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# The Meeting School: An Alternative Mode of Education

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*The Meeting School: An Alternative Mode of Education*

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### **Abstract**

What role do spirituality, community, and farming play in contemporary US education? As a farm and faculty intern at a small, private, Quaker boarding high school in rural NH I gained an interesting perspective on this subject. Using Robert G. Hanvey's working thesis: An Attainable Global Perspective: Education for a Global Perspective as a standard by which to measure my experience at The Meeting School, I explore the implications of an education founded upon the Quaker values of simplicity, peace, integrity, community, and equality (SPICE), within the context of an intentional community committed to organic farming as a means to a more holistic education.

### **Dedication**

I dedicate this work to my family first and foremost. Thank you so much for all of your support and encouragement. Next I dedicate this work to the entire TMS community, without whom none of this would have been possible. I have so many special connections, and relationships, and learnings from TMS. How will they shape the rest of my life?

Next I dedicate this work to all of my colleagues, and the faculty, and everyone at SIT! You are so awesome. I am proud of the work you have helped to bring forth in me.



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## **Introduction**

Too long have we allowed ourselves to be lulled into the complacency that accompanies affluence. The world is changing in very drastic ways as a result of human behavior. Ten years ago, mention of global warming would have been met with disbelief. Today global warming is very real. Americans are the primary contributors to this global devastation. Our actions impact people in other parts of the world disproportionately. Greenhouse gases released into the atmosphere by Americans result in suffering and dire consequences for others around the world.

I see our current crisis as the failure of American Industrial Imperialism and its resulting destruction of the environment. Exalting competition exonerates exploitation, alienation, and destruction. This value set will not solve our problems, present or future. We could be talking about responsibility, solidarity and sharing. These are values of a healthy community. I believe that young people should be taught about how to live in community.

Social Justice begins in our relationships with one another. Our relationships determine the character of our community. Communities create schools to prepare young people to fulfill the needs of the community. The Meeting School is a secondary education project that redefines social relations based on the principles and practices of the Religious Society of Friends, Quakers. These social relations are peaceful and life-affirming, and seek to implement more sustainable use of natural resources. This is achieved on the small-scale, organic, diversified farm. Robert G. Hanvey's [An Attainable Global Perspective: Education for a Global Perspective](#) is a shift in cognition that uses the potential of a global perspective to refocus education that has become decoupled from community, and communal needs, such as a clean environment, adequate healthcare, an autonomous food supply, and just social relations.

I chose TMS as a research site because of the ways it embodies the concepts of social justice and sustainable development: through personal relationships within the community and through the daily work required to provide sustenance for the community.

It is my belief that the impending consequences of global warming and peak oil brought on by our negligence may be averted. I believe that TMS serves as an important exemplar, embodying some of the key principles that offer promise for averting this global crisis. Today's young people will be forced to live in a world where cheap, abundant energy is no longer readily available. This reality is already the genesis of many conflicts around the world today. This conflict, either directly or indirectly, causes decline in important social infrastructure. A degraded infrastructure coupled with the degradation of the environment, and the lack of cheap abundant energy, will cause a great shift in living situations. Students at TMS and their peers will inherit this legacy. It will be up to them to come up with creative solutions for addressing the global problems that they have inherited. We need intentional communities focused on transitioning from a war-time economy to a peace economy. Community building, and the reduction of consumption of non-renewable energy should be foundational considerations of an education that addresses the needs of future generations. At The Meeting School we held the space of a model community to be carried out into the world in all our future situations.

### **Research Question**

The primary research question addressed in this paper is: How well does the education at TMS embody the five dimensions of Robert Hanvey's *Attainable Global Perspective*?

At SIT, the focus of my studies was social justice and sustainable development. I believe the best way to raise awareness of these critical issues on a societal level is through education. In this capstone, I explore the education offered at TMS through the lens of Robert Hanvey's *Attainable Global Perspective*.

By conducting interviews on the topics of community, education, and spirituality, I seek to explore the connections between the data I collected and *An Attainable Global Perspective: Education for a Global Perspective*.

## **Background**

I lived and worked at TMS for three years. I am still associated with the school and volunteer there. In my thesis, I examine TMS as an alternative institution for the socialization of young people. It is our job and responsibility as an educational institution to prepare our charges for participation in society. I am specifically interested in how we do this pertaining to issues of social justice and sustainable development. Furthermore, as a lifelong learner and self-appointed pedagogue, I am extremely fascinated by the idea of developing education models to solve the problems our society is facing.

For three years, I had been immersed as a participant in the life at a small private Quaker boarding high school. I observed the culture of the school and considered how it fit into broader societal culture. I had a personal relationship with each of the participants included in this study. I selected participants with the intent of representing the diversity of identities within the TMS community. Participants are identified by first-name or pseudonym. The identities of some participants are disguised in order to protect anonymity.

The following review of literature, which explores this thesis question, is organized according to the five dimensions in Robert Hanvey's *An Attainable Global Perspective*. The dimensions are: 1) perspective consciousness, 2) "state of the planet" awareness, 3) cross-cultural communication, 4) knowledge of global dynamics, and 5) awareness of human choice. In essence, I use Mr. Hanvey's paper as a tool for investigating my thesis question. In order to more easily do this, I have paired Hanvey's dimensions of a global perspective with corresponding aspects of TMS experience: perspective consciousness = community;

“state of the planet” awareness, cross-cultural communication = education; knowledge of global dynamics = farm; and awareness of human choice = spirituality. As part of my research, I interviewed participants about community life at TMS as it addressed Hanvey’s dimensions, and then drew conclusions from their answers based on my own knowledge and personal experience within the community.

## **Review of Literature**

### Introduction

In *Children of the Revolution*, Jonathan Kozol describes his exploration of the Cuban school system. Cuban school children are required to work on farms in order to provide labor to produce and harvest food crops. The school children inevitably eat from the fruits of their labor.

In our advanced capitalist society, school children are funneled through a system which teaches them how to become proper functioning components of an ideology that no longer has a physical/environmental underpinning. The topsoil has quite literally been washed away and the polar ice caps are indeed melting. Faced with these environmental changes, one can’t help but wonder, will the final question of this mechanized technocratic, and (on the economic side of the spectrum) Neo-Classical, post industrial society be: do we continue to attempt to mold the environment into that which we consider befitting to meet our needs? The fittest will not survive; only those most willing and capable to adapt to change will survive.

We have been doing the latter almost to the point of our own destruction; and certainly to the detriment of free cultural expression. In *I Change Worlds* (1937), Anna Louise Strong wrote of us, “Thus came into being Americans—of all men strongest in subduing nature, most inventive in the use of machinery, most determined to optimism, most naive and credulous in social relations...”(p. 4). So it is we have reached a deficit the earth will not allow us to pay back, at least in the terms we are accustomed to thinking in.

What terms do we think in? This is precisely the topic of C.A. Bowers' *The Culture of Denial*. Fortunately the history of our thought can be traced back to specific historic events and cultural trends. The technology of written language has been referred to as white man's magic. Unfortunately our magic affords us the opportunity to also be very forgetful. Or is it rather to purposefully delude ourselves at selfish pursuits? This memory loss is spurred along by modern concepts of the scientific revolution, which, when combined with human greed, have led us to believe that we are somehow disconnected and separate from the environment.

Bowers comments on the eight "Basic Principles" of Deep Ecology as articulated by Bill Devall, George Sessions, and Arne Naess, assigning them to the ideological camp of modern liberalism.

This rational formulation of principles does not take into account how different cultures have embedded their own understanding of ecological principles in their meta-narratives. It reflects instead the liberal assumption about the universal efficacy of abstract rational thought (Bowers, 1997).

Certainly one would agree that abstract rational thought has not produced a culture efficient at protecting the environment. In *An Attainable Global Perspective*, Robert Hanvey outlines dimensions for shifting the way we think about things, in particular, education. As I have noted in my learning contract, I am interested in how TMS may achieve such ends. Thus I have matched aspects of life at TMS with dimensions of an attainable global perspective. The review of literature is organized according to these pairs.

#### Community: Perspective Consciousness

"Community, to me, means health. They are directly correlated I think." (Cricket)  
Community and health are pretty amorphous concepts because they are so multi-faceted.

When we start putting these terms together, and saying that one has good physical health because of the food they eat, and their physical health allows them to contribute to the health of a community, then slowly a picture of a society's attitudes, values, and beliefs towards community and health begin to take shape. Community and health are part of a cycle of human interaction that inseparably links us to nature. Our reciprocal relationship with nature constantly challenges us to examine the impact of how we live on nature. "The Mother Earth provides us with food, provides us with air, provides us with water. We, the people, are going to have to put our thoughts together, to save our planet here. We've only got one water, one air, one Mother Earth. Let's take care of her and she will take care of us." (Harney, 2011) Education is a central role of our communities, may we use this well-spring of ideas and knowledge to co-create healthy communities and environments.

"One strategy is to set up parallel financial systems, local currencies. In Japan the economy has been stagnant, but Japanese people have been living very well because they have a whole panorama of alternative credit and monetary systems that the government has encouraged instead of suppressing them. For example, there is a credit system where you work to take care of elderly people and that builds up a credit that can be used for your care, or it can be transferred. It gives a real resilience to an economy that looks like it is not doing very well, but the people are doing well when they have that support system." (Quaker Eco-Bulletin, 2011)

This societal value has become jeopardized by subjugation to economic hegemony. There are many flames burning strongly, spreading the desire for reconnection and restoration of the soul. Monetary value, otherwise known as exchange value, is completely arbitrary. Consumption of fossil fuels and war are not. Make no mistake; the extraction of raw materials from the environment is impacting our future environmental reality. The illusion is: the reality we have created for ourselves will continue forever. People are creating a new commons across the globe.

All that will matter is that we have the courage to leave the water in the river, and the trees in the forest, and the bauxite under the hills (Roy, 2010). Community stands for all the ‘things’ which may not be bought or forced upon a being, and this is the one true economy that matters. I believe that there is a burgeoning of new guides and their spirits of interconnection.

### Education: State of the Planet Awareness

The term ‘education’, in its broadest sense, represents the transmission of ideas. As the physical world changes, so do our ideas about how to interact with it. In the 2011 *State of the World: Innovations that Nourish the Planet* Sithembile Ndema writes in the Using Theater to Help Women Farmers section:

“In Africa, most rural farmers are women. According to the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization, women in sub-Saharan African countries constitute 75 percent of the agricultural workers and provide 60-80 percent of the labor to produce food for household consumption and sale. They are also responsible for 100 percent of the processing of basic foodstuffs, 80 percent of food storage and transport from field to village, 90 percent of the hoeing and weeding work, and 60 percent of the harvesting and marketing activities. Thus women farmers bear more than half of the responsibility for agricultural labor. But their agricultural productivity and access to markets is generally very low. Consequently, women-headed rural households tend to be poorer and more food-insecure than those headed by men.”

The Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN) started the (WARM) project, Women Accessing Realigned Markets. “The WARM project uses theater for policy advocacy to engage women farmers, community leaders, service providers, and policymakers, to encourage community participation, and to research the needs of women farmers.” With women playing such a crucial role in food production, it is critical to support them in this capacity in order to ensure a stable society.

Wangari Maathai started the Green Belt Movement in Kenya to plant trees. She recognized the importance of trees in mitigating Climate Change.

Not only do they sequester carbon-dioxide, but they also store water. It had not been an easy journey to get society to change their views on the value of protecting and propagating trees.

Growing trees shifts the priority of land-use, and this shifts social structures.

In his *Moving the Center: The Struggle for Cultural Freedom* (1993) Ngugi Wa Thiongo writes:

“For racism has indeed been part and parcel of slavery, colonialism and now, neo-colonialism. Those fighting racism must never forget that racism, no matter how all-pervasive, is nevertheless an ideology founded on an economic system of exploitation and social oppression and today this is imperialist capitalism.”

An economic ideology lends credence to behaviors that are deemed socially acceptable.

Andrew Rice writes in chapter 12 of the 2011 *State of the World: Investing in Africa's Land: Crisis and Opportunity*:

“A variety of factors—some transitory, like the spike in food prices, and others intractable, like global population growth and water scarcity—have created a market for farmland, as rich but resource-deprived nations in the Middle East, Asia, and elsewhere seek to “outsource” their food production to places where fields are cheap and abundant.”

Environmental factors and social relations are inexorably intertwined. Upon recognizing this, one may draw up a societal education plan that emphasizes local food production, and such issues as water use.

“Americans use about 100 gallons of water at home each day · Millions of the world's poorest subsist on fewer than five gallons · 46 percent of people on earth do not have water piped to their homes · Women in developing countries walk an average of 3.7 miles to get water · In 15 years, 1.8 billion people will live in regions of severe water scarcity” (National Geographic, 2010)

“Big dams are obsolete. They're un-cool. They're undemocratic. They're a governments' way of accumulating authority (deciding who will get how much water and who will grow what where). They're a guaranteed way of taking a farmer's wisdom away from him. They're a brazen means of taking water, land and irrigation away from the poor and gifting it to the rich” (Roy, GCG).

The Meeting School was structured in part to focus on our environmental impact. The social organization of the community, and the growing practices of the farm helped us to implement our vision for a healthy environment, and equality in our relationships. These lessons will have the most profound impact on the state of the planet, and therefore, on what type of education is significant and indeed crucial. Education has been transformed into a mirror of society. It is time to learn about the environment as something which may not be owned. In so doing, we will understand what may be done to restore justice to those who have been wronged.

According to Arundhati Roy (1999):

“The ethnic ‘otherness’ of their victims takes some of the pressure off the Nation Builders. It’s like having an expense account. Someone else pays the bills; People from another country; Another world. India’s poorest people are subsidizing the lifestyles of her richest. Did I hear someone say something about the world’s biggest democracy?” (Roy, GCG, p. 5)

The very same thing happened in this country, where those subsisting off the land were considered poor and uncivilized. Now it is happening again, except it has taken the form of intergenerational tyranny, with the young following their elders into the folly of modern western capitalism. This includes the alienation of education from the environment. (Bowers, 1997)

“The millions of displaced people in India are nothing but refugees of an unacknowledged war. And we, like the citizens of White America and French Canada and Hitler’s Germany, are condoning it by looking away. Why? Because we’re being told that it’s being done for the sake of the Greater Common Good. That it’s being done in the name of Progress, in the name of National Interest (which of course is paramount). Therefore gladly, unquestioningly, almost gratefully, we believe what we’re told. We believe that it benefits us to believe” (Roy, GCG, p. 5).

This quote refers to a specific situation in India, but it decries this nation’s unresolved past, and it reeks of Afghanistan, or our neighbors to the South. Our military is voluntary, yet its demographics add up to one thing: zugzwang.

Life in the US, even public education, is predicated on oil. We delude ourselves into nation building because terrorists defy our right to burn oil. Now the earth metes out her justice--fierce, final, and indiscriminant.

Let's embrace the creativeness necessitated by the immediacy of crisis and learn to adapt to change. This could be at the heart of education, as well as a developing awareness of the state of the planet.

### Social Justice: Cross-Cultural Awareness

Social Justice may best be exemplified by the words "right-relationship." In her novel *The Fifth Sacred Thing*, Starhawk declares that 'spirit', after the four elements, is the fifth sacred thing. Our human spirit arises from the four elements, and is therefore eternally dependent upon how we interact with them. Our human spirit is also the locus of our inter-personal relationships. If we treat water and land as unlimited disposable waste, in a natural environment that has clear physical limits, then we will begin to encounter the problems we are facing. In the United States our culture operates under the principle of private property. In accordance with this we emphasize one's 'right' to do as they wish with said property. Undeniably the consequences of land-use effect more than just the land-owner. In her speaking, Winona Laduke emphasizes the responsibility that is inseparable from 'rights'. The dominant culture in the US has much to learn from the Native American brothers and sisters. It is impossible to continuously take from Mother Earth without also giving back to her.

Earth, Fire, Water, and Wind are sacred; they must not be bought nor sold. Call this a great awakening, and know this is the genesis of your sacred spirit; take a deep breath and begin to live your life free of misapprehension.

At SIT, I learned economics is the science of allocating finite resources to infinite uses. To me it's plain to see that what we understand as "resources" are clearly renewable, even whether this process requires millennia, and the uses of said resources are clearly finite. Talk about hubris. It's funny what mischief the fear of death spurs us onto.

Neo-Classical economic theory, synonymous with Neo-Conservative political ideology, runs on the assumption that consumers have known, or otherwise identifiable, tastes or preferences. Under this economic model, it is assumed we know what modes of production firms are employing, and that all economic agents act rationally. All markets are perfectly competitive, i.e. having large numbers of small (not big enough to affect market outcomes) buyers and sellers, standardized products, free entry/exit, perfect information universally available. This list of attributes simply does not reflect our economic reality (Nikoi, 2005).

Martin Luther King Jr. wrote from a Birmingham jail, "Like a boil that can never be cured so long as it is covered up but must be opened with all its ugliness to the natural medicines of air and light, injustice must be exposed, with all the tension its exposure creates, to the light of human conscience and the air of national opinion before it can be cured." Just as there was the Great Depression, the Dust Bowl, and the Green Revolution, so have scientific growing practices eroded the top-soil of a land wrested from the dead bodies of its prior inhabitants. "Dead and wounded women and children and little babies were scattered all along there where they had been trying to run away" (Takaki, 2003, p. 230). How may we begin to address this history of social injustice? Winona Laduke proclaims the only compensation for land is land.

When there is no land left, because all the mountaintops have been removed, and all the land that is left is tired and weary, because all the lands around it have been defaced; how shall we show our children how to live,

and to be good stewards of what the almighty has manifested as our destiny? As for me and my children, we will return our excrement to the earth via compost. When the town approaches us for violating sewage ordinance I shall declare: “Conversely, one has a moral responsibility to disobey unjust laws...An unjust law is no law at all” (MLK Jr., 1963). I will invite whomever may contest composting human feces to live with me, so they may know the water I know, and I shall explain to them, “In any nonviolent campaign there are four basic steps: collection of the facts to determine whether injustices exist; negotiation; self-purification; and direct action” (MLK Jr., 1963).

Some of the best direct action that I may take is to drink tap water instead of drinking hot tea every day. This habitual behavior has become despicable to me. If I were to examine the supply chain of the source of energy which permits me to heat water, I am certain I would discover it is wrought with environmental degradation and dynamics of power imbalance further reinforcing social relations which lead to still yet more environmental destruction.

#### Sustainability: Knowledge of Global Dynamics

The sustainability aspect of any field may be understood through knowledge of global dynamics. When interviewed by Smithsonian, Dennis Meadows, one of the authors of *Limits to Growth*, as mentioned in Robert Hanvey’s *AGP*, stated:

“What we found was that technological changes alone don’t avert the collapse. It requires cultural and social changes as well. You need to stabilize the population, and you need to shift consumption preferences away from material goods to the nonmaterial part—love, freedom, friendship, self-understanding and things like that.”

A lot of ‘sustainability’, and restructuring Global Dynamics to be sustainable, is things we already know. We need to change our education system to reflect this knowledge, and effect the desired outcome.

### Spirituality: Awareness of Human Choice

“Cultural patterns—religious, philosophical, aesthetic, scientific, ideological—are “programs”; they provide a template or blueprint for the organization of social and psychological processes, much as a genetic system provides such a template for the organization of organic processes” (Whorf, 1973, p. 216). TMS was founded upon the principles and practices of the Religious Society of Friends, otherwise known as Quakers. This religious founding plays a crucial role in the culture and organization of the school.

One difficult ambiguity about life at TMS has always been: Is TMS a school or a community? Issues involving authority, evaluations, and money seemed to confuse the matter. The following quote from bell hooks best portrays the general sentiment at TMS: “To be guided by love is to live in community with all life. However a culture of domination, like ours, does not strive to teach us how to live in community. As a consequence, learning to live in community must be a core practice for all of us who desire spirituality in education”(hooks, 1994). At TMS, we strove to incorporate spirituality into education by living as a community.

Society in the United States of America has confused market relationships of modern Western Capitalism for community. This reality is reflected in the negative impact we have on our environment. E. F. Schumacher wrote, “To the extent economic thinking is based on the market, it takes the sacredness out of life, because there can be nothing sacred in something that has a price” (1973). Market determination of monetary value is arbitrary. Spirituality implies a relationship that recognizes inherent value. Our motives and emotions arise from a recognition of interdependence on entities outside ourselves. Setting up a monetary system that allows us to pretend to determine something’s worth confuses us into thinking that an object’s value is due to our existence.

Martin Buber referred to this kind of thinking as an 'I-it' relationship. We are constantly being influenced by our environment through our sense perceptions. When we recognize the spirit behind the things we experience in our reality, this is called an 'I-thou' relationship. This kind of thinking recognizes the reciprocation of influence that exists between us and our environment. In the West, we have forgotten to recognize the spirit of the buffalo, the tree, sister corn...

We need to change the cultural patterns of our communities. For instance, we may begin by speaking about the natural environment in terms of familial relationship. For Wangari Mathaeii, it is recognizing the link between deforestation and drought. For Dorn Cox, it is recognizing that yes, NH can feed and fuel itself. Farmers of New England, estranged from federal politics, recognize that food autonomy is the avenue to terminate the practice that corporations determine public policy. New England Organic Farmers Association of Massachusetts and Vermont are preemptively suing Monsanto.

It is high time we heed the call of our ancestors from the dark shadows of forgotten recesses and begin to recognize that if we ignore spirituality, so shall we be ignored. Spirituality is the embodiment of the awareness of human choice. As the Arab proverb goes: "One is the master of words yet unspoken, but once they are spoken, they become the master over the speaker."

The power of spoken word is not only in its possible influence on others, but also in the implications of responsibility the words have for the speaker; all the more so when the speaker lives in community, and will continue to interact with their listeners on a daily basis. bell hooks (2003) describes how the work of building community may help us overcome our differences:

“And it will always be vital, necessary for us to know that we are all more than our differences, that it is not just what we organically share that can connect us but what we come to have in common because we have done the work of creating community, the unity within diversity, that requires solidarity within a structure of values beliefs, yearnings that have to do with universal spirit.”

## **Methodology**

If I am in a position to ‘empower’ people, then this implies a power differential that must be questioned! Those who I am attempting to empower will be more likely to resist my attempts at changing their way of life if they do not understand why, and what my motives are. In class discussion at SIT, we came around to making the distinction between ‘empowering’ folks, and actively helping folks to empower themselves. In my view, the structure of our society is oppressive. Public schools are crucial part of this structure, and I would argue that they stand to be found oppressive in many regards. Emancipation, in my view, involves a lot of non-cooperation and creativity. I think teenagers are in a unique position in life to be involved in emancipation. Ethics, consequences, and manipulation are lifelong lessons that should be embarked upon with the utmost of candidness. In this ethnography, I have attempted to examine how the alternative nature of TMS fits into the educational framework of Robert Hanvey’s *An Attainable Global Perspective*. I have also sought to explore whether or not the education offered at TMS is emancipatory.

Rossmann and Rallis (2003) wrote, “Pursue emancipator uses and the radical change of oppressive social structures.” “Although differing strands can be identified, most critical ethnography considers research to be a process of examining the dynamic interplay of culture, knowledge, and action” (Rossmann and Rallis, 2003).

I chose the critical ethnographic genre as the research method for my thesis. Ethnographic observations fit my purposes perfectly as I became deeply involved in life and work at TMS.

When I was at TMS, there were twenty-three students in attendance and sixteen faculty members. About six of the students were Quaker. Students came from all over the country, from Florida to California, and New York City to Massachusetts. TMS offered a high school program, grades nine through twelve, including the occasional post-graduate. The ages of students ranged from fourteen to nineteen. TMS is a non-profit and tuition was valued at approximately thirty-eight thousand dollars per year. Not all students paid full tuition. Some students received financial aid; some students attended at the minimum of eight thousand dollars per year. Most students attended TMS for one to two years. There were also students attending for three and four years. It was less common that a student would attend for all four years of high school.

I use formal and informal interviews, interpretations of artifacts, and personal observations of events and processes. I kept a journal during my internship at TMS. I also used note cards for recording my daily activities. For the German and Spanish, Yoga, and Ceramics classes I taught, I have logs, records, materials, and evaluations. I also have a collection of miscellaneous papers, books, and personal observations.

I had a personal relationship with each of the participants included in this study. I selected participants with the intent of representing the diversity of identities within the TMS community. I interviewed four students, three faculty, and one administrator. Two of the interviews were conducted during my internship. The rest were conducted after I completed the internship. Since I interviewed minors, I had to pass a full review by the SIT Human Subjects Review Board. Since I had worked with the subjects I would be interviewing for the past three years, I assumed receiving this permission would be perfunctory. I found it challenging to put together a research proposal that accurately portrayed the focus of my study. Emphasizing Robert Hanvey's working thesis as a standard against which I could measure my results seemed helpful.

Artifact interpretation is based on Robert G. Hanvey's *An Attainable Global Perspective: Education for a Global Perspective*. As far as sampling goes, I allowed myself to be guided by my relationships with TMS community members. Convenience played a major role as well.

It has been approximately two years since I finished my internship at TMS. Since I left TMS, I was unemployed for four months until I started substitute teaching for the Keene, NH public school district. Soon thereafter I also began substitute teaching for the Jaffrey-Rindge Cooperative and Contoocook Valley school districts. Over the past five years, this research has been the focus of my life's work. I have incorporated personal observations from my life experiences from after my TMS internship into this study.

I feel the sample size, as far as interviewees are concerned, could have been larger. This does not seem practical given the nature of this study, but I firmly believe it would prove beneficial to the outcome. I felt tied to the interview guide. With more interviewees, I think I would have been able to redefine themes based on prior responses. Of course time was a major restraining factor.

Due to the timing on my passing the Human Subjects Review Board, I had to interview students of TMS after I was no longer there, and after they had gone home for the summer. I attempted to set the interviews up via telephone and e-mail. This was a mistake. Using social media websites was a much better medium for maintaining contact and initiating interview plans.

One population not included in my formal interview sample is parents of students. For future research, I could imagine interviewing five parents based on a similar interview guide used for the students. Then, in addition to that, I could interview five more parents who had read my thesis, and interview them based on their response to my thesis. I am sure a comparison between parent and student responses, and then the two different groups of parent responses,

between those who were responding to the same questions their students were asked, and those responding to the material covered in the thesis, might have allowed me to tease out other useful insights.

## **Findings**

### Community

TMS community is based on the principles and practices of the Religious Society of Friends. Three key terms are used interchangeably: principles, values, and testimonies. Quakers use the term testimony to remind us that the behaviors of our daily life are what other people witness. In my interview with Sheila, a faculty member at TMS, during our discussion about how the community dealt with conflict and our collective attitude towards technology, Sheila made a comment that elucidates how the testimonies influence our perspective, and how this, in turn, has the potential to influence our behavior.

“There’s a social consciousness that’s available to us on a daily level, and on a world-wide level. It is important that we make those connections between the way that we live, and the way that the rest of the world lives. We contrast and we compare...we make those connections...between war, and world-wide violence, and the need to resolve conflicts among ourselves. A commitment to social justice and peace must exist both within that very one-on-one individual interaction, and within this community. But it also extends world-wide.”

The Quaker testimonies are: simplicity, peace, integrity, community, and equality. For my research, I asked my interviewees which testimony they liked the most, or which one they had the greatest difficulty with. Listening to their responses, I began to understand how interconnected all of the ‘testimonies’ are. In my view, it is difficult to achieve integrity without also achieving simplicity, peace, community, or equality. It was my experience that the more one incorporated practices of simplicity into one’s life, the easier it was to have integrity. The school philosophy states, “The community provides secondary education for those who undertake to live joyfully with spiritual, intellectual, emotional, and physical integrity.”

One example of a principle of the school, also mentioned in the philosophy and purpose statement, is the emphasis on ‘the dignity of physical labor’. Through working on the farm, an individual would be providing a witness to the testament of physical integrity. Observing someone’s physical space boundaries would be another example of physical integrity. Not doing drugs, drinking alcohol, or having sexual intercourse were yet further examples of physical integrity. These were agreements made by students upon joining TMS community. Lars said of integrity, “I value integrity the most because it’s constant, always present. It meant being honest with myself and my emotions, and what I’m doing, and how this is affecting others.” He also mentioned that he developed a deeper perspective of integrity based on all the meanings it had for other community members.

Offering her thoughts on community, Cynthia said, “It’s constantly before everyone’s eyes that everyone matters to everyone else, that concern is built into the way we do things, and the expectations we have of each other.” This mindset was at the heart of all the activities that went on outside the classroom at TMS, from cooking meals for each other, to doing the work necessary to raise and grow that food. One student, Sylvia, explained in her interview, “Work is at the center of intentional communities. It’s completely obvious how important it is for people to take responsibility for their work.” Lars described the change in his life experience since coming to TMS: “I was thinking more, undergoing transformation, and extending spiritual opinions, as well as receiving meaningful, powerful support during high school from adults other than my parents.”

Community Meeting was the weekly forum where the whole community met together to discuss and make decisions about all aspects of the community. Each semester students took a turn clerking, or facilitating the meeting.

Faculty and student meetings as well as committees dealing with all aspects of the community reported to community meeting. This was the forum where we made sure everyone in the community could be on the same page. Clerking community meeting was a huge responsibility that required a lot of tact and skill. Oftentimes there were opposing positions that needed to be considered and sorted through. For example, ‘clearness’ committees would be organized in community meeting to address interpersonal conflict situations, or personal support needs. Sylvia described an aspect of TMS community she disliked, “Sometimes it felt like there was a lack of space, and it felt like some people in TMS community either didn’t want to be there, or didn’t really understand community in the same way that I did. I’m sure that they understood it in some way, they just had a different understanding.”

In reference to conflict resolution, Lars said, “Quaker process allows all voices to be heard, and requires patience, and listening as others state their view.” Quaker process in this context refers to the community meeting, which is the forum where ‘clearnesses’ are organized, which is one of the main ways for the community to address conflict. Clearnesses are a communal procedure to help insure issues within the community are addressed, and that some sort of conflict resolution can be achieved. Some clearnesses were about interpersonal conflicts, involving teasing or bullying, and others were about drug use. Just as important as dealing with conflicts, clearnesses also focused on decisions for future plans, or requests for general support.

Each individual joining TMS community was consenting to abide by the following agreements: confrontation (encouraging individual action when agreements are not being kept), no alcohol (only when school is in session for faculty), no marijuana/or other illicit/non-prescription drugs, no sex, and no sexual assault.

(Of course faculty members could have sex.) When I was at TMS, it was, in theory, a tobacco-free community although this was not always the case. There was also an agreement about technology use, which was a highly contentious point for the community. Finally, there were agreements about signing out so that others in the community would have a general idea of one's whereabouts. The community handbook goes on to address: physical property, community space use, the discipline process, the clearness process, and the testimonies.

A colleague at the school, Sheila, described conflict in this way: "I think that in any community, there's conflict...and that's certainly a whole part of the philosophy of the whole school: expect conflict, 'cause you'll find it no matter where you go. So, expect it, and learn to work through it, and that there's great value in it as hard as it is."

Daily life at TMS could be intense, particularly on an emotional level. A large focus of the structure of the community is based on how the students are teenagers seeking to develop a sense of independence, and at the same time, learning healthy lifestyle choices and habits. This meant testing a lot of physical and emotional boundaries. It is important to have boundaries, but the community was able to be flexible with boundaries because, as noted by Frederick, a history teacher and dean of academics, "You have to think of this larger question of the emotional health of everyone and the safety of the students in the community, and we do that by means of being more aware of what everyone's doing more often." Frederick goes on to explain how the community tries to remain flexible with its boundaries.

Sylvia described the flexibility to live into the agreements of the community this way: "I think that at TMS, structurally speaking, there's a lot of room for people to have integrity and make decisions about how they're going to live into the community and still be living into the spirit of the community. Everybody plays a roll."

TMS community has always been a very small, close-knit community. Everyone knows what is going on with everyone else. One major challenge of living within this community is to get enough alone time, personal down-time to rest and regain balance. Frederick reflected, “I think it is more difficult here to hide problems or transgressions than it would be in any other place.” In his interview, Frederick explained how the same informal social interactions that helped community members get to know each other so comprehensively were also what enabled members of the community to feel comfortable when dealing with difficult conflicts. Sometimes this work took a lot of energy and that made it all the more challenging for the community to accomplish the other things it was trying to do.

Community agreements were broken by both student and faculty (and intern) community members. Some of these broken agreements passed unnoticed, and were surely unhealthy and harmful to the community. However, most of these problems or transgressions were discovered and dealt with according to the established process of the community. This process allowed for a healthy recognition of what was going on, and a transformation and resolution of the situation that allowed for growth for all involved. This was not always an easy, simple, straightforward process, but required a lot of work and emotional energy. This learning process was just as important as the learning that occurred in the classroom. Sometimes issues dealt with relationships within the context of the classroom, and other times, the issue did not involve school or class at all.

### Farm

I came to work at TMS to be a farm intern. The first work I did on the farm was to transplant onion starts. An important part of my work as an intern would also turn out to be chopping and cooking those onions for the community.

Every student had the opportunity to learn about and experience raising and growing food, and then preparing and eating it. Since I have left the school, I have been blessed to be able to continue growing garlic and onion crops. The onions we grew from saved seed. I am extremely proud of this. I am also extremely proud of being a part of TMS legacy that includes sending students out into the world who are dedicated to and participating in local, organic food production.

In responding to how their awareness of environmental issues changed at the school, Lars described what he learned in farming class: “I learned about the importance of knowing where my food comes from. I used to take the food supply for granted, but now I understand that a bad season could mean less food.” This student has been able to continue involvement in local food production since leaving the school. Cricket commented on what she learned from the farm: “We all need to know how to grow things that will sustain our bodies. It is such an essential part of education.” At the beginning of her interview, Cricket associated community with health. Sylvia also expressed this view in her explanation of the importance of interdependence for meeting the community’s needs. “People need to communicate, and split up work, and be completely interdependent I think, in order to exist in a way that is healthy and productive.”

Growing and producing food is hard work. It is much better to do this in a community where everyone shares in the responsibility. Doing this communal work is also an immensely profound learning experience for young people. Sylvia described her experience this way: “Students talk about the feeling of responsibility that you get when you actually have a job that means something. The work is educational: going out planting crops, harvesting crops, pulling weeds, taking care of animals, rotating fencing. It’s definitely educational, but it’s not pointless.”

Each year farm science class was a part of the curriculum. Generally it put into context the history and practices of TMS farm as an introduction for the students. Some topics the class covered were soil science, orchards, perennial crops and permaculture, using greenhouses, animal husbandry (cattle, sheep, pigs and poultry), gardens, and being an educated consumer. After the students covered coursework on orchards, they went out into the orchard at TMS and practiced pruning. They gathered the fruit to eat and make cider with. Everyday, twice a day, students did farm chores. All community members took part in making sure the needs of the community were taken care of. Twice a week, for two hours each time, students participated in work study. There were all kinds of tasks to be done that did not directly relate to the farm, but there was also work to be done for the farm. I helped to supervise students during work study as they tended to the different work projects on the farm, such as harvesting food crops, or taking care of the animals.

It is a very gratifying feeling to see the community being nourished by food it helped produce. This is a great way to build confidence among community members, which can carry over into other aspects of a person's life. During her last year at TMS, Sylvia had her own milking shift. It was important to her to have this solitary time to herself, while also contributing to the community in a meaningful way. During her time at TMS, Sylvia learned that work on the farm could fulfill two purposes. On the one hand, solitary tasks allowed her to find respite from the cares and drama of the community. On the other hand, by working side-by-side with fellow community members on group tasks, it was easier for her to make friends, and learn about group dynamics. "I'm working, it's because I care about people, and I want to be giving to people. I have these capabilities, like I have my body, I can do work with it, and it also happens to be very, very good for my mental health." By being generous, we open the way for others to be generous.

Many a time a student would volunteer to cover a chore shift for another student. This is also a great way to create a sense of belonging within the community. If someone asks something of us, then we feel needed, and have an opportunity to express ourselves.

The Quakers have a way of describing how one leads a life under divine guidance. They call it “being in the light.” I like to think, “Growing my own food, and doing it organically only using human power: this is how ‘light’ I have to be.” Of course Quakers are referring to spiritual light. As a role model, through my work on the farm, I tried to demonstrate what I had learned: that living in community, and sharing work equally, as well as resources, is a great way to realize spiritual light.

Criquet was like a younger sister to me. She always knew how to encourage and inspire me. She reflected on her experience within the community: “TMS was like a door, because of the land, and the appreciation of the land.” This was in reference to her spiritual journey at the school. She went on to describe an awakening she had on a hike during one of the school’s camping trips. She found herself stunned by the profound appreciation for the opportunity she had entered into. This opportunity was a transformational connection to nature, on a farm, at a school, and in a community. Sylvia noticed a big difference in her ability to feel connected and productive since returning to live at home after school.

“It is really different living in a single family home in suburbia. I am trying to figure out a way to be in a community, just because, first of all, I like feeling like I am contributing something that is beneficial to other people. I like doing work. I like being industrious. When I’m not doing anything I feel really bad about my life and the world.”

### Education

During my time at TMS, there was a shift in emphasis to academic learning. My first year, there was a stronger focus on community process. Wednesdays began with the faculty meeting.

By about 9:00 A.M., in each residential house, students were supposed to arise and prepare brunch for the faculty that were their house parents. After brunch, there would be a house meeting, followed by chores. At one o'clock, there was a community meeting. After this, students might have the afternoon off, unless they were doing farm chores or helping to cook dinner. Like the weekend, Wednesday offered a clear break between the beginning and end of the week. It also served the purpose of creating space for additional organization. It allowed for preparation for the second half of the week, or bringing closure to the beginning of the week.

By the second half of my second year, we were having class on Wednesday mornings to make-up for time missed due to the ice storm. During my third year at the school, we switched from a trimester schedule to a semester schedule in order to make it easier for credits to transfer. We also had classes Wednesday mornings to strengthen the emphasis on the academic program.

The Dean of Academics, Frederick, explained how part of the goal of the restructuring of the academic program was to make the school as appealing as possible to prospective students. Since the education offered at TMS is based on a holistic and experiential model, Frederick pointed out how many people assume this type of education is geared more towards alternative students who are more used to "questioning of mainstream society." Frederick did not agree with this view. "People who are in the mainstream of society may have an interest in a spiritual grounding in their life, or a sustainable take on living in our unsustainable modern society, and those two are related I would say."

On the one hand, the re-emphasis on the academic program was to ensure the school would be as appealing as possible to as many students as possible. On the other hand, and just as importantly, the academic shift was about challenging students.

Frederick noted that it is important to challenge students so they can grow and also learn to negotiate their own challenges as well as develop their sense of initiative.

The academic program may have shifted to become the primary focus of life at TMS, but it was never the sole focus. Frederick talked about how a sense of purpose had developed organically out of the relationship between the faculty and students. At times it was a great struggle to achieve our goals for the school because of how social dynamics were playing out within the community. The renewal of focus on the academic program was to insure that we were holding ourselves accountable to meeting our purpose of providing an academic education to TMS students.

The farm and community were always integral parts of the learning at TMS. When asked about the future of Quaker education, Frederick mentioned that other Quaker schools were noticing a lacking in the emphasis on Quaker values due in part to an over-emphasis on academics. He thinks they are beginning to reassess this balance, hopefully re-grounding academic praxis in the Quaker values.

During my time as a farm intern at the school, I was also a faculty intern. I taught German and Spanish. I did not have an education background, so I found this very challenging. Thankfully I had the support of my colleagues in the form of teachers meeting. I was trying to do many other things on top of teaching, and I think this certainly affected my classroom performance. I attempted to focus on culture as much as language. I tried to create a positive, fun, and exciting learning atmosphere that would encourage students to experience other cultures in the future.

Going through the transition from adolescent to adult and completing school successfully are two of the most difficult things that young people accomplish. Another difficult challenge in life is joining a new community. Students at TMS were doing all of these at the same time.

In the interview with Sheila, we discussed the school's low enrollment. "It has been a frustration for me that we have not been able to find enough students. I do not understand that. It just totally baffles me." We both felt that there must be many more students who could benefit from TMS program. This did not change the fact that the school is an intentional community, and "living into the agreements" of such a community can be very challenging. Sheila remarked, "My understanding of what we were doing over the past decade was that we were coming to terms with what it meant to be a good fit or not for this community." There were students who did not follow the community agreements, and were asked to leave. Some community members struggle constantly with living into the agreements. This struggle is important because it means there may be growth. Taking time and energy to address the struggle however, affects the functioning of the community to a great extent. Sheila goes on to explain, "In some cases there were students and faculty who were not a good fit. Their perspective on life and their way of going about living was counter to the philosophy of the school."

There was a lot going on at TMS between the school, the farm, and the community. If certain folks were having a difficult time fitting into the community, this would impact how the school and farm functioned. Sheila explains,

"I think that we have had a tendency to try to do too much. That is understandable, but it's a difficult part of who we are as a community. I do not think that we have really figured out how to balance our eagerness towards perfection and towards getting a lot done with sanity! That we tend to overdo and get stuck in not getting everything done, and feeling overworked, and stressed out, I don't think we've figured that piece of it out well yet."

Sheila taught Quaker History, Art, Meditation, Peace Studies, and Gardening. In the education section of our interview, she told a story about teaching Peace Studies. I had asked her to talk about the meditation class, but she was quick to point out her holistic approach, and how much Peace Studies and Meditation overlapped. A large part of the work for the class was an individual project in which each student had to define 'peace' for oneself. One particular student who was very interested in pottery was having trouble seeing how this could fit into his definition of peace. With the help of M. C. Richards' book *Centering*, this student was able to understand the connection between using pottery as a practice to cultivate peace within himself, and producing work that a community could benefit from.

Frederick taught History, Writing, Model UN, and Peace Studies. He also taught a course titled: The Long Emergency, which incorporated ideas from James Howard Kunstler's book. The class focused on the issues of Peak Oil. Students did research projects on alternative energy sources. Frederick noticed a sense of empowerment in students as they learned about infrastructure and how society works. He also noticed that students were able to remain optimistic about the future, and focus on solutions.

A look at TMS's academic program would not be complete without discussing Intercession. This was a month-long break in the academic year that allowed students to pursue their own interests in the form of a project or internship. Some students used this time to travel to other countries. Other students explored their interests by working on farms, working at wolf shelters, or working on art projects. One student even built a boat. When students returned for the spring semester, they shared presentations about their experience with the whole community. Intercession was an important time for students to take charge of their own learning.

Some students were more successful at this than others, but I am sure the experiences they had will continue to influence the learning they do for the rest of their lives.

During my third year at TMS, I was not teaching German or Spanish. In order to continue my faculty internship, I became a teaching assistant for Michael's History class. He and his wife Ginny were living at TMS as 'friends in residence'. This meant they received the benefits of living in the community, but helped out with everything from outreach (publicizing the school), to cooking meals and doing farm chores. Michael and Ginny were also very involved in helping to support the students.

Michael taught a history class for which I was the teaching assistant. I led the class in a study of an essay by Wendell Berry, titled "A Tale of Two Economies." The two economies referred to in the essay are the man-made economy based on controlled explosions and the other economy Berry refers to as 'The Great Economy,' meaning all of creation. On a worksheet that went along with the class reading, I posed a question about what our role is in the man-made economy when disasters like oil spills happen. One response I received was: "I believe our role should be one of integrity and one of a voice. Our first intention should not be to point fingers asking, "Who's fault is it?" but first asking ourselves, "What can I do?"" Answering another question about the consequences should we fail to recognize the limits to a man-made economy, a student responded,

"The dependence Berry refers to is the dependence we have on explosions. Combustible engines and nuclear weapons have a huge impact on our society. Our health is affected because explosions mean destruction. In a society where so much destruction is taking place, it is damaging to us. The situation has to change, or our planet will suffer to extreme levels."

It is clear that the planet is already suffering. Philosophical underpinnings of the education system have not been developed to deal with this reality.

Covering such issues is a small change in the right direction. A fundamental restructuring of the system will be imperative in order to avert more extreme suffering.

### Spirituality

TMS is such a small, intense, close-knit community. Any conflict that arises on an interpersonal level tends to compound itself and impact other aspects of the community. With community members coming from many different backgrounds, we are a diverse community. United under the principles and practices of the Religious Society of Friends, and the mission and philosophy of the school, the faculty strives to set an example for the students. We did this by living together in community with the students. In the interview with Lars, a student, he brings to light a central motivation for doing this communal work.

“With my belief in values like peace, equality, community, integrity, I feel like I see things more positively in general. I value integrity the most, because it’s constantly present. For me, this means being honest with myself about my emotions, what I’m doing, and how this is affecting others.”

As members of the community, we all found that sometimes it is painful to be honest with ourselves. This is when community may challenge us to have the integrity and strength to confront our emotions and actions, and help us to understand how we are affecting the world around us.

In describing what sets TMS apart as a Quaker Community, Sheila explains the importance of divine guidance for Quaker Process using a Thic Nat Han metaphor about the North Star: “We use the North Star as our guide. The North Star is something we can look at, and we can use that to navigate through life. We will never go to the North Star. It’s not about going to the North Star. It’s about using the North Star, which in this sense I am referring to, as the ideal, the sense of what is the very best.”

A North Star for the faculty was to provide the best education we could for the students. Preparation for college was a priority for students who wished to pursue that path. Even for students less academically inclined, rigorous class participation was encouraged. Beyond the emphasis on future academic pursuits, communal and spiritual learning were valued as equally important.

When corporations fund academies to innovate in industries that poison the populace, it becomes imminently clear the education system is broken. It is great that parents wish for their children to get an excellent education in the ‘traditional’ sense. However, we as a society need to make sure we are adapting to the knowledge and understanding we are gaining about our current life choices. This is why we practice simplicity in our daily lives. When people live in community, like we did at TMS, they end up sharing resources more than is the status quo in American society. That is one practice that young people will need to be successful in the future.

For Sylvia, simplicity is at the heart of community, integrity, equality and peace.

“When people strive for simplicity, problems and conflict start to disappear. In Peace Studies this year, we were learning about Dorothy Day, and she said something like, ‘If everybody tries really hard to have less, everybody will have enough.’ That really struck a chord with me. Taking that a step further, if everybody has enough, and if everybody’s spiritual, emotional, and physical needs are being met, we stop having problems. It’s funny, because it feels so simple to me. If everyone could just stop fighting, and listen, and try to get rid of their stuff, and worry more about other people...Like: conflict-free world instantly.”

At TMS, a students’ education was influenced in a practical way by the spiritual value of simplicity. As is the case with all things in existence, integrity, peace, simplicity, community and equality are endlessly interconnected. A question on the interview guide was: Which of integrity, peace, simplicity, community and equality do you like the most? Which do you struggle the most with?

I was trying to get at the interviewees' expression of their consciousness of these values. As Jerome matter of factly pointed out in his interview, no one person, and no one system is perfect. What is important is that we are processing our thoughts, and then trying to coordinate our actions with what we believe to be true.

In Cricket's interview, she described this process as follows: "The right thing is always changing, so you can only give yourself a vague guideline and listen to what other people know." Cricket explained how society functions in the opposite manner. A pre-established status quo is the all important guideline, and if one disagrees with this, then they are excluded from participation. Functioning communities and communal values are so crucial nowadays, because the scale they operate on is more likely to include a plurality and diversity of voices. This is precisely the rapid, multi-faceted modus of problem solving that humanity needs considering the magnitude and scope of the challenges we are facing.

Cynthia identifies herself as struggling the most with simplicity. She realizes that one individual living a more simple life is not going to solve the greater issue of over-consumption. Cynthia participated in a community that values simplicity as a way of life. It is a small community, but it is not the only community valuing a more simple way of life. It is up to the people of these communities to make connections with each other, and spread the possibilities of this ethic. Cynthia shares her sentiments about simplicity:

"The basic problems with most human things are hatred and greed and ignorance. I think an ethic of simplicity helps people identify the minimum that they actually need to be happy and gain some protection from impulsive desires... Taking the time and intention to appreciate what you do have helps free a person from the insanity of always thinking that something different or something more would make you happy. The thing that I've already got can make me happy!

You know, and when that is a value, and when you've got someone saying, look, we've got this kale, let us celebrate kale, it helps me celebrate kale. There's a kind of greater sanity which you could call simplicity to live in a community this way."

In his interview, Jerome stated the value of the space provided for spiritual development and growth.

"Going to a Quaker school has allowed me to expand and think on my ideas. I have come to terms with who I am as a spiritual being. I am not just a spiritual being, but I am a spiritual being with these specific ideals about my spirituality. I am more in touch with that going to a Quaker school, and I like that a lot."

Practicing silent worship for ten minutes every morning, before meals, and for forty-five minutes once a week was a practice that helped Sheila live with integrity and peace. "Quaker process and the Quaker structure are the glue that hold it all together. I have seen other communities that had the intensity of relationship, but it was not sustainable, because they did not have the spirit that held it together, or the structure to hold it together."

Life is intense, particularly for teenager's whose brains are still developing. Physical quiet can be a powerful counterbalance to the drive to take risks despite the consequences. Teenagers are learning to establish relationships that will influence the rest of their lives. If they can learn to identify and understand what the sources of their internal motivations are, then maybe they may feel empowered enough to control the direction of their life (Dobbs, 2011).

"I grew up became an adult at school. I grew up with the Quaker Testimonies around me. Without recognizing them I learned them, and I am so grateful for that." In our interview, Cricket and I spoke about how things have been going in her life in general. She talked about how integrity was crucial to be able to have control over the direction of her life. "For me to be able to move my own life at school, in the ways I wanted it to go, I had to have a solid ability to make a decision and do something about it alone." Cricket mentioned it has been difficult to remain true to herself and make challenging life decisions.

Part of the challenge for her has been the disappointment of not finding as much emphasis on the value of interdependence in broader society.

In TMS Community, spiritual practice was influenced by the testimonies Quakers value. In Quaker Process, spirituality has an influence on decision-making. Frederick explains: “Decision-making in Quaker Process is underlain by a spiritual process called discernment. Discernment helps us make decisions using interior senses, spiritual senses; in addition to rational and analytic decision-making based on intellectual reasoning.” Discernment could mean deciding how one feels about someone else’s input, or discernment could mean deciding whether or not to include one’s own input in a decision making process. In such a decision-making process, we try to value each voice equally. We try to take the time and space to give each voice the opportunity to participate. We may not agree with a decision that is being made, but it is just as important that we feel respected and valued by our participation in the process.

## **Analysis of Data**

### Perspective Consciousness

Hanvey’s *An Attainable Global Perspective: Education for a Global Perspective* begins by recognizing the limitations of schools as opposed to adults and informal socialization. Hanvey goes on to describe media as event-centered and school’s roles as being to balance and correct media. He uses nuclear weapons policies as an example.

Since students and faculty lived together as a community at TMS, after school was over each day, informal socialization continued to occur amongst the students as well as between the students and faculty. At TMS there was a continuity between our radically progressive, holistic social critique and our daily routines. Many refer to TMS as a school of life in the broadest sense.

After learning about alternative perspectives in the classroom, the daily routine offered the opportunity to put these perspectives into action. The daily routines offered a powerful reinforcement to the classroom learning.

As a Quaker school, TMS values peace and simplicity. We tried to live simply by living in community and sharing resources. The school is a non-profit, and tuition from students who could afford to pay more was used to help pay for the tuition of other students. We had a farm and tried to grow as much of our own food as possible. We also prepared meals for each other. We sat in silence to cultivate peace within ourselves. We tried to be peaceful in our relationships with each other through honesty and trust, and learned about how to spread this peace to the rest of the world in Peace Studies.

Hanvey distinguishes between perspective and opinion. Community members at TMS may have had differing opinions on different topics, but on the whole, our general perspective and culture were united. A sixty percent military budget is unacceptable. Nuclear weapons are unacceptable. We should actively do things to resist this like conscientious objection and war tax resistance.

The students I worked with at TMS joined me for a protest against the relicensing of the Vermont Nuclear Reactor. Perspective consciousness is the attempt to be aware of what we think, believe and feel. This happens over time through a multitude of sources. The important part of perspective consciousness for Hanvey is recognizing people have different perspectives, and that we may not be aware of what is influencing people to live out their perspective as they do.

## State of the Planet Awareness

In State of the Planet Awareness, Hanvey again focuses on media. How people access information and what information they have access to are paramount to how perspectives are developed. In “Limits to Understanding,” a state of the planet awareness, Hanvey writes, “There are other sources of distortion. Political ideology chokes off the flow of some information, the defense and security syndrome of nations blocks still other information, and selective disinterest of audiences constricts yet other channels.” Media distort. What about self-censorship, and fear of violent force (either as victim or perpetrator)? The Pentagon Papers are a perfect point in case as far as defense and security syndromes of nations are concerned (Ehrlich, 2009).

Use of technology, particularly as a means to gain access to information, was a serious concern at TMS. For instance, as Facebook friends with students, faculty dealt with online bullying. We were encouraged to consider our motivations for using technologies and how our use would impact the community, as well as the environment. Each dorm had one computer that students could share. Students did bring their own computers. We had a technology minute that attempted to have community members refrain from using screens for a twenty-four hour period. The idea was to get us to think about our use of technology. This community agreement was a significant struggling point for the community.

The ‘cloud’ (digital information) is unique because it encompasses all other media. However, it too is subject to distortion. The cloud is more like a reflection of the human psyche. Human experience may be accurately translated into the cloud, but the cloud is dependent on electricity like human beings are dependent on the sun.

The board of trustees tried to have an energy use awareness campaign. The idea was to raise community member’s consciousness of how we used energy.

For instance, Student A and Student B could both be on computers using social media to stay in touch with each other. This would be a decidedly different experience than if Student A walked out of their dorm a couple hundred feet to join Student B in person in his or her dorm. This sentiment of preferring to use face-to-face contact and interaction was partly what was behind the technology minute, and was generally encouraged by the faculty as an important experience. Face-to-face interaction also saved energy.

In other words, the kind of ‘state of the planet awareness’ that we tried to cultivate at TMS was one where you shut down the computer, walk outside, and listen to your thoughts and feelings as you experience the smell of lilacs, or see the red bee-balm, or listen to the cows munching clover.

Surely the animal side of the farm was reliant on outside inputs, but the meat we ate at school was qualitatively different than store-bought product of industrial agriculture. Wendell Berry says, “Eating is an agricultural act.” Hippocrates said, “I will apply *dietetic* measures for the benefit of the sick according to my ability and judgment; I will keep them from harm and injustice.” Ghandi said, “To forget how to dig the earth and tend the soil is to forget ourselves.” At TMS, we grew our own vegetables and ate them. Our state of the planet awareness is that this is a solution to over-consumption and destruction of the environment via industrial agriculture. Student at TMS were well aware that by growing our own food, we were saving energy on production inputs and transportation costs. Students were also learning about how this may be done in community. Our perspective was neither ethnocentric nor egocentric. It was based on simplicity, peace, integrity, community and equality (SPICE).

## Cross-Cultural Communication

For many people joining the TMS community, this kind of communal experience was very new. We were not joining a community where a foreign language was spoken, but there were uses of language that were unique to the TMS experience.

I taught German and Spanish during my internship. A significant portion of the learning in the language classes was focused on culture in addition to learning to speak the language.

Hanvey identifies respect and participation as missing elements in achieving effective cross-cultural communication. TMS was an intentional community because each member was pledging to live by certain agreements. Non-participation within the community was not an option. It is challenging to impress just how different the cultural experience was as compared to the societal status-quo in the U.S. I would argue that social interactions based on respect and participation are much more rare, based on the cultural norms, and how the U.S. society is organized. TMS was a community with a heightened pace of social interactions, offering a higher frequency of opportunities to practice respect and participation through daily social interactions. The holistic and Quaker religious foundations set the school apart from the culture of mainstream society, but this education was occurring typically within the broader context of the students' native culture. If one is able to practice respect and participation in a more familiar cultural setting, then surely this could help one to be more respectful and participatory in a more foreign cultural context.

Quakers believe that every individual has a connection to the divine, and that no intermediary is necessary to experience this connection. Many Quaker meetings involve sitting in silence, waiting for divine inspiration to share a message with the rest of the meeting. At TMS, we began every day with singing and ten minutes of silent worship.

We also had moments of silence before each meal and approximately an hour-long worship once a week. Sheila mentioned practicing this silent worship to start the day, before meals, and once-a-week was a practice that helped her to live with integrity and peace.

These times of silence were often opportunities to gain clarity. Sitting in silence, it is very easy for one to calm the mind, figure out what one is thinking, and where the influences for these thoughts are coming from. The silence is also a great moment for someone to share what they are thinking and how they are feeling. When one enters a different cultural space, it is often the case that we are unsure how to communicate effectively in a culturally appropriate manner. This is when making the decision not to speak and to rely on silence to create the space in the brain to observe how folks in the new cultural setting are communicating may be immensely helpful for discovering how best to communicate. “The practice of “pausing” is a practice of respect. It allows you to acknowledge and access other people’s feelings without violating that space with your insistence that you have a right to be there, or anywhere you want to be” (bell hooks, 2003).

### Knowledge of Global Dynamics

Up until the time I worked at TMS, I had not been involved much in growing food. Eating food, like speaking a language, is such a fundamentally formative human experience. So much of our daily lives is centered around eating: breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Food traditions are such a brilliant way to learn about other cultures. While music is too, I found generally teenagers could be more shy about singing than eating. How and what we eat, as far as land-use is concerned, has profound implications for global dynamics.

Economists call survival ‘keeping body and soul together’. Many people are familiar with the hypothetical analysis that if every person in the world lived like the average American, we would need seven Earths to provide the resources necessary to do so.

Many people on Earth survive by subsistence farming. This means no electricity, no running water, you eat what you can get or grow. In developed nations this is known as poverty. One thing is certain however, this simpler way of life has less of an impact on the environment than the modern lifestyle.

The modern mentality tends to ignore the connection between humans and our environment. In many cases, poverty can be just as destructive of the environment as overconsumption. In an age when population is so great and the environment so fragile, the primary questions must be: What may I do to conserve resources and energy? How may I maximize these efforts and involvement with those with whom I am in daily contact?

In his book *Goat Walking*, Jim Cabott proposes the establishment of a bio-centric ethic. Other people recommend talking to plants. Perhaps a more broadly accessible approach to creating sustainable communities would be to support local, small-scale, organic agriculture by buying local produce.

In the Global Dynamics section Hanvey writes about the world as system. He finds it useful to observe the world system as having three principles: things ramify; there are no “side effects” but there are surprise effects; and to look for the concealed wiring. The rest of the essay focuses on technology and growth. Most notably on ending the use of some technologies and re-evaluating the way growth is understood and planned for.

Physical force will not solve global conflicts. Learning to sit in silence and accurately perceive what action is necessitated by a global conscience would be a much wiser way to deal with global dynamics. In practice, when we sat in silent worship at TMS, we were seeking divine guidance for our daily lives. Human beings need to sit in silence and reflect. This is a way to discover the concealed wiring.

I believe our concealed wiring consists of an autonomous connection to divine inspiration and the ability to influence our surroundings accordingly. I also believe there are myriad ways to access divine guidance, concealed wiring, and global dynamics.

### Awareness of Human Choices

Hanvey's fifth dimension of a global perspective is titled "Awareness of Human Choices." This section focuses on the world as a system and the issues human societies face such as hunger. As David Orr (1992) states:

"From the perspective of physics and ecology, the flaws in mainstream economics are fundamental and numerous. First, the discipline lacks a concept of optimal size, which is a polite way of saying that it has confused bloatedness with prosperity. Second, it mistakenly regards an increasing gross national product as an achievement, rather than as a cost required to maintain a given level of population and artifacts. Third, it lacks an ecologically and morally defensible model of the "reasonable person," helping to create the behavior it purports only to describe."

The whole point of the essay is that when humans make choices, there are repercussions, and that these consequences then, in turn, will affect our future choices as well. Hanvey also delves into the deep dark depths of the human thought process, including how we may sometimes be irrational. He includes a discussion of using computer modeling to more accurately predict the future functioning of social systems. The big idea is to remain open to and actively explore various options for how social systems may function.

Hanvey highlights the complexity of social systems, and thereby emphasizes the non-linear nature of feedback loops. Referring back to the section on Knowledge of Global Dynamics, Hanvey determines that a category of learning for a school teaching about Global Dynamics would be **Basic Principles of Change in Social Systems**. One of the rules Hanvey establishes for change in social systems is: "There are no 'side effects' but there are surprise effects."

In the next subsection of Global Dynamics, **Technological Innovation and Change**, Hanvey describes how the desirability of technological innovation has not been questioned until recently. He states, “First, young people should be sensitized to the global consequences of technological decisions which seems to be the legitimate responsibility of the individual, or corporation, or nation... Second, students must be encouraged to imagine what has hitherto been unimaginable—**the abortion of certain technologies**. We need some classroom games and simulations in which the central task is to decide about pulling the plug.” (Please note Hanvey’s use of the word decide.)

In Awareness of Human Choices, Hanvey describes whether the nature of how we make these kinds of decisions and whether or not to continue using certain technologies is changing. He uses the example of DDT.

“The DDT situation is simply an instance, a small manifestation of the major cognitive revolution that is now underway. But it is a representative one. Many practices once essentially automatic, whose benefits were assumed, are now questioned. They are questioned because we know new things. We know how to measure minute quantities. We know that factors interconnect in complex ways. We know that there are limits to the resources and carrying capacity of the planet. In the context of the new cognition, action does not proceed automatically. Calculations of advantages and disadvantages become explicit and detailed. Choosing a course of behavior becomes a more reasoned process. That shift—from the automatic to the calculated—is a very important expression of the cognitive revolution we are now experiencing.”

It is the researcher’s opinion that GMO’s and Nuclear Reactors should be abandoned as useless technologies.

We live in an empire that has subsisted on insane amounts of non-renewable energy. This reality has necessitated the quite purposeful simplification of our social milieu. Perhaps one could name this streamlining to the ends of efficiency: Serve and Consume.

All of this is changing, and will need to do so rapidly. We are already witnessing social unrest due to changes in the climate. We need a revolution. This is most readily achieved on a spiritual level where the courage of conviction is given the room to find release in a specific behavior. If I protest the continued operation of a nuclear reactor after its legal shut-down date, and I am arrested, beaten, or harassed during the protest, then I am calling into question the use of a nuclear reactor to generate power. What about a nuke is worthy of using violence or hate to defend? If other people know about my actions, and violence and hate are generally socially unacceptable values, then the situation of the protest and the reaction to it generates space for discussion and dialogue. When we engage others with our beliefs, thoughts, and feelings, we are reevaluating our position and opening the opportunity for those around us to join or add to our position. It is clear that sometimes people change the way they believe, think, or feel.

It is my view that public schooling is too subordinate to an economic system in whose interest it is to hold schools in a static, non-disruptive, and counterproductive relationship to a school's role, as Hanvey puts it, to provide a critique and alternate perspective to that perspective provided, for instance, by the event-centered media.

Just as I agree with Hanvey that schools need to have the freedom to question and be the starting place for new social narratives, I also view parents as needing to have a stronger role in determining the outcome of their children's education. I strongly believe holding a school to some kind of arbitrary measure of instruction is merely akin to the function of a society in which communities are by necessity not involved in the social rite of the educational upbringing of their children.

Our social reality, taken on a global perspective, comes at a time when we are realizing the profound brokenness of modern, western, neo-liberal capitalism.

Unfortunately this social reality is paired with an environmental reality that is as equally profound and demanding. During these times when life seems all the more difficult and uncertain, it is precisely spiritual practices that appeal to the spirit of creation within all beings.

While I was substitute teaching, a fourth grade teacher had me read a Native American story with her class. The lessons of the story were: silence, respect, sharing, and circles. These lessons were learned in nature and in community life. What good is the finest education in the world if the recipient has not learned these lessons? In my experience, such an education is good for disconnecting its recipient from the reality of the interconnectedness of all life. It enables, even compels, them to participate in a way of life that is self-destructive.

There are many facets of a movement of creativity to break the bonds of lack of accountability and lack of connection. For this researcher, a lot of these creative actions of hope lead back to: right food, right awareness, right action.

### **Statement of Conclusion**

TMS closed as a school after the graduation of two-thousand and eleven. During the first summer after the school closed, a successful Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program was initiated. Currently, The Board of Trustees is looking for a preferred buyer for the property, and accepting proposals for future use.

TMS was not for everyone. The school's enrollment decreased, slowing its momentum. The cost to run the school was high. The Meeting School community was intense and could be overwhelming, stressful, or even painful. In addition to this, the school would have benefitted from establishing a much stronger connection to the local community.

As uncertainty about the future of TMS looms, it is hard not to ask the question, "If I believe whole-heartedly in everything that TMS stands for, then why does it need to undergo this transition/transformation?"

Currently community, education, and healthcare are part of a political economy that is designed for control and exploitation. This way of life is destroying the planet. The future of TMS is tied up in a spiritual revolution of humanity realizing spirit may not be bought nor sold. Realizing this, and leading a life accordingly, realigns the human spirit into a harmonious balance within creation.

Growing food is hard work, and it is best done in community. Growing local, organic, small scale food production is the single most important and best avenue for building community. My research supports the significance of creative participation in community, education, and spirituality for the attainment of a global perspective. This country needs to turn its swords into ploughshares.

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