

SHOULD WE HOMOGENIZE OUR SCHOOLS?



Allen Lin
Reporter

YES

It is a simple fact of life that one does not have a limitless amount of funds and so the education budget must have limits. Therefore, one cannot have completely individualized educations, as such would be so expensive as to be infeasible. Thus, it is reasonable to state that some degree of homogenization must occur.

It is all well and good for one to be proud of one's culture, but it is difficult to measure the effect of culture on education. Strength of character, spectacular talents, and athletic ability, likewise, are certainly things to be proud of; that is not being denied. However, personality, character, such subjective qualities are so varied, it is hard to classify them at all. As it is difficult to measure the effect of such subjective qualities, it would be nearly impossible to create a method to exploit any benefits it offered. Does being a good person improve academic performance? Does the ability to juggle pins have any bearing on one's ability to juggle numbers? It would be difficult to answer that conclusively without studies and evidence, and few would even perform those sorts of experiments. Furthermore, even if one agreed to attempt a study to measure the effects of such factors on academic achievement, such studies would be expensive and time consuming, taking even more resources from an educational system stretched to the limit. To wit, as of right now, with the educational system hanging precariously, it is not the time for experimentation.

Test scores, on the other hand, are easy to measure and have at least some positive correlation with good performance in school. As they can be quantified, they make an objective way to determine a student's capabilities. This makes them a good a measure as any for sorting students into groups. It would be folly, and untrue, to state the same could be done with culture or personality. Personality, culture, and the like are abstract and cannot be objectively measured, only considered relatively or subjectively. Furthermore, this allows for each level of student to be placed in a class with appropriate pacing, homogenizing somewhat, but still allowing students to learn at their own rate. It would be difficult to use culture, personality, or character in a similar way.

It is true that sorting by test scores creates stratification in the high school social experience, with students socializing mostly with students of the same academic ability, sometimes shunning other types of friendship, but this need not be the case. It is a side effect of the process, not an intrinsic part of it. It can be circumvented with the creation of clubs or groups where one can form other types of friendships. Sorting students by their test scores need not impoverish the social aspect of school. In addition, high scorers are by no means a bland group; in each level there can be observed remarkable amounts of diversity, allowing for one to experience a variety of cultures with those of similar ability. It is true that one may learn from all social groups, not just high scorers, but high academic achievement tends to come from high achievers (although there is confirmation bias), and school is first about academic lessons, not social ones.

In short, I am in favor of homogenizing students by test scores, as it would be difficult to come up with other cost-effective, well-defined methods. Short of a complete revolution in the educational process, other methods would not fit in well, and the negative aspects of sorting by test scores, such as the impact on the school's social aspect can be worked around. As long as education is limited by a finite budget and staff, some sort of grouping and homogenization must occur, but it is not necessarily a bad thing, and test scores can provide an effective, objective, useful way to sort out students.



Avaisa Jefferson-Bruce (9)

"No, because even though you have the same grades your personalities are totally different, you're totally opposite and the only thing you have in common is your grades."

Brooklyn Nelson (10)

"Yes because it's too much time to separate people because of your personality or



Jelani Crudp (11)

"Yes, because I don't think you should put kids who are more advanced beside kids who are less advanced because they'll feel less confident about themselves."

Patrick Chung (12)

"No, because it's unfair to students who are disadvantaged because they aren't inclined to take more advanced classes, and they're less motivated."



Mrs. Jauch

"No, I believe that students can learn from each other and the diversity of abilities and ideas allows students who are struggling to be brought up."

Mr. Bell

"No, a lot of people are good test takers and the test by itself is not a good measure of academic ability."



Samantha Green
Reporter

NO



When people hear the word homogenize they really understand the context spoken about. We mean grouping a set of people by a common trait - in this case, your test scores.

People learn from each other and if we have people of the same mind set and cultures sitting in one classroom this isn't really a change from what we're accustomed to. Especially when the demographic tends to be the same (based off of test scores). Now imagine if all the different cultures and ideas ran freely in a classroom and we managed to build each other in different ways. Not only academically but also with a different perspective. This would make us more prone to adult understanding when we enter the "real world" later on and establish ourselves as adults.

In other countries there aren't different levels, there's just a basic level and everyone has to strive towards success. Growing up in the British system I learned to appreciate I had learned, the steps to success and how to communicate with people on various levels. Though the curriculum may have been more difficult in some areas it taught all of us to help each other. Meaning that students that strived in certain areas helped others who were weak and vice versa. "One man must fend for himself" is often built into the mind set of those who don't help others than themselves.

Seeing that students group themselves based off their test scores the unification is lacking on a whole. Some students have the elitist mentality and prefer to stick with their own groups than help with the basic growth of others. Remember when we were in kindergarten and didn't care about grades, just napping and eating milk and cookies (if you liked milk and cookies)? These are some of the things we're missing as we come of age and go on the journey of becoming an adult. The joy that once existed, the unification that once stood because we didn't have worries.

With AP, IB, Val Tech, ELD etc., we don't have that authenticity, and although these are great programs, we lose sight of other things. Where is the validity and reliability that comes from test scores? Does a C verses an A make you stupid? No - there are so many more variables to consider. Yes, there isn't time to evaluate people and separate them according to culture and whatnot - not what I'm saying. But at the end of the day this distinction in our classrooms transfers into everyday life, causing more separation. This will especially be the case when we enter the adult world and see different levels, for example the upper, lower and middle class. Yes it's expected for us to gravitate towards people like ourselves (those with the same mind set, level of intelligence, cultures etc.) but this only causes more ignorance. People become void to new ideas, lack communication skills when speaking about different topics and aren't open to learning new concepts and ideas.

When coming to school there are various expectations; we come to learn, to see friends, or to establish our futures. There are those who love the very essence of school, down to its very core. Some us are in purgatory (middle way) trying to find ourselves. Now we picture school in different ways and often we are confused about the entire reason we are here, to learn, or to do something else. Ultimately, we all have to do something; even doing nothing is doing something. The stigmas that come with all these classifications just don't help with bettering the general public and the level of knowledge we attain. School is a place where we become better and productive adults even with homogenization in schools we need to learn to separate ourselves from the schools of thought that don't better us on a whole.

THE OBNOXIOUSLY ADDICTIVE SUBSTANCE

Facebook Updating, Twitter Tweeting, and Micro-Blogging Galore

By: Shannon Hsu
Editor

There ought to be an organization called TAA – Twitter Addicts Anonymous, and if there was, then many of us – including myself – would probably have to attend its support group meetings, as someone who just “tweets” way too much. And I know I’m not the only offender – although not even the worst. We all have that one, or maybe even more, friend we “follow” on Twitter that just can’t shut up. Perhaps they’d say, “I’m going to the bathroom now!” and then not even a minute later, they’d feel the need to add “Be right back, I love you all~”, concluded with an annoying little heart. And as soon as they return, you’ll witness your Twitter timeline zoom ahead as they proceed to tell the world it’s dinner time, what they’re having for dinner, whether or not they like it, what they’d rather have instead, how much they’re looking forward to dessert, so on and so forth – all in separate posts – and the cycle goes on and on. And of course, when they return, there’s the inevitable tweet (a cute little name for posts that are made on Twitter) of “I’m back now, did you all miss me?” No. We didn’t.

And then there’s the people who have seemingly endless conversations over Twitter, using the @insertcutesyusernamehere function. It makes me wonder, is it really that difficult to open up another window and start an instant-

messaging conversation instead? Not only would it be easier, but it’d also save the rest of us by being annoyed by your conversation that we’d rather not have flooding up our own Twitter timelines – that is, if you follow both of the people who are engaging in the conversation. Although, I’m not denying that I am also guilty as charged of this incredibly obnoxious habit. There was a time, not too long ago, when Twitter was regarded as a new, revolutionary, different and fresh form of social networking. The possibilities seemed vast and endless – we could communicate in ways we never could before, without the complexities and confusion that sometimes comes with other social networking sites meant to serve similar purposes such as Facebook or Myspace (speaking of which, who even uses Myspace anymore?). Everyone has a Twitter now. I have one, you probably have one, celebrities have one, and chances are that your favorite store to shop at has one, too. It’s not like Twitter is the only way to transmit information to virtually anyone in any countries you can think of, all at the same time, but nevertheless, this (fairly) new trend of social networking, known as “microblogging”, has rapidly become popular all across the world. It seems like people from every corner of the globe use Twitter now. (Unless, of course, you live in places such as China, where it’s blocked, but they have their own version of a “Twitter” there.)

But what sets Twitter apart from those other social networking web-

sites is its simplicity, and the ease it is to update your “status”. Unfortunately, the easier something is, the more one tends to do it. You get addicted quite quickly. And as an added bonus, you can update your Twitter via text messages from your cell phone, and in turn, get everyone’s tweets sent to your text message inbox. I can only pray that everyone who chooses to take advantage of this option has unlimited texting – otherwise you’re almost one-hundred percent guaranteed to run out of texts within a week, and even go over the limit. Or even in a day, if you follow people like me who just don’t know how to shut up. Unless, that is, you’re one of those clever, productive, people who only use Twitter on occasion and have made the very wise decision to only follow a very select few of your friends. Obviously, I am not one of them, and neither are 99.9% of the other users on Twitter. So how does one get to the point where, as previously stated, they “just don’t know how to shut up”? The answer to this can only partially be attributed to addiction to the website. What I’m saying is that people are often “addicted” to Facebook as well, but it doesn’t provide for the same results of Twitter. It’s not that typical for you to have that one Facebook friend who updates their statuses every half a minute, nor do you really see people’s back-and-forth conversations in their statuses to the extreme extent of what you’d see on Twitter, on what is a daily basis for most users. For one thing, Facebook gives you more to

do than Twitter, and you can actually instant-message another person with it. Twitter doesn’t give you freedom to do much other than update your own status, respond to others through your own status, and “retweet” others using – yes, once again, your own status. So everything you say and everything you do there becomes that much more annoying, but somehow, it’s more acceptable than it’d be on Facebook. There’s always the anti-social-networking arguments of “No one cares about your status updates”, or “People who use them are attention seekers.” Unfortunately, it doesn’t seem like Twitter’s over seventy-five million users care that no one cares.

Twitter seems quite pointless, doesn’t it? It really is. It’s not as if it has more features than other social networking sites. But it’s the speed and ease of which one can transmit information to everyone who cares enough to follow – be it meaningful or meaningless, the latter being the usual case – that makes Twitter so appealing and so addicting to its millions of users. It’s not like it’s really a productive use of time – unless, that is, you’re using it for business purposes, which is almost never the case for people of our age group. But I still suppose there’s no harm in saying whatever you want, whenever you want, over Twitter, so long as you stay within the 140-character limit. Never mind the fact that you’ll probably end up annoying everyone who chooses to “follow” you at some point or another. That’s why they created an “unfollow” button, anyway.

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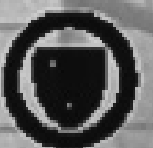
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A SOLDIER HERE, A SOLDIER THERE... ANYWHERE BUT HOME?

By: Samantha Green
Reporter

Should we bring the Iraqi troops back home? Are they in Iraq for the correct reasons? I'm not in personal agreement. Yes, the troops should be taken home from the war. When there's mention of a war in Iraq some think of the reasons why. Most know three reasons: to eliminate Saddam Hussein's weapons of mass destruction, to diminish the threat of international terrorism and to promote democracy in Iraq and surrounding areas. These all "plausible, justifiable" reasons, but at one point to we allow this to keep The United States back.

Many students experience the effects of this war. Primary case, budgetary cuts, larger class size and teacher reductions. The amount of teachers being laid off may not be noticeable but this year alone 22,000 were released. The primary investments of this time could be worried about instead of spending funds on a war that doesn't need to exist. This investment happens to be us, students who need to be more academically driven. If the children are the future then why is it that our government's focus is on the war?

9/11 is sensitive subject to many, since that event

people have been fearful for their lives. Worries of terrorists coming back have been drilled into the psyche of the American population. Many argue that the conspirators weren't even terrorists from the Middle East when it came to bombing of the World Trade Center in New York City. Some say that those who bombed the building were U.S officials who trained in the CIA and the

certain employees were called and told not to go to work that day. Demonization of the US government is not an option here, just a new perspective to look at things.

On August 31st 2010 President Obama announced in a seventeen-minute speech that the Iraqi war is now over and that our troops are coming home. 50,000 troops are still in Iraq doing what we are unaware of, although

reports state that they are helping to rebuild the country. It's a lovely thought that our troops are drinking tea and playing with dolls, spending more money and being martyrs to supposed "enemies." Great men and women serve within our troops, a commendable quality to have, putting your life on the line for all of us. But at the end of the day all these men and women have families who want them home. Why endanger more people for a lost cause? Thousands have died; and there's no need for even more to be added to the list.

The concept of war is a far stretch for me. Yes it has helped to bring great empires alive, and societies all over the world were built on it. There's a war on terror - or is it really a war

against what you think terror is and just your own country. At the end of the day, we don't know the reasons for all these endeavors and I just can't support them. Trust is a big issue here, if we can't even trust our own government, how can we trust this war and the reasons why it exists?



GROUP OF SOLDIERS PREPARING TO LEAVE CAMPSITE. PHOTO COURTESY FROM: WARISBORING.COM

operative attack was a conspiracy for the US government to wage war with Iraq. Basically an avid excuse to move forward with their plans of total world domination, it's scary to think that perhaps our government really isn't on our side. We can further infer about why

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Silence is Golden... Or So They Tell Me

BEN CERCEA
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Gosh darn it, I didn't graduate yet? Dang, oh well.... let us begin this year with some change.

I am really enjoying the "10-10-10" series the *Orange County Register* is doing this month. It is a series of predictions for the next ten years that were concluded by asking "some smart people around town for 10 ideas of what life would be like in 10 years loosely within their own area of expertise." A few of the articles and bulleted information caught my attention including the article 10 ways crime will change in the next 10 years. What caught my attention was: private technology, corporate crime, and public funding. I took the liberty to combine all of them into one quick comment: The private technology, which will be owned by corporations, is supposed to stop the cyber crime, but this private technology will be used by the government which is apparently corrupt, or will become corrupt. See, the corruption will occur through campaign donations and other illegal methods... and who will be sponsoring these illegal methods, why the corporations of course! It's the circle of life, or shall I say the circle of pre-Armageddon?

So Chimp Charlie passed away on Tuesday, but it's okay, he didn't die because of his smoking addiction... well, so they claim. I really am not worried for Chimp Charlie; my thoughts are on the Russian chimpanzee who not only smokes, but he also drinks... Russians... wait a minute, isn't a zoo supposed to be alcohol free?

Google is working on a top secret self-driving car - oh dang, now it's not top secret. It uses cameras and sensors to find its way and drive, just like a karel robot. Now for those Comp-Sci nerds, I have a funny joke for you: prius.drive(). Funny huh? n00b.

So, I guess it is legal for the government agents to GPS devices under your car even though it is on your driveway. The court ruled that the driveway is public unless you can afford gating your property. If you can't, you have a few options: put it in a garage (and close the garage,) build a moat, or, my personal favorite, drive your car into your house. Oh and by the way, the courts also ruled that once they plant a GPS device, they have the right to track you without a warrant. This applies for California and 8 other Western states, but aren't important for my study...

I want to go back to that "10-10-10" series thing I was talking about earlier in this little "rant". The second article that got my attention was the 10 ways your skin will change in 10 years. I think this man was a little confused about what skin is... because half of the 10 things aren't about skin... but anyways, remote control facial and body contours will be the new fad I guess. Within 10 years, women, and some men, will be able to wirelessly adjust their breast size and cheek/lip fullness. There will also be this monitor that detects when you lie! It detects it by monitoring things like eye movement and your heartbeat. Kind of scary don't you think? I mean teachers will now know when we are lying about the reasons why we didn't do our homework...bye!