

## CHAPTER III

### KILIMANJARO

Chapter III	Kilimanjaro	
<u>Origins: Discontent and Response</u>		197
Giving--A Little		200
"Other Ways": In School, but Out		202
The Berkeley Setting		206
The National Scene		207
Success and Control		210
<u>Charter of the Upper Low-Life</u>		213
<u>Ideals of Freedom and Constraint in an Open Community</u>		218
<u>Ideals Enacted: Life at School</u>		220
Sex Education at Kilimanjaro		226
Space and Togetherness		230
<u>Life at School: Volunteers' Views"</u>		234
Educational Excitement		234

Race Issues	240
Sex	242
Politics	245
Authority	247
<u>Community Life: Contradictions In Ideals Enacted</u>	250
Family Lives and School Ideals	251
Membership, Participation, and the Internal Division of Labor	257
Ordering Roles	259
<u>Deformation of Ideals: Work for Pay</u>	265
<u>Deciding How to Decide, Again</u>	266
<u>Vulnerability, Deformation, and Demise</u>	268
[conclusion]	173
Endnotes	281
Bibliography	283

## KILIMANJARO

Pio:What do you do?

Ellis:Right now I'm studying the experimental schools.

Pio: Never call it an experimental school. That makes people lose hope. Out of hope comes strength and that's what you make schools of.

Ellis:What's wrong with saying "experimental"?

Pio:When you say "experimental" that makes people think you're messing around, so you don't say experimental, you say "alternative," because alternative is another way, something, an alternative to what is. And when you have something to work for you have hope and you have strength. You have strength to make the alternative. (Kilimanjaro student, age 11, February 16, 1972)

I worked hard to penetrate the very grave look that eleven-year-old Pio gave me while correcting my poor form in using "experimental" to describe Berkeley's new federally funded schools program. I agreed with him, but I had trouble accepting so quick and tightly organized a response from such a young boy. My attempt to look past his posture was to guess at the scenes--a living room discussion with his parents, perhaps; an intense all-school meeting where this neat formulation of "alternative" ideology was learned. My sociological compulsion was not fair to his very appreciable intelligence. But it was startling how thoroughly his statement encapsulated the views of one group in Berkeley, California, that was struggling to redefine and reorient the city's schools.

Origins: Discontent and Response

Pio was a student at Kilimanjaro Elementary School. It was one of twenty-four new schools created in the Berkeley Unified School District with the support of a massive grant from the National Institute of Education, formed early in the Nixon administration as a new element of HEW. Kilimanjaro was famous--perhaps infamous--in the Experimental Schools Program (ESP) as the most radically unstructured school in the district. The school and the parental efforts that created it were one expression of concerns that had grown steadily out of a constant discontent with public education in this leading-edge city. In 1964, the Free Speech Movement's critique of higher education--a sophisticated blend of political and pedagogical theory--gave impetus to a national argument over the structure and purposes of education in general. Education became part of what "the Movement" was about. Concurrent themes from struggles for civil rights and educational rights were mixed, in overarching--if uncoordinated--effort to redirect the major institutions of the country in a more humane and participatory direction.

The socialization of children in schools was a natural concern of the Movement, since schools were the locus par excellence of the formation and transmission of values. They were central, in all cultural critiques, to the quality and character of other institutional spheres of American society: work, economy, leisure.

The impulses that generated Kilimanjaro were similar to those out of which Operation Bootstrap had grown. Bootstrap was seeking a new and effective path for black people out of the quagmire of poverty and self-rejection. The alternative movement in education similarly sought escape from the rigid, self-constricting character of a public education system that mainly disciplined a work force and sought order at the expense of black progress. Critics came to see the resulting problems as not unique to blacks in schools. The struggles for desegregation and regeneration of ghetto schools were, for these critics, clear examples of the work everyone must do to free the educational enterprise from the mindless dominance of a corporate state unable to admit freedom, value commitments, and participation into its process.

So, just as the quest for the civil liberation of black people had developed a cultural nationalist theme, which sought a more self-accepting personal transformation of dominated minds, there emerged in the same period new countercultural, psychological, and religious swells for personal liberation in other parts of the society.

Kilimanjaro sought to be part of all of these movements. Pio's imperative was an elegant summary of the intent and goals of the alternative school movement--of Kilimanjaro and of those in Berkeley who were attempting to recreate the city through its schools. But, as with all grass-roots efforts of this sort in the 1960s, the inevitable governmental response affected--some would say absorbed--what the movement demanded.

It is no surprise that Berkeley, California, would be a seedbed for places such as Kilimanjaro. The city houses a university famous for the generation of new ideas. Similarly, its citizens and the people attracted to the university had become well-known for their readiness to act out their philosophic, political, and aesthetic convictions, and to demand integrity of belief and public action. The city had a history of transforming liberal inclinations into formal practice through its governing agencies. For example, in a contentious, highly visible, and participatory process, Berkeley began voluntarily desegregating its public schools well before other municipalities were forced to that necessity by federal law. Sproul Plaza, on the university campus, eruptive site of the campus Free Speech Movement, became a free expressive and political space and the end of a pilgrimage for students from around the world. And Berkeley in the 1960s became a "free life space," generating more than its share of "food conspiracies," communes, political collectives, and other intentional groups of people beginning or confirming altered lives and minds in a mutually supportive atmosphere.

### Giving--A--Little

In retrospect, desegregation of its schools seems to have been an opportunity, afforded by the issues of the times, for Berkeley to change itself in ways larger than simply redressing racial inequities. The change in the schools was the most focused of those that occurred.

Even with the liberal intellectual atmosphere engendered by the rapidly growing university, the Republican city had been slow to respond to the demographic shifts in its population that had followed World War II.<sup>1</sup> It was only shortly before the 1954 Supreme Court decision (Brown vs. The Board of Education) on school desegregation, for example, that the city's high school swimming pool was opened to black children on Friday nights (Sibley, pp. 2-3). But soon after the school desegregation decision agitation was begun to integrate the district's teaching staff. There followed in rapid sequence a series of meetings,

surveys, workshops, bond referenda, and school board elections that occurred during the next ten years and resulted, not only in the liberalization of district racial policies, but in a general, progressive broadening of curricula in the schools.

By 1968 the district had received a National Arts and Humanities grant to aid in the Restructuring of the curriculum of its lone high school. The Berkeley Summer Project included course content dealing with self-worth, relationships with others, control of one's destiny. Extensive time was devoted to drama, art, dance, and communication. Similarly, student-created and student-led projects occupied appreciable time. Informality, cooperative planning, and flexibility of scheduling were core features of the project's organization. The entire effort stressed dissolution of hierarchy and the spread of authority throughout the group of participants in communal decision-making.

In the second semester of the 1969 academic year, the project was introduced as the semi-autonomous Community High School within Berkeley High. This free educational space, deposited in a traditional setting, was partly the result of a careful, alternative, pedagogical rationale. But there were other reasons for the appearance of Community High School. The overwhelming majority of its students were white children of affluent, Berkeley "hills" families. Many of these students, often with the implicit sanction of their parents, were acting out the lives of budding political radicals in a small city thunderously alive with activist, leftist, and antiwar politics. Many were also "hippie freaks" in quest of new, Aquarian Age commitments, consciousness, and community. Their drugs, sex, music, language, and personal styles were those of San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury district across the bay.

Parental acceptance often did not extend to some of the attitudes and actions that resulted. Bones broken in political demonstrations, jail terms for arrests at Peoples' Park or for conscientious draft evasion were one thing. Minds blown on drugs and truncated educational careers were another. Community High School became, in some measure, a fearful and strategic effort by the community and some parents to give a little--to support the new styles and values that many adults shared, but to control the others, and to keep them played out in school.

"Other Ways": In School, but Out

Herbert Kohl was one of the many people attracted to the rolling dynamism of Berkeley. Teacher, alternative advocate, and author, he had

dropped out of Harvard's doctoral program in philosophy to teach in the cauldron of New York City's public schools. His inventive efforts there to salvage the motivation, self-respect, and creativity of black fifth and sixth graders from the chaos and degradation of P.S. 103 had an enormous impact on the national debate on teaching when, in 1967, his book 36 Children was published.

Kohl's's first-hand experience (he had also worked with P.S. 201's parent group in Harlem), combined with his informed position on alternative education, made him exceptionally relevant to Berkeley's circumstances at the time. The Berkeley School District was confronted with increasing pressure to open its classrooms to more varied styles of teaching and studenting and to more "relevant" subject matter. But it was under even greater pressure to change the bimodal curve that for years had characterized its students' performance on assorted state and national tests. Blacks predominated at the lower mode of the curve. The district had somehow to respond to these pressures in that facet of a still-monolithically white teaching corps, in newly integrated but still-traditional schools.

One of the district efforts to deal with these issues was a collaboration with Herb Kohl. Kohl and colleague Alan Kaprow conceived a teacher training center for Berkeley. With the support of Neil Sullivan, then superintendent of schools, a proposal was submitted to the Carnegie Foundation to:

- (1) conduct teacher training seminars;
- (2) develop and print teacher training and curriculum materials to be used by people interested in opening up their classrooms;
- (3) attempt to create models for change within the public schools and encourage the development of a few of these models in Berkeley; and
- (4) bring poets, artists, community organizers, scientists, and other skilled individuals into the schools to work with young people and collaborate with them and teachers in developing sensible and humane forms of schooling.<sup>2</sup>

The Carnegie Foundation responded favorably and, in September of 1968, Other Ways opened in a storefront. The district adopted a cooperative, hands-off approach to the collaboration. But the location of the center "off-site" (not on district property) set a precedent that was to condition relations between alternative educators and the district for years to come.

It is difficult to exaggerate the influence of Kohl and his colleagues on the Berkeley setting. The political atmosphere of the city was receptive to articulate, radical voices that strengthened the chorus of societal challenges with which the city was ringing. Kohl's was the most public voice in education. Other Ways was to become an embodiment of the alternative critique of education within the very institution under attack. The district had responded to appreciable community demand by taking risks to modernize the culture of its schools. In so doing, it provided the home for a clearly located critique of its own practices, and it gave its critics institutionally legitimate access to its teachers and students.

Within a year Other Ways evolved into Berkeley's first off-site alternative school.

We were assigned this storefront on Grove Street . . . and told to do what we wanted. We were . . . not put in contact with any teachers or any kids in the Berkeley School District, but left to do it ourselves. . . . We put a poster up in all the schools, in Cody's Book Store, up at the university. We invited people to come to the storefront on Monday afternoons. . . . Some of the kids in the neighborhood dropped in. Some of the teachers began to come there to Monday sessions and asked me to work with their classes and begin to meet kids. Then, I got bored because I really liked working with kids much better; and I asked one of the people from Willard Junior High if I could work there. I found the constraints on my work impossible, you know the physical facility, the almost institutionalized caesaritarianism . . . the racial tension, and the misery of the kids. So we bussed the kids down to the storefront, and that began to extend. By the end of the first year, also, some of the teachers who were dropping in and some people from the community and some friends of the people we brought up from New York decided to stay around. So there was myself, a bunch of adults, and a bunch of kids. So we decided to become a school.\*

At the end of its first school year Other Ways was accredited and graduated eleven students with Berkeley High School diplomas.

The off-site precedent was explosive. Other Ways soon became, in the minds of some, an alternative even to the newly created Community High School. More important still, a complex of subcommunities of interest began to emerge in the school district, with plans and demands for other off-site school serving very specific cultural and subject-matter concerns. Within two years Berkeley housed ten schools crowded uncomfortably under the mantle "alternative." Five of these were off-site. Among them were Black House and Casa de la Raza, serving the needs that some minority parents and teachers saw to physically separate from the stream of public education, in order to reorient and upgrade the skills and ethnic consciousness of minority students.

One of these new off-site schools began as troubled Le Conte Elementary School. Lee Conte's principal was--in proclivity, style, and training--uncongenial to the new forces abroad in the city, some of which now took up residence under her authority.

---

\*Interview by Herb Kohl. Unless otherwise indicated, all interviews were conducted by me or members of my experimental schools program research team. See Appendix--for full description of my role and the teams activities.

With the evident sanction of the school district, enterprising students from Other Ways, and several parents as well, began insinuating into her bailiwick activities and attitudes that she and many of her teachers could barely tolerate. An alternative classroom was started in the basement of the school in the spring of 1970. It soon coalesced into an enthusiastic group of parents and teachers who were generally dissatisfied with the scale, content, and impersonality of the school's daily educational life.

By the end of the school year this group, with some students, teachers, and parents attracted from another school, resolved to split off from Le Conte. After consulting with Kohl and others, they successfully negotiated that right with the school board and the district administration. With minimal support from the district, they created a summer program under the name Parents and Teachers for Alternative Education (PTAE). This group was soon to become Kilimanjaro.

## The Berkeley Setting

Kilimanjaro was created in the context of two major external developments: the rapidly deteriorating financial condition of the district, and the emergence nationally of funding for experimental schools.

Impelled by its explosive new energies, the increasingly liberal Berkeley citizens were willing to pay new taxes for racial desegregation and curricular exploration in the schools. But this civil philanthropy barely kept abreast of burgeoning inflation. At the state level, inflation and the reluctance of Californians to vote new monies for education combined to bring about a massive reduction in state contributions to school district revenues between 1960 and 1970.<sup>3</sup> By spring of 1971, the district projected a deficit of \$2.6 million. This fiscal drought was also affecting school districts around the country.

Neil Sullivan and his 1969 successor as superintendent, Richard Foster, were very resourceful at holding the Berkeley School district in high relief as a national experimental showcase. They were equally successful at offsetting district deficits with extramural funding. In fact, the district had managed, through its project development office, to attract nearly nine million dollars in such funds between 1961 and 1971. Berkeley newcomers Kohl and Foster, in an uneasy alliance, negotiated through the Ford Foundation two hundred fifty thousand dollars for a "comprehensive effort toward alternative modes of education within the standard system" (Sibley, p. 200). The funded proposal included marginal support for the fledgling PTAE in its first full year of operation, 1970-1971.

## The National Scene

Ford Foundation funding of Berkeley's alternative expansion was, at the time, just the most recent of that foundation's strategic forays into social reform. Like Ocean Hill-Brownsville, Berkeley benefited from the foundation's continuing efforts to refine the attacks on urban social problems that it had launched in the 1950s (Timpane, p. 552). Recognizing the linkages between poverty, racial inequality, power, and

education, the Ford Foundation, in the 1960s, supported numerous community action, participation, and educational reform programs around the country. Of these, Ocean Hill-Brownsville was the most notorious. Berkeley's proposal offered the foundation an opportunity to boost an already-launched program to a level that promised both actual school reform and increased knowledge about the path of successful outcomes.

Ostensibly, nothing could have differed more fundamentally than the orientations of the Richard Nixon administration's policies and those of the Ford Foundation. Nonetheless, Nixon's rejection of Johnson-era War on Poverty programs left the need for federal interventions that would address the same problems in times vivid with urgency. The fulcrum of similarity between liberal and conservative reformers was their commonly held critique of Johnson's projects: the leap into these projects was precipitous and political; they were too poorly crafted to yield scientifically sound and useful knowledge; they created chaos and general disappointment.

Thus, in March of 1970 President Nixon announced to Congress, in his "Message on Education Reform," plans to create a National Institute of Education (NIE) that would institute an Experimental Schools Program (ESP) to "begin the serious systematic search for new knowledge needed to make educational opportunity truly equal" (Timpane p. 548).

Experimentation evolved as a prominent feature of the resulting program. Its projected success was seen to hinge on "designing experimental models encompassing whole schools, focusing the best ideas recently developed in education upon the most important social and educational issues, and . . . installing a system of thorough and rigorous documentation of educational processes" (Timpane, p. 560).

While the political task of negotiating the president's program through Congress washed away some of this scientific emphasis (Cohen, p. 55), a good deal remained when, in January of 1971, the director of the new NIE phoned Superintendent Foster to make him aware of the program and invite him to a small conference.

The Berkeley showcase had magnetized the attention of federal planners, as it had the Ford Foundation. Indeed, with important exceptions, NIE's charter could easily have been written in Berkeley. The NIE template for selecting up to five initial ESP sites was to be:

- 1) demonstrated experiences with education innovations on a large scale;
- 2) staff capacity and competency to manage comprehensive experimentation;
- 3) development of a plan for broad participation in the design, implementation, and governance of a project;
- 4) identification of the targeted population for a potential project;
- 5) extent to which design fulfills objectives of the Experimental Schools program, including:
  - a primary target population of low-income children
  - a student population of approximately 2,000 to 5,000
  - a longitudinal K-12 design
  - a comprehensive approach to the learning environment, including, but not limited to, curriculum development, community participation, staff development, administration, and organization;
- 6) attention to evaluation and documentation of the total project;
- 7) commitment of resources for the duration of the project.<sup>4</sup>

### Success and Control

Recognizing the special attention accorded their district, Foster and his staff prepared a proposal for a sixty-day planning grant from NIE. One of the eight grants given was awarded to the Berkeley Unified School District (BUSD), in a competition that included nearly five hundred school district applicants.

The sixty-day planning process was filled with community conflict. In its application to NIE, the district had promised "Options Through Participation":

The Berkeley Unified School District proposes to institute a model of education that addresses itself to the pluralism in the community of Berkeley, and will do this by sponsoring an organizational structure that will offer alternatives to American public education unprecedented in a public school system. These alternatives or options will not be merely tolerated by the standard system, but will be legitimized and supported so that they may co-exist and thrive alongside the so-called standard system. Further, it is expected that they will influence the standard system toward future substantive institutional change.

This model would have two goals:

To implement alternative approaches to public educational programs by offering real options for students that reflect a commitment to a culturally pluralistic society . . . (which is in) pace with the social, technological, and knowledge revolutions (of this era).

To provide feedback from these alternative programs that will influence the standard programs through a continuous process of evaluation and self-correction leading to a change. (Cohen: 60-61)

When it got the planning grant, BUSD called for proposals of alternative school designs, but in an announcement that critics charged was issued late and was not widely disseminated. District staff responded opaquely to community inquiries about the planning grant and insisted on district control of the planning process. Some alternative schools were refused inclusion in the proposal; some traditional schools with no interest in being "alternative" or "experimental" were pressured into submitting proposals. The traditional schools responded angrily. One principal complained: "Don't call it alternative, hand it to us, and expect to get the community involved" (Sawyer, p. 6).

The loose network of off-site alternative schools hastily formed themselves into an alliance. They presented a united front to the district staff, insisting that the proposal to NIE include their package of more radically alternative proposals. All must be accepted, they said, or none would participate. But Foster hung tough in what he

regarded as a struggle for control. He cited NIE's insistence on applicants' approximating an experimental design. And he played on the alternative efforts. The strains broke the ranks of the alliance, and Foster won his battle for control. But the split in the larger world of Berkeley's schools had become clearly visible and had widened. It was to plague district politics until the death of the alternative schools.

Despite their strategic losses, all of the alternative schools were funded when, in June of 1971, Berkeley received \$3.6 million, renewable, for the first thirty months of its Experimental Schools Program.

The research firm hired by NIE for long-range documentation and evaluation of the Berkeley experiment was later to conclude:

Thus, not only were "community" schools being rejected, but new administratively-linked schools were being hastily created to meet Washington's guideline for a range of schools covering K-12 in the "alternative" school category. It was beginning to appear as if there was no genuine community involvement at all in the drafting of the proposal because people did not know what was going on, and by the time they did know, it was too late to get involved. Thus, BESP is a child of grant writers, administrators, and federal guidelines.<sup>5</sup>

The first glossy brochure received by parents announcing the new program attempted to mollify them:

The Office of Education required that the Berkeley package be reworked so that all of the experimental schools be contained in just two of the city's four attendance zones. The reason was to have a comparison, or "control" group--two zones with alternatives and two without. The U.S. Office of Education also named the program Experimental instead of Alternative. This offends some advocates of Alternatives, who consider their program as "another way" rather than an experiment. With 3.6 million [dollars] at stake, the label on the effort was considered a matter of semantics. Berkeley educators who have and are fathering alternatives to the status quo in education agree that the important thing is in the result, not the title.<sup>6</sup>

Pio was not convinced.

### Charter of the Upper Low-life

LETS see the positive signs that we are growing as well as changing LETS bring our teenagers to Kilimanjaro LETS study ecology and environment LETS learn self sufficiency in our daily life LETS learn the basic skills and practice them outside school in our homes, etc. LETS collect as many books for ourselves and each other as we can so we don't have to resort to state texts LETS take care of all tools including books which are valuable tools LETS expand our present environment and explore others LETS make this thing a continuing thing which in time responds to the sun and moon and earth seasons rather than to a school district timetable LETS do more field trips and camping in small and large groups thereby keeping our classroom the largest and most diversified possible to our needs LETS SLEEP around in each others homes thereby learning about each others' closet environments LETS feel learning as an organic process involuntary and autonomous LETS feel it as being inseparable to our physical growth LETS think of Kilimanjaro as a group of people learning and helping each other learn survival techniques in ever more rapidly changing environments LETS find our ourselves a center outside the city closer to mountains, desert, forest and ocean so we can learn to live in different ways than the urban way LETS learn independently with as much love for each other as we can muster together.

First Issue of Kil News  
October 29, 1971, p.5

This cathartic, ideological spray opened the first issue of Kilimanjaro News, October 29, 1971. It is a call to community action by Jeremy Tribe, a member of the Kilimanjaro founding core group. This first and central parent body can best be described as grown-up counterculture. Predominantly single, white welfare mothers 25 to 35 years old, they seemed latecomers to the Aquarian Age. But the wide expanse of living styles and arrangements tolerated by an experimenting Berkeley made their mixture of parenting and alternative life explorations not odd but somewhat heroic.

While many had tried opting out of society, most were not "dropouts." Moving to Berkeley (many were migrants) obviated that popular choice. They hovered, instead, between buying into the system and entirely rejecting it. Dropping out, to the extent that it was an ideologically informed act in those times, was seen as the only way to establish a new world of expanded consciousness, love, and community in a society of dead practices and ideals. Berkeley, however, had announced its intent to be different, to open its institutional doors to progressive change in many different areas of life. These were parents, and the door widest open was that of the schools.

The nether world between "in" and "out", which most of the core group occupied, moved one mother to reflect plaintively in a general meeting: "You know what we are? We're upper low-life." They were indeed visitors to, but not denizens of, the acid-freed world of the urban counterculture, living off street smarts and the then-nutritious, castoff produce of the affluent society's supermarkets. Most could claim good, if not extensive, educations. Their poverty was, in the main, voluntary. Welfare payments, when a justification was needed, could be seen as "liberated" money extracted from the system to nurture the growth of the system-changing lives. Otherwise, their marginal existences were supported by ad hoc service work, sex therapy classes, street music, odd jobs, and the hip-capitalism of pottery and other handcraft sales on various Bay Area promenades.

The creation of Kilimanjaro was less an effort to make a school than a formal confirmation of similar lives in one community. Jeremy Tribe's hopes for Kilimanjaro would make the community and the wider world the school. The school as a situated building would be only a starting point. Its walls were to be infinitely permeable both to exit and to the intrusion of the outer world's varied people and ideas.

School district money was functionally similar to welfare checks; and it carried similar burdens of accountability. The core group at Kilimanjaro was not entirely hostile to such burdens, since its self-conception was, in part, that of world-changing agent. It would teach the district a special version of increased educational options, reduced institutional racism, and participation. Compromise, while difficult, was seen as necessary to help them survive and to get underway the system's reverse education into new values.

An early flyer announcing the school's purposes to the wider public of potential recruits declared:

Kilimanjaro is a nongraded school from kindergarten to 6th grade. We are part of Berkeley Public School System. Kilimanjaro has 9 teachers, 50 children, many volunteers, and parents, ALL OF WHOM HAVE EQUAL SAY IN SCHOOL AFFAIRS.

We believe the overcrowded schools have been, and are, racist, sexist, and authoritarian. We recognize our commitment to solve these problems within ourselves and our schools. We believe in offering a meaningful curriculum including survival skills, reading and math skills, contract teaching, nonviolent solutions to conflict, and an understanding of our natural environment.

The world is our class room.

We hope to develop an appreciation of ethnic, sexual, and personal worth in a free-learning environment....

Our program is designed so that child growth at Kilimanjaro will reflect community-world awareness and concern. Through working together as a community, we hope to fill part of the great need.

Kilimanjaro's never-completed, legal articles of nonprofit incorporation asserted:

This educational venture is established on the principle that education is not inculcation, the learning of programmed responses, the assimilation of western civilization, or the learning of socially sanctioned morality, but is rather the organic process by which an individual learns through individual environmental education the joy of self-discovery freely sought on the basis of what he or she understands is relevant, thereby developing his full potential as an autonomous individual.

Ideals of Freedom and Constraint in an Open Community

Freedom from received rules and practices formed the rejectionist end of upper low-life ideals. Openness to free explorations of new possibilities in rules, roles, relationships, and responsibilities was the environment in which the community would pioneer.

Order was to come from interpersonal trust and commitment to the community enterprise. All sources of invidious distinction and authority would be dissolved, even authority of belief. There were no books or bookish ideologues of socialism or anarchism to which the community turned, except for ad hoc "free school" articles and Herb Kohl, who functioned more as a practical legitimator of the school's efforts than as an ideological fount. But the group's basic notions of authority were radically, if diffusely, anarchistic. Decision-making was to be entirely by consensus in a democracy of regular and as-needed meetings that included the entire Kilimanjaro community.

Complementing this open freedom within the community was this sole conception of constraint: individual commitments to participate fully in all aspects of community life. Induction into the community carried this requirement. Michael, a large and voluble parent and member of the core group, posed the issue to a prospective new teacher: "We are building a community with the school as its focal point. You can't leave school behind you when you go home. Do you want to try that?" Personal relationships were expected to transcend normal school boundaries of space and time and to come before outside concerns.

Within the Kilimanjaro world, interpersonal relationships were expected to benefit from the lack of an external authority structure, because participants would be able to rely instead on mutual respect, love, trust, cooperation, sensitivity, constructive criticism, and nonviolent solutions to problems. The emphasis on nonviolence was an ideal held particularly by parents for children, as an opportunity for them to learn a mode of interpersonal problem-solving different from the prevailing tendency to violence in the ordinary schools.

Roles were to be dissolved. "All adults should be parents to all kids" read the Kilimanjaro Handbook. Likewise, "All people at the school should be considered of equal value." The roles of parent and teacher were required by reality and by the school district. But they, like age, sex, and ethnic differentiations, were thought to function more as barriers to personal growth and societal liberation than as facilitating social conduits. Respecting the rights and dignity of all would lead to a nonsexist, nonracist, nonageist community. One critic

of Kilimanjaro characterized these utopians as "macrame radicals" absorbed in hoping "The world can be multicultural." That, indeed, was the ideal.

The bane of open groups is the locus of responsibility. At Kilimanjaro, responsibility was to be generalized throughout the community and unspecific in content. "Responsibility is on whoever is there," said the handbook. Commitment, participation, and the expectation of self-evaluation and mutual evaluation would throw into relief (and solve) the problems normally handled by assignment. There would be trained teaching staff and a coordinator, because those were functions necessitated by the outside world. The people occupying such roles were expected to share their jobs, not allow them to harden. Most of the work of the community would be done by unpaid volunteers.

Finally, the slogan "the world is our classroom" was meant to keep the environment of the school open to the world and vice versa.

#### Ideals Enacted: Life at School

For a year, the new school was "lost" to the attention of the school board and the district, tucked away in an illegal building from which it got its name. Then Kilimanjaro moved to a new site for the 1971-1972 school year. Rent was paid from ESP funds. This site, previously a church and its surrounding grounds, was located on the northern edge of the University of California near student thoroughfares and shopping areas. Northside embraces a rich convergence of university buildings, stately older Berkeley homes of stable upper-middle class families, student co-ops, and apartments. Situated in the foothills, the area includes several schools of religion long associated with the university. This door connecting city and university life was more quiet and orderly than the southern one. The latter, the Sather Gate entry, was the locus of Sproul Plaza, scene of the Free Speech Movement, door to Telegraph Avenue's street merchants and musicians, panhandling freaks, political harangues, Peoples' Park, and the other symbols of the Berkeley that had become publicly known through the media for several years.

"Hey, give me a dime!" were the first words I heard from a seven-year-old boy on my initial visit to Kil. Shunting aside the self-righteous hustle, I wandered past a noisy clutch of boys playing a rough

and peculiar variety of football at one end of the church grounds. The grounds were wet from December rains, and barely discernible in the mud of the game was what once had been a bank of neat and carefully tended plants. Even with the general litter and abuse it was suffering, the multitiered site retained a physical serenity that lent an idyllic character to the scene of scattered groups of children.

The football game included six boys who varied greatly in size and physical coordination. It seemed casual and open-ended. The boys got plays off quickly, with much running around and no apparent regard for ordinary rules. There were frequent acts of gratuitous violence, ending suddenly and invariably in loud arguments within and between teams over the adequacy of someone's effort, where the ball should be placed, how to interpret the rules, where out-of-bounds lines were located, and so on. The game was played on the highest area of the city and its sounds formed a constant background to the outdoor life of the school.

Wandering away from the game toward the school's central courtyard, I encountered a small black boy to whom I said a tugging "hello." He looked directly at and through me without responding. Soon after, I was accosted by a large bearded man who asked in rapid-fire succession: "Who are you? What are you doing here? Have you spoken to the director?" Learning that I hadn't, he instructed me: "I think you'd better go upstairs and talk to her."

The office, located in a small shingled cottage above a garage, provided the same scene in all my visits to Kilimanjaro. It was almost always occupied by single mothers, girls of various ages, and an occasional young boy. The mood varied from quiet inactivity to the frenetic, if insouciant, conduct of business. Stephanie, the director, answered occasional phone calls. Kids popped in, asking no one in particular: "When is the zoo trip?" "Are the free lunches in yet?" "What time do I have to be back for the bus?" and so on, throughout the day. Otherwise, the ebb and flow of big and little people seemed agenda-less.

"Your job is to convince me I should let you look at the school," was Stephanie's semiserious response upon learning that I was from the "outside" evaluation team. We spent several minutes discussing the degree of threat I represented from the school district or the federal government. Satisfied that my interests were sympathetic, she asked if I'd like a tour of the school. A boy looked into the office. He was sloppily dressed, with frizzy, blond, uncombed hair that sat insecurely

on his head. He turned out to be ten years old but had the mein of someone aged thirty; this was enhanced by a cigar clamped competently in the corner of his mouth. Traces of little boy appeared in the stylized way he thumped cigar ash on the office floor, punctuating his agreement to show me around the school. This was Martin.

Setting a mountain-trek pace, Martin led me downstairs, stopping briefly to muse aloud: "Hummm, gee, they fixed this." He explained to me that behind the once-broken door of the garage sat the school's carpentry tools. Dutifully, with a thorough and incessant patter, Martine gave me an account of every physical space in the school: the ball field, the upper court, the "quiet room" downstairs, and the large crafts, study, and dancing room that had once been the main chapel of the church. Suddenly he said, "Oh well, let me introduce you to some of the people," and headed toward the football game. We passed it, then a few adults, then a knot of older girls. As we went, Martin unceremoniously called out the names of people and directed their uncomprehending attention to me: ". . . Ross [sic]. He's from the outside evaluation team."

His second-round tour of introductions ended abruptly when we returned to the chapel, the school's largest indoor space. We were greeted with "Martin, you're smoking again!" "Yep," he said to his critic, a girl who, with several others, was being supervised in rug weaving by a parent volunteer. Entranced by the weaving, Martin forgot his tour duties and shouted "Hey, can I do that?" The woman said "Sure" and handed him a small hand-loom device, yarn, and a square of rough material through which the device poked colorful threads. Suddenly, he was all little-boy concentration. It took him several minutes to realize that the cigar smoke was interfering with his ability to make the device work. Tilting his head from side to side to keep the smoke out of his eyes, he finally took the cigar out of his mouth, looked at it a few moments, and rushed distractedly outside. There, he gathered a large mouthful of spit, deposited it on the ground and squashed the cigar out in it, leaving the remains stuck upright in the ground.

Having lost my guide, I roamed as unobtrusively as possible around the room, the walls of which were covered with antiwar and Black Panther posters, children's paintings, the weeks' schedule of events and classes, a large photograph of Lenin. The litter was impressive. Unfinished paintings, opened paints, and wet brushes were scattered about the area reserved for that purpose--a raised platform at the east end of the room where the church's altar had been. On a ping-pong table

with a slack net were tall stacks of records outside their covers, a few of which had ended up on the tile floor under the table. A few standard elementary school desks were clustered in no apparent order in one part of the room. Underneath stained-glass windows opposite the altar was arranged a small library area, most of its books off the shelves and on the floor. In it a woman was reading to a small group of children between five and seven years old, one of them clearly too young to be a student at Kilimanjaro.

A great bang exploded in the altar end of the room. The entire football game entered and slammed through the rug weavers, grabbing at the kids and the work in progress in an obvious raid on their activities. Oddly, there was little or no response from the girls except scattered calls of "Quit it," a retrieval of the lost pieces and a return to work as if nothing in particular had happened. The parent volunteer (Rikki) murmured "Okay, you guys" as they exited. She took the occasion of the disruption to engage me in conversation.

She explained the size, purpose, origin, and organization of the school, as well as some of its ideals. We were joined by her daughter, whom she greeted with mock karate moves learned in a self-defense class at Kilimanjaro. Her daughter responded similarly during our conversation, pretending to smash her mother's knee with a kick or throw her over a shoulder, until Rikki firmly instructed her to stop. With disarming candor Rikki began an account of her own life and involvement with Kilimanjaro, her distress about the public schools and the problems her daughter was having in them.

The reading session had ended. Lou, another parent volunteer, overheard our discussion and meandered over to us. She immediately picked up Rikki's confessional mood and began to unfold her own story. Four of Lou's boys were at Kilimanjaro. She had been desperate to get them out of the public schools. She said this with a soft and deliberate voice, as though her mind went great distances away from the room, the building, the town, the planet to find her thoughts. A wan woman, she fitted perfectly the style that was then referred to as "spaced out."

Indeed, she described herself as having spent several years "on the road," and as having been one of the "early people in the Haight." Her kids, she said with some gravity, had "had to put up with a lot" during her hippie years of open-life, drug and sex explorations. Her personal crisis with the schools had begun when one of her boys "just

stole everything in sight." She had found herself constantly having to give things back and to convince shopkeepers that he "meant no harm."

At about the time she began to worry she had started receiving phone call from officials of the school district about his behavior at school. Soon after, in consultations with district counselors, "They started telling me I was crazy and my children needed help." She thought the school's psychologists were absurd and decided to take action, holding sessions with her son to describe what was wrong with stealing, explaining "there's good karma and bad karma." She was beginning, she thought, to see results, especially since the move to Kilimanjaro.

Kid business and other distractions ended our discussion. Rikki left and another woman came up to ask, in a whisper, if Lou had her car. Both departed, surreptitiously, leaving me the only adult in the room.

Earlier, Rikki had invited me to return to Kilimanjaro. "You might be interested because we're going to have our sex education class and there will be a film of elephants fucking."

### Sex Education at Kilimanjaro

I returned expressly to observe the sex education class and went directly to the quiet room where the film was to be shown. This room had been established after several complaints by parents and students about the lack of any space for serious, supervised study. Creating the room had run counter to the school's ideology of universal openness in the learning environment. Learning and teaching were to have been spontaneous events that would emerge from any situation in a rich, unstructured curriculum. Sheila, one of three paid instructors, was formally in charge of the room. But Rikki and Cheryl, another parent who was the wife of the school's unpaid codirector, Michael, were vaguely supervising the occasion. Several six to nine year olds were intermittently working on reading, math, and writing. Older girls sat around in coats or long dresses, a few with colorful scarves on their heads, some in conversations, others reading comic books. Martin arrived and joined the scattered few who simply milled about the space.

The room was not quiet. Rikki announced "Okay, now, everybody, we're going to continue with our sex-education class, and we're going to see the film of elephants fucking and some movies about dogs and

dolphins." She introduced a young graduate student from the university and immediately the brief gathering of attention Rikki had managed to achieve disintegrated into general chaos.

The young man attempted to provide background information on why scientists were interested in animal sexuality, but he never got the kids' attention. The general din increased. He finally gave up in exasperation and started the first film. With the lights out, a few objects began to fly around the room and the noise, which did not decrease in volume, shifted to loud two-person conversations. Neither Rikki nor Cheryl attempted to calm the crowd, nor did they seem bothered by it. The film's rather technical narration was barely audible above the noise.

The first film was about dolphins and focused on the behavior of adult males. The animals were in captivity and the underwater footage showed them as they maneuvered a ball underwater against the bottom of their pool, trapped it against their penises and, in great humping movements, got repeated playful pleasure. The children as a group seemed indifferent to these scenes. But occasional undirected questions rang out: "What's he doing?" "He's masturbating." "Why does he do this?" The questions seemed to come from the youngest children and were fielded by older students or by one of the two parents. Many questions evoked no response. The graduate student's attempted answers were too long and were never completed before they were engulfed by the noise that briefly receded following a question. He finally slumped against a wall behind the projector and stopped speaking.

The second part of the film depicted a bull elephant approaching a female, ponderously mounting her, and the two finally achieving sexual intercourse. While the noise level never decreased, its content changed when the camera focused on the elephant's penis, a massive, prehensile organ that moved very much like an elephant's trunk does. It seemed to have a consciousness of its own, taking ages to scout out the vagina and entering slowly with repeated, snake-like undulations. Questions like "How does it do that?" were soon buried in a cascade of laughter and jokes accompanied by a rising sexual tension that soon produced, for the first time, focused group attention.

The noisy crowd was now engaged. Bobby, an older black student, requested permission to thread the next film onto the projector and proceeded to break it. The graduate student, now angry and seemingly near tears, protested that it belonged to his departmental library. But

he was too intimidated to follow his apparent inclination to pack his things and leave. He overlapped the broken ends of the film and started a sequence about beagles. The focus and tension from the elephant scenes were enhanced by those of dogs locked helplessly in post-coital genital tumescence. Laughter, moans of sympathetic sadness at the expression on the male dog's face, and cries of "Ow!" filled the room. Realizing the opportunity in this collective focus, the graduate student shouted a didactic alternative to the students' perspective: "This is a 'survival factor.' The dog's penis swells to make sure his semen gets into the girl dog. That way nature makes sure puppies are born and then there will be new beagles." This brought the only quiet spell of the session, which soon ended for good after the next portion of the film showed a bitch determinedly licking a dog's penis. "That's what Karen does to Mark," laughed an older boy from the back of the room, producing an explosion of jokes, pushing and shoving. Trying to retrieve the educational mood he had produced with his earlier account, the graduate student explained that this behavior was also thought to be a survival factor "genetically transmitted. The dog's penis sometimes get prematurely large and the female instinctively licks it and that makes it smaller so they can have intercourse."

To no avail. The class was lost for good, with some bottom pinching in the dark. The film ended and the lights went on. The looks on the faces of the youngest children varied from boredom to relief. The older girls seemed studiously indifferent. The older boys laughed, joked, and rushed from the room, one or two mocking or pushing those in front of them. On his way out Martin mused loudly, "Boy, straight kids would really be freaked by this." Suddenly a clot of big boys, including some footballers, gathered at the door. One shouted in, "Hey, are we going to see that movie about elephants fucking?" Rikki spoke to the graduate student. Reluctantly, he started the film again. Most of the older girls stayed for the second showing.

### Space and Togetherness

A committee of core-group parents had reviewed more than fifty potential sites before choosing the church. After six months they began to find the setting inadequate, especially for the vigorous and constant physical activities of the older boys. It was a surprise then, when I received a call from Michael, the school's codirector, asking if I could find an architect to work with the community in reorganizing the

school's assorted spaces. Reminded of parents' desires to move, he responded, "Well, we're thinking in long-range terms. Maybe we'll get to move away from here, but right now this is what we have and we'll work with it."

Nothing revealed the site's limitations more than the social ecology it forced on the students, especially in light of the community's distaste for scheduling. No bells rang to signal recess or "a time to change rooms." Staff for volunteer classes consisted of relationships with kids which happened to be cordial at the moment. Efforts to round up participants in anything other than a field trip to the beach, racetrack, or pool hall yielded whoever could be coaxed. Otherwise, the youngest students clustered together or found an adult shadow or lap, out of the marauding athletes' orbit. Big girls moved their talkative groupings to various locations and were more likely than other groups to engage the school's instructional offerings. Groups of boys made forays to the Northside shopping area or to Telegraph Avenue, returning with bags of candy. Or they gathered in laughing, running clots to celebrate a practical joke played on someone in the neighborhood, or to relate an exciting story from The Avenue (Telegraph). Black and white children, outside class situations, very often played separately, but there was no feeling of peer enforcement of this separation, as there was in most Berkeley schools. Whatever the day's spatial distribution of children and adults, touching was constant: absentminded, loving, playful or, frequently--violent.

All students' desires to be alone seemed to be honored. During one day of observation I noticed off and on for an hour, one eight or nine year old girl named Mandy repeatedly twist a tire swing until its rope was knotted, put her body in the tire and let it spin till its twist was exhausted. Chancing a violation of the apparent let-alone policy, I approached Mandy, who while spinning in glee, said as though she knew me, "You know what happens sometimes? The blood rushes to your head." She stopped her play then and spent a moment regarding me carefully. Never asking who I was, she seductively asked if I'd seen the hole underneath the cottage. Then she led me on a long, tortuous trip down to the lowest, back part of the grounds. On our way down we passed a small boy weeping bitterly. I had encountered him crying on an earlier visit, and had stopped that day to console him, spending nearly an hour holding him in my lap. Mandy said now, as we moved past, "He's mean. He screams all the time." Reaching the spot, Mandy showed me a hole underneath a brick wall, saying mysteriously, "You know where that goes?" Before I could profess my ignorance in a similar tone, she

wandered off into a stand of nearby bamboo, as if our brief sojourn together was officially over.

I decided to approach more loners. My next risk was with a boy seated near the cottage steps. My introductory "hello" was greeted with a stiff, deprecatory finger in the face. There was no spoken "fuck you" to confirm its meaning, but he spat aggressively on the ground. Later I was told "Yeah, Mark greets all newcomers by trying to beat them up or something."

Undaunted, I approached a tall, angelic-looking boy with long, flowing hair who was casually rubbing a spoon against a large coin. "Hi. How you doin'," he saluted first. My "Fine" produced "Look at this," as he pulled a silver ring from his pocket. "I made it." He then showed me his stainless steel spoon, explaining that it was harder than the Kennedy half-dollar he was rubbing and pounding it against, and that after a series of manipulations he made rings. "I'm going to put them on consignment in some of the head shops." He knew people who did that. There were lots of head shops and the profits would be good. "I can get ten dollars apiece for them an' they only cost me fifty cents. Right? Wanna try it?" I did. The coin was surprisingly pliant underneath the spoon. As I worked he volunteered, "It's illegal to do that you know," referring to defacement of the coin. "But sometimes something that's illegal can be right," he said, and used as an example how his mother was once so poor she had had to steal baby food to feed him. "Stealing, in certain cases, is justified. There's nothing wrong with a mother stealing food for her baby if the baby's hungry," he said with quiet conviction.

This boy, Daniel, was twelve years old. He was very popular. Many students meandered by us and asked to see his ring, which he generously produced. During one visit ("Daniel, how're you doing with your rings?"), I left to observe a very strange scene. Mel, a thin, soft spoken man who was one of the three paid teachers, was attempting to negotiate his way across the courtyard, six large girls in tow. One was walking backwards in front of him, playing a word game with him that I found impossible to understand. Another was holding his neck from behind in a choke hold with both arms, occasionally dragging him into a stoop so that her toes dragged on the ground. Others were poking him in the ribs. One large black girl was pinching his behind--apparently very hard--then running away, unchased, with great delight and screeches, and returning to repeat her attacks. Mel did nothing to dissuade the group, managing in an asphyxiated voice to keep up his part of the word play.

When I returned to Daniel he was relating his plans to a young man I'd never seen, about 20 or 25 years old with long hair, jeans, and leather jacket. ". . . ten dollars for fifty cents," Daniel was concluding. The young man responded, "Well, I don't know if that's true. I only paid ten dollars for this," and removed a silver ring marbled with streaks of turquoise. "Do you think you can really get ten dollars for your plain silver rings?" "I bet you didn't buy it for ten dollars in California!" The young man confessed his purchase was from Minnesota. "Figures," said Daniel. "Prices are much higher in Berkeley."

### Life at School: Volunteers' Views"

As the year unfolded, the school, acting on its dedication to openness, expanded the number and types of people who could participate in its daily life. Presumably anyone could. When a field studies class from the university expressed interest, its students were formally invited to participate in all aspects of the community's activities and were given the right to vote at general meetings. Their journals provide outside views of school life different from mine, which was undoubtedly influenced by my "evaluator" role, especially in relation to the core group.

### Educational Excitement

The field study students, many of whom planned teaching careers, were self-selected by their interest in field experiences in an alternative setting. They tended to view the culture of the school through sympathetic eyes. For example:

"The Kids of Kilimanjaro," that was my experience. I came while they were having photographs taken. I stood and watched and listened. Teachers (who are also the parents), kids--there's really not much separation. All sat together, talking, combing hair. Most of all I noticed a sense of relaxation instead of rigidity. Instead of "cheese," the word was HASHISH. I kept imagining the reaction in a public school! Why do we say cheese anyway? The "nonstraight" attitude confronts me with demanding "What were all those rigidities based on?" I walked

inside and was asked "Who are you?" I liked their curiosity about me because I feel out of place--wondering how to be--My reaction is that usually kids are supposed to be doing something--going to class, working. It must be a relief to be unconcerned about "SUPPOSED TO'S" and have the freedom to explore. I want to say "I WANT TO BE FREE!"

Celebrations of the ease and openness of the school were common among the volunteers. The commensurate fact of the school's lack of traditional order and social content, however, usually produced shock--positive and negative--ending in serious reflections on the personal and pedagogical meaning of the apparent structurelessness:

Half the school was outdoors today practicing the primal scream.

At Kilimanjaro things are so loose that I'd better go with it or be left behind.

I've witnessed many Kilimanjaro children kick around the yard for half a day before saying a word to anyone, or picking up some crayons. This school can get depressing because the kids are so random, sometimes it just gets ahead of you.

My one harassing question was this, do people really learn like this?

It is spring. Football is replaced by baseball. The game is the most consistent, orderly, and visible activity in the school. Invariably, volunteers begin to integrate themselves into the life of the school through games, or occasionally by giving "horsey back rides" to the younger children, who use adults as climbing posts or nurturant seats. "I am feeling that I am nothing more than an observer and playmate," lamented one volunteer after several visits. Such experiences gave way to others, revealing effects of the school's student-dominated culture. It was easy for any adult to get stuck in mere physicality because of the kids' cleverness: "Sometimes I think these kids are manipulating me even more than I think. If you come without a project or at least an idea it's too easy to get lost and I think the kids manipulate you by taking you from one thing to the next."

Even for the volunteer with an "idea," the parent/staff insistence on the dissolution of form, rules, and authority was disorienting: "The lack of structure here sets a block in front of getting projects running, at least for a volunteer like me who gets occasionally overwhelmed by the chaos."

Insinuating a going project into the daily chaos was fraught with difficulties, due to the unpredictability of events in time and space:

Before everyone had finished, Mel (teacher) came and told us to go to a student government meeting. We had been told we could finish by another teacher but some worried kids took off. I really felt undermined and Mel later apologized to me.

Sunny (volunteer) didn't even know of the existence [sic] of the downstairs "learning" room until I happened to mention I was headed there! That's incredible.

Went to school and there wasn't anyone there--sign on door read: "We've gone to a picnic"--why the hell doesn't someone let someone, like me, know! I could have cut my early class and gone along.

When volunteers could "find" the school, to engage it, the results could be as powerful as the core-group ideologies might hope:

For the next couple hours, straight through lunch, we played a game of baseball, girls versus boys. Naturally, our team was lousy and losing, nonetheless full of esprit de corps. I learned much about the sense of fairness and sportsmanship during the game, which children have naturally.

For lunch, some of us took off for Euclid Street and bobbed in and out of grocery stores, ice-cream parlors, and snack shops. Wow, what a mess it was, everybody sharing and grabbing mouthfuls of this and that of someone else's. I can't remember when I had so much fun. I hated to leave . . . before I left, Cybell asked me to "be her teacher." I could hardly answer her because of the lump and the tears welling up as I told

her that whether she knew it or not, she'd been my teacher for the entire day.

The whole day had been flowing, spontaneous, fun--and I realize that an incredible amount of basic learning had happened, had been impressed upon certain individuals meaningfully.

Even the "classroom" could yield majestic results:

WOW! I just had a beautiful experience with Judy. I brought my characters<sup>7</sup> to Kilimanjaro, along with the tape recorder. She started asking about the various buttons so I perceived that she was eager to learn how to work it. I thought for a moment--teach her and let her discover herself at the same time. I demonstrated the function of each button as I described the situation it is used in. "Let us say we want to record. Which button do you push?" And she showed me. After about ten minutes, she had a good understanding of the machine and was ready to work it for herself. It was on "record" and I was telling her "now we can talk." She felt sort of nervous and insisted that I talk first. We mumbled on and I asked her about the vacation she had mentioned before. She talked and felt more at ease, and I felt I could introduce the characters now. I handed her a pile and she chose the one she liked. She kept turning it upside down. At first, I turned it back for her, then I thought, "I don't want to interfere. Let her see it her way!" So she looked at it upside down and described what she saw. At first I couldn't see it. Then all of a sudden, I saw it the way she did! I was excited. She described the character as being born, seeing the world for the first time. The more I saw it, the more it meant to me. I looked at the character, felt how it feels when it sees the world for the first time--because I let my imagination teach me the feeling! Next step was building upon that foundation. We shared how we looked at the picture--each describing an aspect--teaching each other. I told her when I saw and when I didn't. I felt honest and at ease. I appreciated the moments. We then took a brief look at other characters to see if they could be turned upside down. A few worked and we described what we saw. I didn't hold back my observations (worrying if they'd intrude). The conversation flowed. It took an effort on my part to let my imagination flow with hers to understand the situation. . . . I felt so much more alive and open and this is valuable to my growth. WOW!

Learning in free play or periodic deep access to a child's inventive thinking were, in the main, overshadowed by touchier themes. The most prominent were race, sex, politics, and authority.

### Race Issues

Episodes involving race and racism were frequent. During one field trip baseball game, for example:

Stanley walked up to Mara (white, 6 years?) who was swinging, and threw a stone into a puddle under [the swing] and of course her dress got wet. She cried and called him a nigger so he hit her and ran off.

During another of the incessant ball games at school:

The boys were up to bat, and I was pitching for the girls' team. Robyn huffed up to home plate with a bat which he bashed against a couple of bushes to warm up.

"Come on you ol' Japanese bitch!" he hollered out, tensing himself for the pitch. But the ball never came, because I stood there frozen with anger and indignation. In a moment I'd snapped back, "You racist little pig, how dare you insult a sister like that. Goddamit, I'm not even Japanese! My blood is Korean. But I was born and raised in the United States of America, and am a citizen, just like you, Robyn."

"You see, Robyn, don't you, that careless words hurt people, even if you don't intend to actually hurt them. That's a good reason to be responsible for your words and actions!"

At this point, Robyn was wide-eyed and intense--he was listening, and understanding; I could tell by his face that he had been reached. Robyn, since that game, throughout the day remaining, was quiet.

The comments I have heard from other children, on whom Robyn vented his meanness, and occasional acts of hostility, are among the following:

"Something is hurting Robyn deep inside."

"Robyn has gotten not enough love, he's adopted, you know."

"Robyn is more confused than some of us."

"Robyn hasn't had the chances to grow up."

I was amazed totally by these reason that kids who were Robyn's peers had given after he had just done something pretty low-down to them.

This episode and its outcome fit exactly the founders' conception of the way openness could elicit and dissolve the pernicious deposits of racism among community members. This was teaching and learning without desks and testing, across age grades and formal roles.

#### Sex

Similarly, the freedom to explore sex roles and relations was valued:

Today they were working with clay when I arrived. So I joined them. "An opportune situation to talk with Dawn" I thought to myself. I've noticed a sparkle of energy in her--a working imagination. I asked "What are you making." And she said "A mouse," so we began joking about mice . . . then I saw Judy and was surprised. I told her so. She said she didn't go away on her trip yet. She implied that she wanted to see me. She began working with clay and said "Do I like you?" The question was blunt and honest. I answered YES with a smile. She still wanted to test me. She asked, "Are you easy to get to know?"

I looked at her to reassure her of my sincerity and said, "If you want to get to know me I'm easy to get to know." Next she tried to startle me. "I live in a Woman's House. Some are lesbians. Do you know what a lesbian is?" I answered, "Yes," and we talked a moment about it. She said she knows a lot about it so I asked her to tell me. She keeps dropping little hints of what's on her mind but she's not ready to share it orally yet. She mentioned she needs a place to stay Saturday night and I invited her to my house. She got excited.

More radical expressions of the community's ideal of freedom to explore were difficult for volunteers to accept, since most of them adhered to usual cautions about what children could or should be exposed to. Some staff and parent volunteers, on the other hand, acted explicitly as if age-grades did not matter:

Went to school today and was playing with cuisinare rods with two girls that I'd never seen before. The door flew open and a woman walked in and announced, "Hey kids, we've brought a movie of people fucking." One parent in the room reacted with "Wow, great!" The kids made no particular response. I must have registered surprise, because someone came over and explained that this was part of the sex education class, and that after seeing a movie about elephant mating patterns, the kids asked for a movie about "people fucking."\* I was appalled, and while everyone who was interested filed out to go see it, I tried to figure out whether I wanted to see it. If it had been an educational film that would have been one thing, but this was bordering on pornographic. Adults were shown fornicating and then there were variations on the theme. I asked one girl, after the film, what she thought and her response was a passive, "Oh, it was okay." That afternoon the school broke into a mild

---

\*Let the kids see the movie that the parents saw last night, Love from Langley, The Pro K.N. Date missing.

uproar. Alfred began chasing all the girls, and they in turn began running to the downstairs room to safety. What a mess, I really think some of the adults in the school are sick!

Can't help thinking that with a few exceptions this school is full of people who are not as concerned with a good educational program as they are with having a place to go and work through their own problems, as well as project a lot of them onto the kids they work with.

Another volunteer reflected on the same event:

This was outrageous. The entire school, I began to feel, was perverted and neurotic, especially the parents. Or was my set of values simply alien to these people? I began to feel uncertain concerning my interest in the alternative system. Perhaps I was just not the right kind of super-liberal person to be there. I never would show that porno film to young children--that wasn't sex education. That day, I concluded that I belonged not in an alternative school, but the standard public schools, even though I don't think they are effective. I thought that I should evaluate my own standards and be confident of them before I could try to instruct in a school.

## Politics

Political activity expressing the lives and beliefs of community members was a routine part of school life. Today was a day of activism awareness at Kilimanjaro. By the time I arrived at school, most everyone was gone to the UC campus to observe and take part in the campus Smoke-In for CMI,\* student protest, and worker's picket line. Cries of "Here come the blue meanies" came from the Kilimanjaro kids in regards to the UC police. Jeremy and I met up with the others from the school and we listened to music in Sproul Plaza while sitting in the sun.

But political attitudes that were normal at the school were difficult for some volunteers to accept as routine fare for children:

We were sitting on the floor and Debbie asked me whether I was a paid teacher or a volunteer. I told her I was an unpaid volunteer and a

student at UCB. She asked how I supported myself and I replied I worked. She asked where, and I told her "I am a bank teller." She seemed to recoil and then replied that "Banks are places that steal your money." I disagreed with her. She then called to a lady across the room who was playing the piano and restated her belief in the form of a question. The lady, Marsha Sue, said

---

\*California Marijuana Initiative

"Yeah, most banks do." This infuriated me to the point that I couldn't reply except to say that my bank doesn't. And where did Marsha get off feeding that prejudice to Debbie? What kind of value system is being taught to these kids anyhow? When my inner anger subsided I realized that I should have pursued the discussion, but by that time Debbie had fled and I went downstairs to work on math with whoever was down there."

When I walked downstairs today they were showing another film. This one was on the "American Aggressors in Vietnam." There were pictures of American bombers dropping bombs and American soldiers kicking dead Vietnamese soldiers, and malformed babies that had been hurt by gas warfare. Essentially there were films of all the atrocities that go with war. The film was very realistic, even brutally so, and it's not the realism I object to--it's the fact that the room had children, three to five years old, watching as well as the older ones. And the guy showing the film would shout, "That's an American bomber killing innocent Vietnamese," and other such prejudicial statements wherever appropriate. I question whether the emphasis here is on learning and teaching or on brainwashing and indoctrination. It seems that some people use the freedom at Kilimanjaro to vent their personal prejudices upon a somewhat captive, certainly impressionable audience. I'm thoroughly disgusted with the whole school, and if this is representative of alternative education I'm sorely disappointed. My biggest sorrow is for the kids. Certainly there is freedom here and no stifling structure that enforces and to some degree constricts learning, but I question whether there is too much freedom here, both for the learner and those who are supposed to educate.

Authority

The abandonment of authority (Swidle) was the feature of the school most difficult for the volunteers to accept. Ultimately, the consequences of abandoning authority were to prove central to Kilimanjaro's demise. One volunteer reflected:

"When adults give up authority, the freedom of children is not necessarily increased" . . . More good words from George Dennison. The kids know that they are "free" to do what they please. If what they're into is making noise and disrupting another group at work or concentration, that's cool according to their rules.

The following is typical of the disruptive events plaguing all efforts to establish teaching/learning spaces in the daily chaos:

Thursday was my first real traumatic experience. I was downstairs in the quiet room by myself because a few instructors were missing. It was a hot, humid day. There was tension in the room; there had just been a fight. Cicero (five years) and Jeremy (six years) came down and began disrupting the others, shouting, throwing things and the usual chaotic conditions. Debbie, an older girl, told me "Sheila would discipline them. She'd throw them out." Obviously Debbie noted that I wasn't handling the situation with authority. I began bodily to throw them outside. Then they began climbing through the window! Eventually there were six or seven children racing around, opening windows and doors that were locked. I was actually chasing them. Al, Rufus, and the younger ones were easy to cart out. But the others made trying to restore some semblance of order impossible. Finally help came--the bus had arrived, school was over. I felt very dejected and like a complete failure. I had felt very apprehensive about bodily forcing them out and yet I couldn't reason with them, although I tried. For example, I tried to get Stanley to pick up the bricks he had thrown. ("Will you please pick them up, this is a room for study only." "Do you know how to restack these blocks? I bet you could.") He started stacking the blocks when Thiise, a six year old boy, knocked them over again.

The reason I felt ambivalent was that it seemed as though having a structured quiet room was against the philosophy of Kili. It seemed to me that emotions should not be stifled, even in the "quiet room." I thought the alternative school allowed for all characteristics and moods of students. Perhaps it would be better to let the students' moods rule

the course of the day. I felt Sheila (the full-time instructor in charge of the quiet room) was structuring that room too much.

That day I felt very disillusioned. I felt personally betrayed by the students. The day had ended in chaos, as it often happens around 1:30, just before the bus arrives. My wallet was stolen. There was only \$5.00, but all my I.D.'s were gone and I was just disappointed in the children. I had had too much faith in their honesty. I realized that day that children are humans, subject to the same temptations and weaknesses as adults. I realized that I too, had a right to my rights when a choice had to be made between myself and a student. This incident was brought up at a staff meeting. Four days later the wallet was returned, no questions asked, to the office where it was put away in a drawer. The following day when I picked it up, the money was gone. Someone in the office had taken money out of my wallet. This really depressed me. I felt that I had lost faith in the staff as well. That afternoon, I began to really doubt the positive worth of Kilimanjaro. I began to feel that the instructors, including the parents, were just as confused and immature as their children. I had wanted this school to be a successful example of how an alternative school could function. In other words, I was disappointed.

By the end of the school year even the volunteers most congenial to Kilimanjaro, and to the idea of alternative education, were moved to make comments like the following:

I think some parents and teachers are so afraid of authoritarianism that they forget to be instructors. Obviously, a child can't learn everything on his own. He will not try something he doesn't want to try. That's part of the learning process--having someone introduce you to something you weren't sure about wanting to learn, and eventually finding you enjoy it. I think that discipline is taught by parents. I had thought earlier that I shouldn't impose authority, because that would create a conflict with the values of their parents.

I began to feel a need for more structure. (Horrors!) Certain activities should always be initiated so that they at least have a choice. I hope that the parents will see a need for at least a framework to call a school, and that they will realize that nonstructure is not to be equated with alternative education.

## Community Life: Contradictions in Ideals Enacted

The picture painted here of life at school must be seen against the marbled backdrop of tensions between governance and internal structure on the one hand and the management of external relations, on the other, as these issues played themselves out in the life of community participants. These issues were influenced by the economically difficult lives of many Kilimanjaro families and the dependent position of the off-site, alternative school. At the same time, the evolution of Kilimanjaro was subject to contradictions between the actual lives of its members and their high ideals of participation and social change in education.

### Family Lives and School Ideals

Parents' life choices determined much of what developed in school. The economic marginality of many parents' lives was largely a matter of choice, but it still affected their abilities to fully live out the ideals of Kilimanjaro's charter, on which they had agreed. One mother, lamenting the frequently chaotic and violent conditions at the school, said:

Well, I say that the school needs more parent participation and it needs more focus on the kids, you know. Like, you call up a parent and you say, "Well gee, you used to come up to school, why don't you come anymore," and it's "Oh, I'm having trouble with the old man" or something. Like everybody's life is always so precarious, you know. It really is, you know, people working all over the place. What can you expect from a bunch of kids, you know, just within a school?

Without doubt, many parents were more engrossed in the conduct of their alternative life experimentations than they were in the school. Yet they helped to create or were attracted to a school that held out the prospect of complementing in their childrens' lives what they sought for their own. For example, another mother, a migrant to California,

explained her fascination with what she discovered "hippies" to be about when she arrived, and with what she sought in Berkeley:

Authentic hippies are rather lovely. I mean they're into individualism which is kind of a drag. Do your own thing without remembering that some people have a greater ability to do their own thing than others. But other than that I really like them. I like their values.

A hippy is full of creativity above all. You know. A hippy is pro freedom and generally among hippies you can get them to distinguish between freedom and license. A hippy is anti repression. A hippy is pro sexual liberation. A hippy is pro a lot of good things, very few negative things. And having come at the end of it [the hippy period] and never really having dug the culture except through its art forms, I mean I was amazed when I came to California and found that there were books written that came from a culture that I didn't know about and that there was a mode of dressing that came from that culture.

Having "escaped" the Midwest, where her deviance from local norms was not appreciated, she had found in Berkeley and in the school a conjunction of worlds that allowed her to live and teach her children aspects of these admired values while remaining a responsible parent, in terms of those values:

In the Midwest, my kids lived with their grandmother who was a very structured lady to say the least, and they had a lot of difficulty in just adjusting to living alone with me, you know, in terms of what freedom meant to me. And then they found out that freedom wasn't license they got real upset for a long time. But I said "you know it's like this, I'm going to cook dinner and I need some help, and I'll be at school until such-and-such a time. All I ask from you is that you go to the Co-op market and when I come home there will be such-and-such to cook and if there isn't that's not my problem." And for a long time we nagged and fussed like almost everyone does. And then one night I went to dinner and I left the foodstamps on the table and I came back at nine o'clock and they were bickering at each other. But they ate something they had cooked. They told me they thought I was a rotten mother. You see, they were ten or eleven then, and at ten or eleven you can make it clear that one person's freedom can often be another person's lack of freedom, and that it was fine for all of us to be free; that the freedom

to eat a meal means that you're able to prepare a meal and those are lessons I would like them to be learning at Kilimanjaro in terms of their academics as well.

This mother felt that the freedom of Kilimanjaro, coupled with the children's choices of when or whether to engage its academic offerings, taught useful lessons. Her children having chosen not to study,

. . . now they find that they aren't able to play with the O'Malley children and I ask them why they couldn't play with the O'Malley children and they said well, because the children play games where you just had to know how to read and write well and you had to know your arithmetic and if you didn't know it you felt bad. So they found out a little bit about that.

But not all Kilimanjaro families were counterculture whites. As the reputation of the school developed, new families found occasion to place their children there. Interracial couples and a few black mothers were attracted. Maintaining a multicultural environment, reducing institutional racism, and integrating the schools were overlapping goals of the Berkeley Unified School District, the Experimental Schools Program, and Kilimanjaro's founders. Thus, it was both the goal and the obligation of Kilimanjaro to accept all children from the few minority families that applied. These new families held significantly different notions about the values of alternative education, discipline, structure, and curriculum than those held by the founders. The difference set up a serious value conflict that was exacerbated by the demand for continual participation and consensual decision-making.

Even with their desires to have their children out of the common schools, black mothers, in particular, were incensed at

the rumored\* looseness of the school and the misbehavior of their own children. One complained, in stark contrast to the school's philosophy, "I'd slap him in the mouth if he did that at home," when told of her son's misadventures. This conception of discipline was also reflected in the demand of black parents for more organized concentration on the three R's.

The pedagogically anarchic quality of school life was rejected by other new parents who were not identified with the countercultural life.

One white mother, half of an interracial couple offered a simple explanation of the problematic life at school. "I shouldn't pass judgment on people, but basically the group of people who send their kids to Kilimanjaro just aren't into their kids." Mirroring other new parents' critiques of the core group as apolitical and self-indulgent at the expense of their children, she caricatured their position:

So they agree not to become neurotic middle-class people and that's as far as they go. It's like, "I let my kid run barefoot, and they run naked and the house doesn't have much in it and we get along without hardly any money" and that's it. That's as far as their minds take them. They've dropped out from the heavy consumerism and so, to them, that's an alternative life style.

These ethnic, ideological, and class differences became increasingly common as the school evolved. They had important

---

\*They seldom visited the school or went to weekly meetings.

consequences for the development of community life in terms of its idealized internal structure, levels, and styles of participation. The divergence in family attitudes from the ideals of the school's founders were more complex than the few sketched here. For example, black families were not the only ones critical of the inchoate curriculum, but theirs was the most aggressive demand for more structure. Also, there were strong disagreements about how much the school's daily life should express counterculture themes.

Shared hostility to the traditional schools held this complex of attitudes and expectations together in one uneasy mixture. Some parents assumed that an exemplary life of nonparticipation in American consumerism was the best avenue to social change; others argue that a politically articulate offense against "the system" was necessary. But the understanding was shared that schools had to change. One mother commenting on Kilimanjaro's budget agonizings with the district, said:

Sometimes I just think we should forget about all the money and everything . . . and just go be something by ourselves and quit trying to be part of the public school system. Then people remind me that what

we really want to do is change the public school system. The fact is, you know, we have to make good so that other people can do it too.

### Membership, Participation, and the Internal Division of Labor

"Making good" involved turning ideals into visible, replicable practice. At first the structures housing the community's practice were deliberately primitive, designed to provide a minimal boundary for inclusion of "members" around school life. Kilimanjaro's unrealized articles of incorporation specified three types of gatherings for the consideration of school business: annual meetings, monthly membership meetings, and a workshop that would meet as often as necessary to accomplish school work. "Membership" was defined to include children, parents, professionals, and volunteers. Volunteers were identified as "student teachers, court referrals, and other individuals who, on an ongoing basis, participate in the operation of Kilimanjaro."

In fear of creeping internal rigidity, the founding group made specific provisions to dissolve any tendency to hardened authority and to guarantee decision-making consensus. Jeremy Tribe, chief ideologue-in-print, described the group's intentions in the school newspaper, including its concerns about the intrusion of district agents in school affairs:

1) Have regular workshop meetings (decision-making meetings) preferably excluding all school district people except our own paid professional who we have to embrace and to whom we have to offer security (if needed) in any way to ensure there will be no divisive cleavage or question that their answerability or accountability is to and their advocacy is a parent- or family-directed venture [sic].

2) Make a statement, preferably in the form of a legal contract, that we hold our paid professionals accountable to us for everything at all times. Foster in them this basic concept of a family-directed school. Help them feel secure (if needed) in this buffer between them and the BUSD.

3) Reiterate to the school district, particularly to the "team" of alternative school social workers, psychologists and in-service training

experts, etc., to await our calling upon them for their services if and when we deem that such services are needed.

In the short run, the most energetic parents and teachers volunteered for, or stumbled into, roles thrown up by the school. The enthusiasm for universal participation in school affairs was primarily that of the core group founders. The idea, but not the activity, attracted new families. Typically, the few volunteers who kept trying to live out the charter that made the school attractive became so overloaded that grand resignations from those roles began to appear in the newspaper.<sup>8</sup>

One major source of the problem was the fact, widely resented, that the core group was managing the school's affairs. The problem was compounded by the ideal of universal responsibility, which meant, in effect, that no particular parent was responsible for the school in a routine way. Those who participated and attended meetings routinely produced warning to nonparticipants:

Parent participation is defined by individual parents. If you want to participate, you have valuable opportunity to influence the school. If you don't want to, or can't, that also defines individual parent participation (absence of). But you must be willing to accept the environment created by those who do participate.

The last statement was crucial. The environment of Kilimanjaro was being determined by a small paid staff and those parents who would participate. That environment was being objected to by various, otherwise occupied, parents who agreed with the school's ideal, defined elements of the charter differently than the core group, but did not themselves participate. Thus, the nature of the Place was established through a common attraction to the terms of the charter, conflicting interpretations of those terms, and common hostility to standardized public education. The employed parents, the minority parents, and the distracted, "alternative lifestyle" parents sent their children to school with much the same drop-off attitude with which they had sent them to the traditional schools. The resulting tensions provided the impetus for the school's direction and demise.

## Ordering Roles

The general parent body wanted more order in the school day, less violence, and children who would end up able to read, write, and calculate. But they wanted an "open" school. The core idealists wanted something similar, but sought a participatory community committed to a much more extensive conception of "open" than was imagined by most of the other Kilimanjaro parents. As nonparticipation became routinized, conflicts developed over who was to perform which roles in the making of order, and what "order" meant.

One need only review the earlier characterizations of life at Kilimanjaro to understand most parents' inclination for more activities structured in time and space and by functional division of labor. The pressure to achieve these was confounded by two issues: how to achieve order without compromising charter ideals, and who was to do and be paid for this work. These issues were produced by troubles internal to the school and parent community, but the pressures from the school district and the external community added problems.

It was not simply the lives and lassitude of certain parents that produced the low level of parent participation at the school. Neither was it true that alternative and minority parents used the school as a "dumping ground"--as some critics contended--for kids who couldn't function in any place other than a "mini continuation school." It was true, however, that most days at school were rife with significant, violent encounters among students, while their encounters with learning situations were nearly random. Those situations that had some continuity from day to day were regularly disrupted by roving bands of bigger boys, on breaks from the permanent ball game.

Open-ness also meant, in effect, that students often disappeared for long periods, exploring life on the Berkeley campus, the north campus shops, Telegraph Avenue, and other more mysterious places away from school. Volunteerism, the broad definition of membership and responsibility ("whoever is there") made supervision unreliable. Unpaid volunteers could come and go as they pleased. But the small paid staff and most committed participating parents relied on these irregular volunteers and parents to keep some circle of supervision around the school day. Gradually, the tasks of nurturance, discipline, control, entertainment and supplemental teaching were absorbed by those adults most often at the site, either because they were good at particular jobs or simply because daily, they were daily in the path of the unmet

needs. Thus, an unplanned division of roles emerged, the enactment of which ran counter to the expectations of the charter and the core idealists.

Michael, a big and voluble core-group founding member, became the enforcer. The terror of his size and anger became the outer limit for violent boys, whom he would often restrain at arms length in midair, while shouting lectures of nonviolence. Soft Mel became a nurturant sink, often weighted down with the bodies of older girls and younger kids seeking comfort, contact, and relief from boredom. In the school's long mutual-evaluation sessions, Michael was criticized by the strongest ideologues of nonviolence for using physical restraint and violent language with the transgressing boys. But no one else would play a similar role, and effort to institute a procedure of suspensions or parent interventions never made their way to action. Mel was criticized by periodically visiting parents for his easygoing, "sandbox" approach to kids who were weak in basic academic skills. But the need for the parent/playmate surrogate role he played was largely unfilled without him. Indeed, Mel was among the most faithful to that part of the charter calling for a dissolution of parent/child, student/teacher role relations.

A more complex version of the difficulties appeared, and Sheila, one of two full-time credentialed teachers, became trapped in its net. Hers was the most dramatic example of a conflict that other, noncore members suffered. As a credentialed instructor, she was one of the school's legitimate faces toward the district. District and parental expectations of student academic performance focused on her. In effect, it was her formal and paid responsibility to find a teaching path through the radically unstructured days of school life. But the path she was forced to choose was personally treacherous because her own sense of belonging was at stake. She was not a founding core group member, but had been attracted to the school because of its ideals and her fascination with the lives of its central citizens, especially certain women. Admitting her "straight-laced" background and her desire to become part of the "in-group," she easily confessed her motivation: "And the notion of just living off welfare because you happened to have children, you know, it just really never occurred to me to do that."

Her first visit to the home of a welfare mother she most admired was also enlightening: "Well there's the whole aesthetic dimension of that house which just really excited me. The way that they put things,

the physical things. I didn't have a plant in this house until I saw Mary Ann's room."

Witnessing the way of life of these counterculture women, she responded:

I wanted to become friendly with them. I really didn't want to become friendly with them so much because of their relationship to Kilimanjaro but I thought they were really interesting women. I really admired the way that they lived. I wanted to make friends with them and it was very difficult for me because they weren't particularly turned on by me, if they got to know me, so I just stuck with it.

But when Sheila responded to the internal and external critics of the school's lax atmosphere (one influential, black member of the school board called Kilimanjaro students "personal and academic basket cases"), others questioned her commitment to the values of the core group. ("Sheila's into badges," "Sheila's not really in the subculture.") She had posted schedules for classes and the assigned responsibilities for classes and tutorials, specifying locations for these activities, and trying to impose some regularity on the school day.

Members of the core group cooled to her so thoroughly that, in response, she published her pain of rejection in the form of a poem in the school newspaper. A response was immediate:

To Sheila: - Sheila, I read your poem. I have not really talked to you on a personal level, this I have heard, that person to person you relate quite differently, as indeed, your poem shows. But Sheila, on a group level, you alienate me, and others, because I feel that you are talking down to us. Talking to us about training us. Sheila, you cannot train us, no more than can the school district. Maybe if you started to think of us and yourself as people instead of parents and teacher you would have more communication. It is as much our fault as yours, this breakdown, in that we play the role of naughty children, pulling faces behind the teacher's back, instead of as people, telling you that we are people, not naughty children to be scolded.

Parallel tensions grew from individual efforts to bring some order to the school's relationship with the outside world. Several jobs had to be done. Larry Wells, director of the Experimental Schools Program,

insisted on dealing with one representative from the school, rejecting the core group's insistence that it was a whole community and must be dealt with as a whole. Stephanie was Kilimanjaro's official "director." Kilimanjaro tried to skirt the district requirement by rotating the individual members who attended district meetings, but the fact of her designation meant that routine business and large and small emergencies were referred to her both by the district and by Washington's representative to the ESP.

The organized body of off-site alternative school directors also needed a consistent, if not a single, Kilimanjaro representative to its lobby. Quick decisions were necessary in many situations, such as negotiating with the district on small changes in resource allocation, or developing common political stances to be taken by the off-site schools in relation to the district and to Washington. But no individual was empowered to make such decisions; each one could only report to the community, which would then, through its consensual process, decide on a course of action. The process seldom worked. Nonetheless, the outside world insisted. Stephanie made decisions--and suffered the consequences. She was roundly criticized for her actions.

#### Deformation of Ideals: Work for Pay

I've described only the most dramatic examples of Kilimanjaro's intolerance of those who, counter to charter and dominant opinion, attempted to fill the ordering roles they inherited from general inaction. Actually, a succession of part-time instructors and volunteers rotated throughout the school, having similar encounters. Burnout and turnover were high because personal conflicts were frequent: Managing invariably complex days at school could be maddening. Meetings were endless. The participatory charter was ambitious, but unrealized. No one was allowed to speak for the school.

Problems were not solved with any dispatch, but ad hoc ordering roles, focused on these problems, were unacceptable. Gradually, with resentment about this bind, some people moved away from volunteerism and sought pay for the more circumscribed roles they had agreed to play. These applicants were, consistently, from the unemployed upper low-life, and their circumstances added to their desire for remuneration. They surrendered selfless idealism and went after money for their time.

## Deciding How to Decide, Again

The work-for-pay problem could only be resolved case by case in plenary meetings. It joined other unresolved issues that clogged meeting agendas. The urgency of the situation impressed the most active members, who sought to resolve the assorted conflicts by calling an all-school convention. This gathering created an array of committees, the purpose of which was, among other things, to deal with the problems that had necessitated the ad hoc ordering roles: student behavior, curriculum, external relations, and community decision-making. To refine the cumbersome consensus process, a committee on administrative procedures was directed to deal with it. The committee returned (to a much smaller meeting) with this proposal:

Keeping in mind that the idea of consensus is based on mutual trust and goodwill of the people involved, the committee recommends the following:

### 1. The Kilimanjaro Community be informed in these ways:

1. The agenda for each general meeting will be proposed at the end of the previous meeting. (Action Items)
2. The agenda will be published in the newspaper.
3. Notify the people by telephone in case of emergency action items.
4. Non-action items may be discussed (not decided) at any meeting.

II Chairperson will rotate.

III Meetings will follow this procedure:

1. Chair announces the agenda item.

2. Everyone at the meeting speaks briefly (about one minute) to give input to the item.

3. A one-hour time limit begins following the input of each individual present. The chair asks for a proposal.

4. A proposal written by a member is then written on the blackboard.

5. Chairperson asks for objections to the proposal.

6. All objections are heard; no new proposals are heard.

7. The chairperson asks for a proposal integrating some or all of the objections.

8. The chair allows for several [discussion] cycles during a 30 minutes period. If no consensus is reached everyone is asked to speak individually.

9. If at the end of one hour there is no consensus the chair will asked for:

a) consensus to continue discussion; if there are any objections to that, the group.

b) sets up a volunteer committee to return in one week with a new proposal (group, i.e., those present at general meeting, will define the powers of the committee).

10. Meeting will begin at 7:30 p.m. sharp and will end at 11:00 p.m.

11. After a three week trial period, the CAP will meet again.

It was impossible for this group to adhere to such an intricate structure, although it was adopted as policy for meetings. The candid interpersonal--even confrontational--style of participating members was a valued one of insouciant unfolding of topics, comments, and argumentation. Also, those seeking pay were the first to test the procedure to its limits and beyond. Meanwhile, those previously exasperated with endless and personal meetings--including those with a renewed determination to participate--were finally convinced of their futility. Participation contracted to a group varying from six to ten of the most committed parents and staff, and never grew again.

#### Vulnerability, Deformation and Demise

This story has been condensed. There were, aside from the difficulties, periods of joy, mutual support and, at times, a great sense of specialness about the Place, Kilimanjaro. It also enjoyed a reputation among the off-site alternatives as faithful to its education ideals. But the school's tendency to dissolve decisiveness in the struggle for broad participation and consensus made it vulnerable to district bureaucracy, to the state, and to Washington.

The original ESP plan proposed to "flatten hierarchy and share power"<sup>9</sup> with individual schools, parents and students. During the five-year life of the ESP grant, however, original suspicions--that the district-created plan had been designed primarily to defer the BUSD budget crisis<sup>10</sup> while maintaining control over the experiment--were vindicated. It became clear that Superintendent Foster had structured the program with great administrative guile. Actually, a new layer of administration had been created to manage the ESP schools, but no changes were made in the review processes of the already-existing district bureaucracy, and no participatory concessions were made by the school board.

In its weakened condition Kilimanjaro was, in relation to this bureaucracy, peculiarly but not uniquely vulnerable. A variety of

problems beset the ESP schools, particularly the more radically alternative and off-site ones.

Two problems in particular confronted them: major resource disadvantages, and standardized accountability to district, state and NIE testing and evaluation requirements. Thus, for example, Kilimanjaro, far from its envisioned self-sufficiency, found itself in the common off-site dilemma of being cut off from routine district custodial, facility maintenance, and library services. It had rejected other district services such as personal and academic counseling. There was, however, no budgetary compensation in the ESP grant for this resource isolation. A short-lived Alternative Schools Council and the New Schools Network managed, successfully, to elicit compensatory funds from the NIE advocate, but only briefly.

As the national purse shrank and NIE took a more critical view of ESP performance, the grant was changed to a contract. In the renegotiated budget, funds for administration were significantly increased--that being Washington's perception of ESP problems--and funds for direct school support were commensurately decreased. The alternative schools lobby learned that it was more efficient, thereafter, to negotiate individual favors, backstage in the labyrinthine bureaucracy, than to act in concert. Kilimanjaro's commitment to community decision-making and the frequent changes of director made it impossible for the school to benefit from informally extracted exceptions to the district review process. Similarly, Kilimanjaro lost its defenses against state- and district-required, standardized student achievement tests, which the parents and staff vehemently opposed.

In the third year of its grant to ESP, the NIE eliminated all funding for noncredentialed teaching staff in all ESP schools. Kilimanjaro was then dependent on its two credentialed teachers and its volunteers.

While budget and administration closed in, general city enthusiasm for the Berkeley "experiment" had also waned by 1973. By then Kilimanjaro bore little resemblance to the school initially imagined by its founders. The first visible sign of its deformed ideals appeared in the form of spatial control. The school's radical conception of social and spatial openness assumed self-control on the part of all its members. But as the community rejected all ordering roles, progressively burned out its noncredentialed staff, and lost the ability

to attract idealistic volunteers, those few adults active in daily school affairs were forced to resort to simple control measures like locked doors.

The first to close was the back door of the main building, the door through which the biggest boys conducted their raids. This was a sad but necessary act, because adults were decreasingly available to monitor this aspect of the school's valued freedom. Next, parental clamor for focused classes in the basic skills resulted in the reservation of the downstairs room for math tutorials. During these classes the room was declared off-limits to students not scheduled to be there. This, of course, made the room all the more attractive to the excluded students, especially in light of their clear understanding that the practice ran counter to the school's official norms. Their exclusion was handled in an ad hoc way. One volunteer recounts a typical episode:

Finally, all the Redhots were uprooted from the room by a man teacher (with a threatening sound in his voice, I might add). Such a move succeeded in clearing space for those at work in the room--but it didn't do anything for the four boys who got ostracized from the "learning community." I watched them roam around the yard and shuffle leaves--and fight with one another. The fights attracted attention from adults who broke them up. These children are not free.

The social and physical permeability of the school's outer boundaries produced events that also gradually compromised open-ness ideals. Some students, for example, discovered they could make money by selling hastily dashed-off paintings to passersby on the sidewalk adjacent to the main building. As enthusiasm for this venture grew, so did the physical disarray associated with making the paintings. In a hotly contested decision, the store room was locked. Any student wanting paints or other materials was directed to an adult assigned possession of the key. Another issue arose when several Berkeley "oddballs" sidestepped the filter of "seeing the director" before participating in school activities. After one of them apparently engaged a student in aggressive sexual teasing, a sign-in sheet was instituted, and staff became generally less hospitable to unknown outsiders and informal volunteers.

Finally, two major events shrank the school to a nearly inoperable condition. The loss of staff and volunteers meant there were fewer

supervisory adults on the site. Students, gradually closed out of scheduled and locked spaces inside the school, became more adventuresome in their forays outside it, and their activities were destructive. The landlord of one nearby building was a very liberal Protestant group that, at first, thoroughly identified with the school's purposes. But finally, in exasperation, after many appeals to the school to take some meliorative action, it built a six foot high fence across the middle of the student athletes' playing field. In \_\_\_\_ or 19 \_\_, the Berkeley Fire Marshal declared the school's office and recently refurbished library in violation of city codes.

### Kilimanjaro: Negotiated Alternative Participation

Increasingly, as the movement and the counterculture spread and deepened in intensity, more people developed a need to find a way to live life and make history at the same time. (Moberg: 28)

There was a greater willingness on the part of Americans to make a scene and to make their own scenes: to engage in dissent and to create patterns of culture; to refuse inherited institutions and precast roles, and to widen and deepen their subjective space. (Clecak:27)

These new forms--urban communes, free schools, law collectives, a whole range of "counterinstitutions"--came into existence with a variety of grand objectives. But the theme common to all was the members' hope that the new organizations prefigured a better way of living and working. (Case and Taylor: 4)

The unanimous retrospective view of conservative and radical critics of the 1960s and 1970s on what was taking place at the ground level of engaged peoples' lives is simply good reporting. Within the circumstances of those times, however, the story of Kilimanjaro was an ordinary one. The people of Kilimanjaro suffered the normal trouble of groups attempting to establish "other ways" in normal schools.

Like the leaders of Operation Bootstrap, the founders of Kilimanjaro Elementary School envisioned their place as a seed of new life. Their radical rejection of the culture and pedagogy of the common

schools was nested in a larger critique of education and society in general. They were to be a participatory alternative to what "society" offered up as education. This would be accomplished by creating their own society, of which the school would be the center.

Unlike Bootstrap, these new-life advocates made a deal with the society they rejected: they accepted--indeed, were dependent on--its money and managerial structure. How could those with such a radically alternative vision have made such a constraining accommodation?

One aspect of the explanation can be found at the national level. Getting underway some five years after Bootstrap, Kilimanjaro was part of a nationwide and networked body of people actively moving toward "free" and alternative schools. And, as Graubard points out in his summary retrospective:

Instead of starting their own schools, parents, teachers, and students who shared the educational and cultural ideas of the small band of free-schoolers worked to establish the idea of parent and student choice in the kind of education provided by the public system. Some administrators, educational "experts," government policymakers, and foundation officials supported this approach (Graubard: 50).

So, in terms of the national conversation among free-schoolers, Kilimanjaro was not unique in its immersion in the public schools. Sympathetic local support, a network of activists, a distinguished critical literature gave a convincing feel of reality to their goals. The resultant general pressure on the federal government to acknowledge these critiques was, after a fashion, successful. The world of advocates--with Berkeley at center stage--had rights to the resources they had freed up. Although thoroughly distrustful of government motivations attached to these resources, local Berkeley conditions helped sustain some confidence that any attendant traps could be avoided.

The advocates of alternatives in education did not comprise a social movement in the same sense as that of civil rights, out of which Bootstrap had grown. Thus, there was not a fund of experience at the time for dealing with agencies from which resources had been extracted. Most civil rights activists had witnessed, firsthand, the evolution of publicly supported participatory programs for the poor. This was certainly true of Bootstrap's founders and explains their rejection of

federal funding. While many groups in southeast Los Angeles did accept such funding, they did not conceive of themselves as alternatives. Presuming to be alternative in that context was a truly extraordinary feature of Bootstrap.

In Berkeley, by contrast alternatives were ordinary. Most highly valued among them were those governed consensually. And there was the scent of victory; the seemingly impending radical control of city governance. There was ample warning about the impossibility of a marriage between a true alternative and federal funds mediated by the school district bureaucracy. But systematic and rejectionist criticism was, at the time, a routine tool of the struggle. The Herb Kohls on the scene could be viewed as a focal vanguard beating back the barriers of institutional conservatism and thereby making space for the establishment of multiple alternatives that locked in new ways of living and learning that would transform the city. This is what Kili-manjaro sought to do.

Kilimanjaro's challenge was not the creation of something unique but something uniquely faithful to principals of consensual decision-making, antihierarchical in terms of age, gender, role, or status, based on trust that the best learning for all depended on a laissez-faire, noncoercive schools community. The founders and core protagonists subscribed to all of Arthur Stein's (1985 :3) summarized values\* of that period. Two of those values were the pivot of their undoing.

First, despite the supportive environment of the city, was the deception that self-reliance and independence from "the system" could be managed with the system's resources while negotiating separation from the legal requirements and managerial practices of the system. Dennis Cohen argues that the ultimate demise of alternative schools in Berkeley is explained by "the general exhaustion and political defeat of radical education reformers within the BESP . . . a citywide reduction in political activism and dissent and a reaffirmation of mainstream lifestyles that grew at the end of the Vietnam War protests" and by "increasing pressures to cut back their offerings because of the district's accelerating enrollment losses" (Cohen: 292). But

---

\*See Stein, p. 168.

Kilimanjaro's peculiar vulnerability lay in its charter-based refusal to play by the system's rules and its paralysis in consensual decision-making. Looking back, it seems that, as the slightly adjusted administrative machinery of the school system ground on, Kilimanjaro's brief existence was a case of the tolerance of an experimenting city in exploratory times.

The second place-dissolving problem was the simplified lives of the "upper low-life." The values of the charter and the core group read like a catalogue of counterculture aspirations. In his compelling review of these values in the 1960s, Steven Tipton writes:

The counterculture's ideal society is exemplified by a small-scale, intimate, collegial, and relatively self-supporting commune. It contrasts with the large-scale, impersonal, hierarchical, and associational bureaucracy that organizes modern society in tandem with the nuclear family. The commune is collectively oriented and stresses interpersonal relatedness over individual achievement. Social roles are diffuse (rotating chores versus a fixed job), status is ascribed (friends, lover, and mutual helpers versus co-workers), and relationships are highly affective (a warm embrace versus a brisk handshake). The bureaucracy is oriented toward the individual, roles are functionally specific, status is earned by achievement, and relationships are affectively neutral.

We have seen that the counterculture defines the ends of individual activity in terms of self-awareness, self-expression, self-realization, and the like. These categories have a developmental dimension in the counterculture's usage, and this fact has a crucial effect on its view of social affiliation. In seeking to realize oneself rather than maximize one's interests, achievement becomes an internal activity of the psychic or spiritual life, instead of an external activity of the social or economic life. (Tipton: 18)

Even Kilimanjaro's age-grade egalitarianism rang true to the romanticization of children that Bennett Berger found among hippie communards (Berger: 50-90).

Despite the paradox of pursuing these values within a bureaucracy, fidelity to these values in the personal lives of the core group

required a marginal attachment to the "dead" social and economic system of the larger world. The style of life and the resulting struggle for economic survival, thus, drained participatory energy away from the school and ultimately warped the school's internal life in the competition of pay for work. The very attraction and allegiance to alternative lives incapacitated Kilimanjaro for the hard practical exigencies of maintaining an alternative place.

While Graubard chronicles the success of many alternative schools--some surviving to this day, most of these are the products of advantaged, upper-middle class, and professional people around major urban centers of higher education (Graubard: 51-54). Despite the peculiar local circumstances of Berkeley, Kilimanjaro is typical of a type of alternative school "failure" witnessed around the country. They tried to do too much while doing too little. David Moberg looks back admiringly on the goals of the national alternative schools thrust:

They tackled one of the most basic mechanisms for reproducing society. By abandoning hierarchy, discipline, and a curriculum designed to integrate obedient kids into twentieth century American capitalism, and replacing it with a program of equality, freedom, love, spontaneity, and the development of strong individuals, they could help the students escape the dreary regimen of public schools and strengthen the forces of social change (Moberg in Case and Taylor: 291).

But he goes on to cite the lament of Jonathan Kozol, one of the earliest and most acute critical leaders of thought about free and alternative schools, about the outcome: "I think that one of the reasons that we now face the frightening 'back-to-basics' movement in this country is because many of us, and I include myself here, were very reckless and careless and stupid in our behavior in the late sixties and would just say, 'kids are beautiful and neat and can learn at their own organic and spontaneous pace.'"

Kozol is clearly right, but why? I believe Kilimanjaro to be representative of the fate of many free and alternative schools around the country. Their adult members bore a faith that, unencumbered by rules and regulations, the spontaneous and organic would release fundamental democratic impulses within their protected enclaves. But they were concerned to nurture that spontaneity and organicism in their individual lives more than in their collective lives. There was a

certain personal convenience in holding these exalted beliefs. And the ordinary world did not leave them alone.

The Bootstrap episode represents the formation of participatory alternatives during the first blush of the idea. The Kilimanjaro episode is a case example of a national contraction--not disappearance - -of participatory alternative places. In the mid-seventies, the idea and practice of participation were still very much alive, but in different garb. The final episodes that follow tell the story of two forms of its emergent expression.