But the same study determined that when children wore clothes over cloth diapers, contamination was reduced to the level present with disposables sans clothes.

Parents whose children attend day-care centers may have little say about the type of diaper used. Some centers strongly prefer disposables. On the other hand, two New Jersey hospitals we contacted switched to cloth more than a year ago and are happy with that decision.

Whether you use cloth or disposables, you can help a baby stay healthy by keeping both house and baby clean and changing diapers diligently.

Some critics of disposable diapers have argued that the viruses and bacteria in the wastes they contain create a health hazard in landfills. Inside a well-maintained landfill, however, disposable diapers are not a hazard to anyone.

Convenience. You'll need to soak cloth diapers when they're heavily soiled, and you'll probably be washing a load of diapers several times per week, especially for a child's first year. Overwraps like the ones we tested, which aren't all cloth, have to be washed and dried at cooler temperatures

than cotton diapers. If you don't use a dryer, note that overwraps take a long time to dry—about nine hours on a clothesline.

You can save time by having a service wash the diapers and deliver them, but that may not be an option; there are only a few hundred diaper services in the U.S., mostly in cities. If you intend to cover the diapers with overwraps, you'll be washing those yourself, according to diaper services we contacted. Usually, you'll need to rinse the diapers before they're returned, but some services will accept unrinsed diapers.

In most parents' eyes, disposables are more convenient than either washing cloth diapers yourself or having them delivered. That's partly because people commonly throw disposables in the garbage, waste and all. They shouldn't, say both diaper makers and government officials: Feces should be flushed down the toilet, where they can be treated by a sewage system. Otherwise, aside from trips to the store, disposables require little time or effort.

Cost. A detailed comparison of the costs of diapering methods could fill a book. The table that follows provides a rough estimate. To help you determine whether your costs will differ from ours, we've listed the assumptions on which our figures are based.

TWO YEARS OF DIAPERING

Cloth washed at home	Cloth from service	Disposables
\$526	\$1268	\$1352

Assumptions: For home laundering, one-time cost of \$200 for four dozen cloth diapers and a dozen overwraps; three washes per week; use of electric water heater, top-loading washer, and electric dryer, with electricity cost of 8.2 cents per kilowatt-hour; detergent cost of 40 cents per load. For service, \$11.40 for weekly delivery of 60 diapers; \$82 for overwraps and a minimal setup fee, charged by some services. For disposables, weekly use of 50 diapers costing 26 cents apiece.

ANATOMY OF A DIAPER

Disposable

The outer layer is polyethylene, a waterproof plastic commonly used in packaging. The water-repelling lining in contact with the baby's skin is usually polypropylene. In between is absorbent padding, generally fluffy wood pulp. In an ultra-absorbent diaper, the padding contains a gel so thirsty that the diaper can be relatively thin. In our tests, some ultra-absorbents held more than a quart of water. Manufacturers say that boys' diapers have extra gel up front; girls' in the middle. Some manufacturers add cornstarch to the plastic outer layer, claiming it makes their diaper biodegradable. It does and it doesn't (see page 555).

Cloth combination

Many of today's reusable systems bear little resemblance to the cotton square and rubber pants in which Mom and Dad probably wrapped you. Combining overwraps of breathable, waterproof fabric with various types of cloth inserts, these new diapers look a lot like the disposables they're competing against in the marketplace. One obvious difference is that cloth diapers don't contain water-absorbent gel. In addition, the overwraps that envelop the diapers fasten with Velcro tabs rather than tape. The archetypal cloth combination—square cotton diaper, waterproof pants, pins, and all—is still an alternative, of course, though we found it somewhat leaky.

