CHAPTER 12

Nonviolence as a Daily Practice in Education: A Curriculum Vision

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What is the task of the curriculum theorist in the local, national, and international world? For me, an international person who traveled from China to the USA and who currently lives in Oklahoma, at this historical moment and in this particular location, the task is to practice nonviolence in daily educational life.[1] While my autobiographical account is narrated in my previous books (2004, 2014a) and cannot be detailed in this essay, it is important to mention that my cross-cultural journey of learning from different places has given birth to the vision of nonviolence as an educational project in daily practice in the context of internationalizing curriculum studies, a vision obscured by the noises of modernization worldwide, the standardization in American educational reform, and the dominance of technical reason.

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Furthermore, my intellectual history in bridging different interpretative traditions from both East and West—not as a binary but as a marker of difference—has taken me onto less- traveled pathways. Engaging with psychoanalysis, Eastern philosophy, international wisdom traditions, feminist theory, post-structuralism, peace education, and their contested intersections for the past two decades has enabled me to study and teach about, for, and through nonviolence. Practice lies at the heart of bringing the purpose, content, and means of education together toward nonviolence. In this paper, I first discuss the concept of nonviolence and then explore three important aspects of engaging nonviolence in education as a vision for internationalizing curriculum studies: nonviolent engagement with the self, nonviolent relationships with difference, and practicing nonviolence as an essential task of the curriculum theorist. In so doing, I also explore different international intellectual traditions and their contributions to this vision.

What Is Nonviolence?

Nonviolence in modern human history is, by and large, a political concept developed through political movements led by Mohandas K. Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. However, in the popular imagination, many people tend to link nonviolence with passivity or "playing nice" even though action is an essential part of nonviolent resistance. For me, most importantly, nonviolence is an educational project, centering on cultivating the integration of the body and the mind within the individual person and promoting compassionate relationships between the self and the other. In achieving the integration of the self and cultivating humane relationality, practicing nonviolence also involves converting negative psychic energies internally and fighting against social injustice externally. It is a practice that every teacher and student can engage in and has already engaged to a certain extent without speaking its name, yet somehow nonviolence is almost a muted voice in education. It is not difficult to discern that the nature of compulsory schooling in many nations, with its structural, social, and cultural impositions, is not conducive to spreading the message of nonviolence, but I think it is time for us to claim the site of nonviolence in education.

Michael Nagler (2004) traces the word *nonviolence* to the Sanskrit word *Ahimsa,* which basically means doing no harm and being kind to all living beings because life is an interconnected whole. Nagler points

out that after it is translated into English as "non-violence," rather than "nonviolence," it conveys a negative sense of responding to violence, but loses the positive quality of nonviolence as an integrative way of life. Nonviolence as *Ahimsa* is cultivated daily, integrating body/mind and self/other. Nagler (2004) further explains, "unlike the English translation, in Sanskrit abstract nouns often name a fundamental positive quality indirectly, by negating its opposite" (p. 44). Similarly, the English translation of the Chinese Daoist definition of *wuwei* as non-action also obscures the positive quality of *wuwei* in its capacity to enable appropriate action without imposition. *Wuwei* is both receptive and creative. The African notion of *ubuntu* passed down through orality and tradition is also difficult to translate into English without losing its original meanings. As Tutu (1999) points out, *ubuntu* refers to a different worldview in which one becomes a person through other persons and the self-other relationship is mutually enhancing (see Lesley Le Grange's chapter in this volume). Without reifying these international wisdom traditions—and the indigenous tradition of restorative justice—I argue that the interconnected world view they share provides a solid foundation for nonviolence education.

I have discussed the concept of nonviolence in the context of education in my previous work (Wang 2013, 2014a, b). Organic relationality that transcends dualism, non-instrumental engagement that engages students' growth without trying to control the outcome, playfulness that decenters fixity and allows emergence in teaching and learning, the necessity of the inner work simultaneous with the outer work, a radical denouncement of violence in all forms, and the feminist advocacy of peace are all important aspects of nonviolence. I believe that the fundamental task of education is personal cultivation and self-transformation that enables social transformation, unlike a political task that aims at mobilizing mass action (Wang 2014b). Education is necessarily a long-term project, not seeking immediate effects as the current standardization movement demands. Nonviolence is a positive energy that permeates the shared fabric of life, in which passion rather than passivity and sustainability rather than submission mark its existence. With nonduality (within the self and between the self and the other) as the central thread, the educational practice of nonviolence is a process of seeking individuation in the Jungian sense while simultaneously learning from the differences of the other.

There is an inherent mechanism in nonviolence against all forms of violence, not only physical, but also intellectual, emotional, and spiritual. In today's world in which intellectual imposition is common at schools, democracy is used as a vehicle to impose the will of the powerful on others, and peace is manipulated as a weapon for warfare rather than the welfare of humanity, it is imperative to speak about nonviolence that does not condone any form of violence. In this sense, nonviolence education is intimately related to social justice education, including eco-justice education. Nonviolence has two intertwined aspects indicating "no" to any system or action of violence with one hand and with the other hand stretching out to build productive, integrative, and sustainable relationships. These two gestures cannot be separated.

In formulating nonviolence education, I have studied peace education literature. While being enlightened by educators' work in dealing with intense conflicts and finding peaceful solutions, my work does not fit into this camp very well. First, many curriculum and pedagogical innovations in peace education deal with international conflicts or inter-racial/ethnic tensions, but I perceive nonviolence as a daily practice that is fundamental to individual growth. What is missing in the focus on the inter-group work is the daily educational work on integrating body and mind to cultivate generative and generous aspects of nonviolence that can prevent violence from happening in the first place. Second, the role of difference is usually downplayed in peace education. Difference, as the phrase "conflict resolution" suggests, needs to be smoothed out or negotiated toward the middle ground. Influenced by psychoanalysis and post-structuralism, I believe difference must not be erased but be put into use to generate new possibilities.

However, nonviolence based on the notion of nonduality and interdependence is also in conflict with both psychoanalysis and post-structuralism. In my own intellectual trajectory, the move to nonviolence has been enabled through both psychoanalytic insights, particularly those of Julia Kristeva and Carl Jung, and the post-structural affirmation of the alterity of the other, particularly of Michel Foucault, Emmanuel Levinas, and Jacques Derrida. Jane Addams' notion of positive peace as dynamic and nurturing (Addams 1906/2007) and the post-structuralist feminist notion of "working difference" (Miller 2005) at the site of creativity have also been influential. At the same time, with the further studies of Chinese intellectual and cultural history, my vision of nonviolence is a recursive return to Taoist and Buddhist insights. These strands of thought are not all necessarily in harmony, and I discuss specific contestations among them later.

Living with this contested site of multiple intellectual traditions, I tease out several threads important for engaging nonviolence as a daily educational practice. First, engaging nonviolence within the self goes hand in hand with engaging nonviolence with others. Here is where nonviolence and psychoanalytic tasks both support and contest each other. From them, I affirm the necessity of not only transforming negative energies but also connecting to the inherent interconnectedness in nonviolence education. Second, nonviolent engagement with difference welcomes and hosts the unknown as potentiality, not as a threat to the ego. Here is where the poststructuralist effort not to colonize the Other and the Buddhist nonduality both inform and question each other. From both, I affirm the positive role of difference without radicalizing it. The implications of nonviolence for the internationalization of curriculum studies are also briefly discussed. Third, nonviolence is a daily practice of each individual person and a vision to be embodied and lived every day. It is not a utopian ideal to pursue but rather grows through committed practice. Drawing inspiration from different strands of thought—in both resonance and dissonance—I illuminate nonviolence as a curriculum vision through its daily practice.

Working from Within

"Working from within" was a call from William F. Pinar (1972/1994) during the 1970s in the American field of curriculum studies (p. 7). This call was informed by psychoanalysis, phenomenology, aesthetics, and Buddhism. It is a call we in education still need to attend to, especially now when public education is in crisis. External turbulence may trigger the projection of our internal negativity onto others, so the inner work becomes more important in a difficult time for integrating diverse elements within the self. In owning the problematic aspects of ourselves and not repressing them into the shadow or projecting them onto the other, we can sustain our capacity to relate to others and transformatively participate in social action (Shim 2012, 2014; Taylor 2009). Jeremy Taylor (2009) names such a psychic working through as "nonviolence." His use of Jungian dream analysis in his first group work in the 1970s was proved helpful to social activists in understanding their subconscious racial biases, and in turn, in forming better relationships with local communities. The inner work toward nonviolence can also be triggered by external events. As Naomi Poindexter (2015) relates, a student's

engagement with Holocaust Education caused her to look inside and find constructive ways of working through difficulty rather than resorting to self-harming practices.

Nonviolence work contributes to the process of working through by using aesthetic, imaginative, literary, mindful, and meditative modes of practice that can transform difficult emotions such as anger and fear, contain and sublimate psychic aggression into productive activities, and put us in touch with the interconnected energy of life. Ashwani Kumar (2013) theorizes curriculum as meditative inquiry that supports "playful, imaginative, meditative (of thoughts, emotions, and body) and artful" (p. 110) learning. Lindsey Bolliger (Bolliger and Wang 2013) discusses how she uses yoga in the classroom with young children to enact a pedagogy of nonviolence. Yoga has helped her students center themselves, engage in meaningful learning, and create a classroom culture of peace. Stillness and quietude is inside of us, a source of vitality and peace, and despite children's endless action, they also have access to this inner source. There are reports of introducing mindfulness into school and college classrooms with success in the USA and Canada, and I have practiced it in my teaching. Most of my students have responded positively to the calming and integrative effects of mindful activities. Some also introduce them into their own teaching at school while there are some other students who are skeptical. Without romanticizing the effect of mindfulness practices, I think it is important to incorporate nonviolence in various forms into daily educational practices.

However, there is contestation between psychoanalytic theory and nonviolence studies: Psychoanalysis assumes the repressive mechanism of civilization and the existence of psychic violence in becoming oneself while nonviolence acknowledges the existential interconnectedness of life. For example, Sharon Todd (2001) argues that learning is ontologically violent, as it is implicated in the pedagogical demand that students change themselves, a demand serving civilization.[2] She further suggests

[2] Organic relationality lies at the heart of nonviolence but it necessarily contains the difficulty of growth and life in general. Refusing to grow up and staying in one's comfort zone is, arguably, doing violence to oneself. In this sense, the loss, pain, and anxiety of growing up cannot be avoided, but can be sustained by compassionate relationships. Moreover, Freudian psychoanalysis is embedded in modern Western discourses that set individuality and sociality at odds with each other. As much as sociality can repress individual desire, individuality relies on sociality to enable its own independence. In this sense, the relationship between the two cannot be only subversive but must be dialectic.

the necessity of ethical nonviolent relationships as pedagogical responses: "[It is] precisely because violence is inherent to 'learning to become' and because teachers and students are continually vulnerable to each other in the face of this violence, that the question of nonviolence can even be raised" (p. 439). In this way, violence is perceived as primary, nonviolence as secondary, and the possibility of compassion as compensational for the vulnerability under violence. However, if learning is ontologically violent and nonviolence is only a counteracting response, upon what basis can nonviolent teaching be developed? Only when the basis of nonviolence connects with its original possibility can it accumulate an equal force to counteract negative energy. Here the difference between the terms *nonviolence* and *non-violence* is not trivial, as the use of nonviolence affirms itself primarily as a positive and compassionate life force rather than a negation of violence.

On the other hand, in nonviolence studies, as Michael Nagler (2004) argues, violence is socially and heavily media-constructed and aggression is a learned behavior. He suggests that nonviolence is a primary force driving humanity toward a better future. The different emphases of psychoanalysis on individuality and of nonviolence on relationality are also at work. I try to contain their contestation in my own vision. I believe both aggression and compassion exist in the human psyche and society and that humanity has an inherent capacity for containing destructive impulses and establishing nonviolent relationships. I don't perceive pain or loss in the process of growth as necessarily violent, but psychoanalytic insights can help nonviolence work to acknowledge and work through difficulty. Individuality and sociality are not dualistic opposites but mutually embedded in the human life. Engaging nonviolence from within is closely connected with engaging nonviolence with others in an ongoing process of individual and social transformation.

Nonviolent Relationships with Difference

My formulation of nonviolence is not based on seeking commonality or consensus but on cultivating nonviolent relationships with difference. Difference, whether it is psychic difference or social difference, cannot be erased into perceived commonality because such an erasure itself can become a form of violence. The psychoanalytic notion of the unconscious is that it can never be mastered although it can provide a source for learning from the otherness of the psyche. The Levinasian alterity

(Todd 2003) and the Derridian difference (1992) as the basis for ethical relationships in the postmodern condition emphasize the necessity of not colonizing or assimilating difference into sameness. To preserve the creative and generative potential of difference, post-structural thinkers radicalize the alterity of the other toward the unknown.

Drawing upon Buddhism, Peter Hershock (2013) argues that the interconnectedness of shared life is enabled by the contribution of difference and diversity. A healthy ecosystem, for example, requires diversity, not sameness. He also argues for difference not as an entity but as a process of differentiation in which the relational dynamics of education can lead to a mutually flourishing community. Valuing difference is for the welfare of the whole community without the mark of separateness. Here is where I depart from post-structuralism and soften its radical edge of alterity—while recognizing difference as generative—with the wisdom of Buddhism, Taoism, and other Indigenous traditions that highlight an interdependent viewpoint. When the other is positioned so distantly in the unknown, the threads of connection with the self become too fragile to sustain relationality. The self and the other are already organically connected prior to their first encounter in a specific time and place.

With the increasing diversity in society, the issue of how to live with difference has been under discussion for several decades in Western education. There are many approaches, including pushing away difference to pursue equality, positioning differences as separate entities, essentializing difference into social identities opposed to one another, and radicalizing difference as unknowable otherness, among others. Not necessarily opposed to these approaches that can be useful in certain contexts, a nonviolent approach to engaging difference does not suppress, separate, essentialize, or radicalize difference but considers it an organic part of interconnected life. Depending on the situation, sometimes difference needs to be highlighted in order to contest the authoritarianism of a system, while at other times it needs to be dissolved in order to reach a higher level of integration for a more inclusive communal life. In a nonviolent orientation, we recognize and respect difference's positive role but do not elevate it above the web of life. Furthermore, this organic approach to difference is also connected to the necessity of working from within to integrate different elements in the self. Nonviolent relationships with difference are not only between the self and others but also within the self.

Such an engagement with difference is particularly important for transnational and intercultural relationships in the internationalization of curriculum studies (Pinar 2014). The Accord on the Internationalization of Education by the Association of Canadian Deans of Education (2014) emphasizes the principle of economic and social justice, reciprocity, sustainability, intercultural awareness, and equity in the internationalization of education. All these principles are important for engaging difference, and the practice of nonviolence supports them as long as they are inclusive and restorative of human interconnectedness. Not intending to set nonviolence above other principles, I see it as an underlying thread for shared educational commitment to personal growth, community building, and humanity/nature harmony through engaging differences in organic relationality.

In the nonviolent dynamics of international and transnational relationships, difference and multiplicity are neither excluded nor self-contained, but are transformed through interactive, dynamic interplay. This emphasis on dynamic interaction within a bigger picture necessarily challenges the self-closed nationalism and the economically motivated uniformity in globalization. The nation can become a site of differentiation to contest the totalizing power of globalization as Julia Kristeva's (1993) vision of "nation without nationalism" indicates, but close-minded nationalism does not allow differences within the nation to play a positive role. Although globalization increases connections through the Internet and economic and cultural exchanges, globalization is centered by a sweeping force that pushes away different indigenous and local heritages. Neither a fixation on a separate entity in nationalism nor a pursuit of one path for the whole planet, the internationalization of curriculum studies takes difference as a positive site for transforming the relational dynamics between and among the local, the national, and the global. Nonviolent relationality lies at the heart of such internationalization (Wang 2014b).

As I have become committed to nonviolence education, I remind myself of the necessity of not reifying it into a fixed ideal. In Derrida's deconstruction practices, he questions the essentialistic Western discourses of metaphysics, democracy, and justice, along with other concepts, but he does not propose any definite alternative to replacing these central notions. Rather, he envisions democracy as yet to come (Derrida 1992). Tracing the social, cultural, and political impact and historical evolution of these notions in Western society, Derrida exposes and

denaturalizes their dominance. While embracing nonviolence as an educational project, I am not proposing another metanarrative that is exclusive and suppressive but perceive it as compatible with other principles such as democracy, social justice, and ecological sustainability as long as they serve to promote integrative relationships (Wang 2010). Certainly nonviolence can be deconstructed if it becomes a reified concept. Here I approach nonviolence as both a vision and a practice based on the perception of "violence-nonviolence as a continuum" (Weigert 1999, p. 16) rather than a binary, in which violence must be continually worked through to enable nonviolence in daily practice. It is a vision because nonviolence must be evoked in order to illuminate less-traveled pathways that lead us to a more compassionate world. As an almost muted voice in education, it has hardly achieved a dominant status to be deconstructed. It is a practice because it is a daily struggle to transform psychic and social constraints and form nonviolent relationships with both the self and the other. It is a disciplined practice in word, thought, and deed that must be consistently cultivated.

Practicing Nonviolence in Daily Educational Work

Nonviolence is a practice that has existed throughout human history (Harris 2008; Lynd and Lynd 2006). I don't position education about, for, and through nonviolence as something new but see it as already practiced in some educators' daily work. It is not the newness that I claim, but that we must do more by shifting our lens to foreground nonviolence work in education and spread the message of nonviolence as a viable vision.

Molly Quinn (2014) approaches peace as "*an experience*, in which *the senses are engaged* … and an experience one … must *actually choose to pursue*, actively, intentionally, consciously" (p. 51; emphasis in the original). I also approach nonviolence as an experience that educators can intentionally craft for themselves and for students. Any effort to integrate body/mind, self/other, inner/outer work through choosing materials or designing activities beneficial for students' whole-being experiences contributes to nonviolence work. Essential educational questions about what we teach and learn, why we teach and learn, how we teach and learn can be guided by the principle of nonviolence.

David Jardine (2012) speaks of the everydayness of "cultivating free spaces in teaching and learning" through "a pedagogy left in peace."

In particular, he argues that there are free spaces for play in the midst of difficulty if we can see through the ontological illusion of separateness to deeply experience "the dependent co-arising of things and the dependent co-arising and shaping of our selves" (p. 17). Underneath the scarcity and constraint intensified by standardization and uniformity in education, there is abundance of relationships. There are many different ways of creating nonviolent and nondualistic relationality in education, ranging from the mindful and meditative inner work to the outer work of social action and service learning to engage both subjective and social transformation.

I have been teaching about nonviolence for quite a few years in American teacher education, and I remain amazed by many students' resistant responses. It appears to be more difficult to teach the importance of nonviolence than of social justice. I realize that the very foundation of nondualistic interdependence in nonviolence is not easy to imagine in a strongly individualistically oriented society. While the notion of social justice can be traced back to the concept of the individual in the West (Wang 2013) and the concept of non-violence with a hyphen can be understood along the lines of individual human rights, nonviolence as a holistic concept is based on the ability to go beyond the confinement of separate identities such as self, group, nation, or even humanity itself. It is a further step that is difficult to take. The dualistic mechanism of control (in response to fear), domination (in response to threat), and mastery (in response to failure) is so entrenched in the American psyche that the logic of violence is often taken for granted and that nonviolence can only be imagined as a secondary reaction to violence.

To change such a perspective takes nothing less than nonviolence as a practice for both the teacher and students. Only can a pedagogy of nonviolence (Bolliger and Wang 2013) in its persistent effort in daily work undo the grip of violence. It takes practice to transform a sense of separateness into an experience of interconnectedness. Cultivated practice clears the ground for developing the clarity and stillness that leads to the revelation of human, ecological, and cosmic interrelatedness. Without experiencing interrelatedness, the human attachment to individual reification and aggression (psychic or social) can be difficult to dissolve. The human ability to transcend fragmented self-centeredness, to contain aggression, and to rise above hatred is closely related to the human capacity to share, to connect, and to relate. Critiques of violence do not automatically lead to a better society if the foundations for a better world

are not built. It is the persistent practice of nonviolence that enables us to imagine the world otherwise. As an educational project, nonviolence can be practiced through many different ways in a classroom, and the teacher's engagement with nonviolence education cannot be accomplished once for all, but must be renewed on a daily basis.

The rigorous practice of letting go of attachment to separateness not only takes time but also requires intense engagement with what is at hand in curriculum, teaching, and education (Jardine, in press). The notion of the subject in education is necessarily doubled as both the human subject and subject matter (Pinar 2011). Full immersion in an experience can lead to self-transcendence, and students' learning is a site for practicing nonviolence. Here the teacher's task at school is somewhat different from students' task since students are in the process of self-formation and development of a healthy ego is beneficial, but students can develop a sense of interconnectedness that provides the foundation for their balanced personal growth. The teacher, who is in the authority position, must closely examine her or his own teaching self so that "a breathing space for teaching and learning" (Jardine, in press) can be provided for students to explore their relationships with themselves, others, the subjective matter, and the environment. Practicing pedagogical relationships nonviolently, rather than by imposition, the teacher embodies nonviolence in the classroom.

Nonviolence is not a destination or an ideal to reach, but an ongoing process of daily work to unlearn the mechanism of domination internally and relate compassionately externally to others and to the world. Both the inner work and the outer work of nonviolence are filled with struggles, tensions, and the effort of working through internal and external difficulty. In this sense, nonviolence is not a noun but functions as a verb, mobilizing educational experiences along lines of movement toward a higher aspiration. I have been working with a group of teachers, principals, teacher mentors, and activists in the local area to implement nonviolence into educational work. Each of us has at least one specific educational project to work on and we also engage in nonviolence work with the self. Advocating education about, for, and through nonviolence in the worldliness of curriculum studies (Miller 2005), this paper invites individual and collective efforts to enact the principle of nonviolence in daily practices to open up new possibilities. Individually and together, we can make the world a bit more loving and a bit more sustainable each day. What effort can you make in your own sphere of

influence to enact the principle of nonviolence? Can we practice nonviolence as a shared educational project for a world yet to come, in our different places, times, and contexts, extending hands across difference?

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