Whose Who?

When we were growing up, Eddie Haskell of *Leave it to Beaver* was a popular cultural icon. Eddie Haskell, who could turn from a scheming teenager to a sycophant at the mere glimpse on an adult. And then there was Superman, bumbling newspaper man in his interactions with Lois Lane who transformed himself into a superhero in times of danger. Both had multiple identities that emerged as circumstances suggested, Eddie to impress (or so he thought) Mr. and Mrs. Cleaver with his impeccable manners, Clark Kent to create an awkward persona to mask the graceful power of his alter ego.

Okay, so Eddie Haskell and Superman were sixties fictions, limited in scope by the shallow conventions of the sit-com and comic book. Yet they serve as prototypes for our understanding of an important theoretical point: People do not have a single, static self but instead play multiple roles. Building on the work of Jung and more modern social-cognitive psychology, McAdams (1989) addresses the idea of the multiple roles that people play through his concept of the *imago*. Imagoes are the various characters, the "(mes) within me" (p. 207) who play leading roles in various parts of one's life story. According to McAdams, no single imago can define the complex amalgam of roles that any individual plays. Yet he argues that "A major goal in life—perhaps *the* major goal—is to discover or compose the right story for one's own life" (p. 28; emphasis in original). That is, people seek to compose life stories that somehow integrate different and often opposing imagoes. McAdams's notion of the importance of an integrative narrative, we think, provides a profound challenge to schools.

For many students their home selves and the personas expected of them at school are so radically at odds that an academic identity would be difficult to assume and, if developed, would be difficult to integrate with the selves that emerge in other relationships. Researchers such as Delpit (1995), Heath (1983), and Moll (2000) have described how the ways of knowing learned in home and community life may be of little service once students enter the school building. Indeed, common metaphors as "citadel of learning" and "ivory tower" place schools behind fortifications designed to rebuff intruders. Once within the school institution, students often need to become, in

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effect, a different person in order to be successful. For these students, taking on an academic identity—"doing school" as it's often called—requires abandoning the identities that work in home and community life and taking on identities that meet the expectations of different cultural norms.

In short, knowing who to be has a lot to do with being deemed a good student in school. Viewed this way, the ability and willingness to play an appropriate role becomes a form of capital, affording students entry into the culture of power. This capital is more readily accessible to some students than others. An important question for educators then becomes, What can schools do to expand the kinds of identity capital available to make schools work effectively for the broadest possible range of students?

The articles in this issue of *RTE* take up the issue of the identities that school requires or allows in rich and compelling ways. Julie E. Wollman-Bonilla's article is the text of the speech she delivered upon accepting the 2001 Alan C. Purves Award, presented to the author of the *RTE* article from the previous year's volume judged to have the greatest potential impact on educational practice. Wollman-Bonilla reflects on what she learned from writing her award-winning article, a study of elementary school students' use of Family Message Journals as a vehicle for learning the conventions of scientific writing. In doing so, these students were encouraged to take on the role of scientists, allowing for the development of an identity that has tremendous capital within school culture. Wollman-Bonilla argues that the use of these journals—in which students write messages to their parents about what they have learned in their scientific studies, to which their parents write responses—helps provide two important bridges. One bridge is conventional: Students learn both the social practices and literacy conventions that accompany scientific investigation and the relationship between the two, knowledge that they are not likely to have learned outside school and are not likely to understand spontaneously. The second bridge is between school and home: Students and parents use school work as a medium for learning about one another. Wollman-Bonilla argues that both bridges serve to promote social justice, equipping students with the tools to take on a scientific identity and involving parents in supportive relationships with their children. Learning the conventions of scientific thinking and writing, she argues, provides students with tools to make them more capable participants in school and in activities requiring a scientific disposition.

Eleni Pappamihiel examines the ways in which nonnative Mexican American students experienced different degrees of anxiety in mainstream and ESL classes. Not surprisingly, they were more anxious when with mainstream students whose ease with the conventions of American schooling proved to be intimidating to these nonnative speakers and cultural outsiders. Anxiety in mainstream classes was further exacerbated when Chicano stu-

dents—American-born students of Mexican descent—were present because of the taunting they directed at the newly-arrived immigrants for their accents, circumstances, and other factors. The identities required for reduced anxiety were not yet available to the participants in her study, leaving them with little personal, political, or cultural capital to thrive in mainstream classes. Pappamihiel's study of students' levels of anxiety provides an important picture of the emotional consequences that follow from a sense of alienation from school and suggests the importance of ESL classes both for learning and for assistance with the affective transition that immigrants to new cultures require.

Katherine Schultz studies the out-of-school literacy practices of a set of urban teenagers, raising questions about the possibilities afforded by greater attention to students' lives outside school. Schultz urges educators to consider school as the site of only part of the learning a person is engaged in throughout the day and across a life span. She studies students' writing practices—including poems, letters, and journals—to look across school and out-of-school settings. The three case studies she develops illustrate the kinds of literacy potential possessed by students who often struggle academically in school, where the personal topics of their self-sponsored writing have less currency. Their out-of-school writing, she finds, was largely private and distinct from their school writing and was used to articulate a critical stance toward their circumstances. Schultz argues that by allowing these concerns to become part of their school writing, teachers could more effectively draw on the students' cultural resources, acknowledge the complexity and richness of their lives, provide greater opportunities for classroom success, and make the classroom a more vital site for learning. In such circumstances, the literate lives of students outside school can provide them with the capital they need to feel accepted and productive in school.

Diane Downer Anderson studies the gendered identities of students in two third- and fourth-grade multi-age classrooms, exploring how gender, identity, and literacy are entangled and mutually constitutive. Anderson conceives of literacy as social, local, and situated, challenging essentialist notions of gender in the process. In her study she looks at how students adopt gendered identities in school. Outside school these young children have been heavily socialized into sex-based identities that promote some attitudes, stances, and behaviors and discourage others. Anderson looks at school-based literacy activities designed to blur gender distinctions, including a dramatic performance where such devices as costuming mitigated sexual differences. Anderson's study shows how school can serve as a vehicle for questioning the social identities encouraged by cultures through prolepsis—that is, through subtle, usually unconscious efforts to steer people toward particular social outcomes such as traditional heterosexual male and female roles. Anderson argues that teachers can set

up *permeable* classrooms—i.e., those that are open to children's literacy experiences—that help to complicate students' notions of gender in healthy ways. She shows how teachers can help enrich children's understanding of gender as social and cultural as well as physical through thoughtful organization of classroom activities, in the process providing an arena in which students can problematize their culture's expectations for gendered identity and construct more balanced selves in relationship with their classmates.

Taken together, these articles make an important contribution to the field's understanding of the selves that students are asked or allowed to take on in school and how they relate to students' other selves. While Eddie Haskell's interactions with Mr. and Mrs. Cleaver might be transparent and comical, problems following from cultural mismatches between students and their schools can have tragic consequences: disproportionate rates of punishment, increased instances of resistance, poorer performance on assessment, greater likelihood of harassment, and ultimately higher rates of attrition. At the same time, the identities developed through social interactions outside school may enculturate young people into limited notions of their potential selves. Teachers can use classrooms to create new spaces for identity construction that are not available elsewhere in students' lives. We see the issues raised by the authors in this issue of *RTE* as contributing to the understanding required to create more just, democratic, compassionate, flexible, and effective schools that both build on and provide the grounds for critiquing the identities that students develop in home and community life.

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