

## **A Path Appears: Multidisciplinary Teaching Resource**

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This text provides a space to initiate discussions on important issues—both local and global. Each chapter can be read as a stand-alone unit, and each chapter, in addition to focusing on social and historical research, shines a spotlight on a small cast of characters: highlighting their stories, struggles, and inspiring achievements. The book is multidisciplinary and much of it can be integrated into a range of courses. You might consider using this chapter guide to select (or have students select) excerpts that seem the most interesting and relevant. This guide does not attempt to evenly summarize the book; its goal is to provide a window into some of the content and possible disciplinary connections that can be made. The “big questions” listed are not necessarily explicit in the chapter, but they might be used to extend the conversation. Please contact GCP (“Global Citizenship Project”) to offer any suggestions, additions, or corrections. We welcome and appreciate your feedback!

### **Chapter 1: A Meaningful Life**

- **Possible disciplinary connections:** the first chapter is multidisciplinary, but it may be particularly useful in history, psychology, and sociology courses . . .
- **Big question:** Are most people generous or self-serving?
- **Content-based question:** According to the authors, why should society try to help poor children instead of leaving the job of childrearing completely up to parents?
- This chapter shows us the ways in which neuroscience and psychology are being used to better understand generosity.
- Social connections and mentors are essential: No one achieves success without help.
- **Organizations addressed:** charity:water, Cure Violence, Evidence Action, HELP, Heifer International, Save the Children

### **Chapter 2: A Drop in the Bucket**

- **Possible disciplinary connections:** this chapter is appropriate for service-learning courses . . .
- **Big questions:** Do you believe charities should be held to a higher ethical standard than for-profit businesses? What are the implications of your answer to this question?
- **Content-based question:** What three general techniques for helping others are discussed?
- The charity “industry” is not perfect, but it’s improving.
- **Organizations addressed:** FirstStep, Smile Train, Citizen Schools, DoSomething.org, Reach Out and Read, Big Brother and Big Sister, iMentor, Bead for Life

### **Chapter 3: From Anecdote to Evidence**

- **Possible disciplinary connections:** this is one of the best chapters for insight into critical thinking, and can be worked into any discipline, but it may be particularly useful in engineering (clean cook stoves) and culinary or business classes (“Donuts with CARE”) . . .
- **Big question:** Is it possible for an “outsider” to effectively solve problems within a community?
- **Content-based question:** Data analysis can show us which social programs for improving lives work best. How does Biti Rose's experience connect to the research of Esther Duflo?
- The issue of evidence (its relevance and application) is explored in this chapter.
- Metrics that have been useful in the corporate world are now being applied to charities.
- Microfinance and microsavings are briefly addressed.
- **Organizations addressed:** Poverty Action Lab, Evidence Action

### **Chapter 4: The Land of Opportunity—If You Catch Them Early**

- **Possible disciplinary connections:** English, math, nursing, education, political science, sociology, psychology, biology, criminal justice . . .
- **Big question:** Is it possible for an individual to rise above his/her environment without any outside help?
- **Content-based questions:** According to the authors, when do interventions have the most impact on the life chances of a poor child? How does poverty in the USA compare to poverty in developing countries (such as those in Africa or elsewhere)?
- The neuroscience of neglect is addressed in this chapter.
- Parenting coaches and early interventions can make a big difference in the trajectory of a life.
- Social and economic hardship deeply impacts one’s education and achievement.
- **Organizations addressed:** SCRIPT, Nurse-Family Partnership, Save the Children

### **Chapter 5: A Thirty-Million-Word Gap**

- **Possible disciplinary connections:** English, reading, languages, communications, reading, political science . . .
- **Big question(s):** Why do we fail to direct resources toward social programs that help children? What are the beliefs and perceptions that influence our public policy?
- **Content-based questions:** What is Head Start and what is its purpose? Why is it controversial? Name one activity that all parents, rich and poor, should do with their young children to prepare them for school.
- Questions of government involvement in education are raised in this chapter.
- There are major differences between poor and affluent parents in speaking to their children.
- **Organizations addressed:** Reach Out and Read, Head Start, RESULTS, First Five Years Fund, Springboard Collaborative, Echoing Green

## **Chapter 6: Who Grabs the Marshmallow?**

- Possible disciplinary connections: psychology, sociology, criminal justice, English . . .
- Big question: Is it possible to draw absolute conclusions from experiments in the social sciences? What steps can be taken to elevate the validity of different types of experiments?
- Content-based questions: What is “grit”? Why is it important?
- The ability to delay gratification seems to be a strong indicator of one’s potential for success.
- The idea that intelligence is “fixed” and opportunity is readily available is fallacious.
- Organizations addressed: Upward Bound, Schools on Wheels, Chess in the Schools

## **Chapter 7: Coaching Troubled Teens**

- Possible disciplinary connections: math, education, political science . . .
- Big question: Which is worse: to be deprived of hope or to be deprived of basic resources?
- Content-based questions: Consider social programs from an economic standpoint (in terms of return on investment): Which group of people—children or adults—do the authors think possess the greatest potential? Is the viewpoint of the authors reflected in the way in which money is currently allocated?
- Family planning has been traditionally concerned with how to meet basic physical needs, but people, particularly young mothers living in poverty, should also have their emotional and psychological needs addressed and discussed when planning for and raising children.
- Unfortunately, teachers who work with disadvantaged students are usually ill-prepared for this type of work, and they lack the support and resources to be successful.
- Organizations addressed: Carrera curriculum, Options for Youth, Citizen School, Youth Villiages, College Advising Corps

## **Chapter 8: The Power of Hope**

- Possible disciplinary connections: English, math, philosophy, psychology, sociology, history, economics; “A Kenyan Named Kennedy” at the end of the chapter offers a vignette that would work well in a theater, business, or education course . . .
- Big questions: Is it fair to hold an individual fully accountable for his/her behavior? Or should circumstance be a major consideration when judging a person’s actions?
- Content-based question: What are the internal constraints of the poor?
- The cycle of poverty is examined in this chapter.
- Depression, learned futility, and self-destructive behavior are also addressed.
- The arts (e.g., “ambush theater”) can be a powerful force in raising awareness.
- Organizations addressed: BRAC, Plan USA, SHOFCO, Projects for Peace, Mothers’ Day Movement

## **Chapter 9: A Doctor Who Treats Violence**

- Possible disciplinary connections: criminal justice, psychology, political science, math . . .
- Big question: Which has more influence over our behavior: nature or nurture? (Or is this a reductive and flawed question?)

- Content-based questions: How does Dr. Slutkin view violence? Describe the way in which his career and his travels have informed his unique perspective.
- Dr. Slutkin's assertion: "[U]rban violence . . . [has been] misdiagnosed as solely a moral problem or a criminal issues . . . [when it is] in many ways more like a disease epidemic" (144).
- Organizations addressed: Cure Violence

### **Chapter 10: Attacking Sex Trafficking**

- Possible disciplinary connections: English, journalism, history, anthropology, political science, math . . .
- Big question(s): Who determines what is "news"? Why are there so many important issues that get so little attention in mainstream media?
- Content-based question: What are some of the most significant misconceptions that people have regarding sex trafficking?
- Sex trafficking is an underreported issue that affects vulnerable populations in the US and around the world.
- "[O]n any one day there may be 100,000 women and girls (about 10 percent of them underage) selling sex in the United States" (156).
- Organizations addressed: Polaris Project, GEMS Girls, FAIR Girls

### **Chapter 11: Charity—In Search of a Revolution**

- Possible disciplinary connections: business, economics, communications, marketing . . .
- Big questions: What are the implicit assumptions about power that come with our current definition of "charity"? To achieve the greatest good, do we need to revise our definition of "charity" and think, instead, in terms of partnership?
- Content-based questions: What is "effective altruism"? How does one choose an effective charity? Is minimal expenditure on employees' salaries and PR the best route? Are sites like "Charity Navigator" undermining the good that an organization might do by confirming a narrow, self-sacrificing definition of charity?
- Organizations addressed: Oxfam, TeamWorks, Vital Voices, GiveWell

### **Chapter 12: Madison Avenue Helps the Needy**

- Possible disciplinary connections: philosophy, political science, journalism, English, film, psychology, communications, marketing, business, allied health (various courses) . . .
- Big questions: Is there an ethical problem when graphic images are used to raise money for a cause? Do the ends justify the means?
- Content-based questions: Who is Pale Male and why is he significant to the authors? What is the point of the pond story told by philosopher Peter Singer?
- The issue of compensation for talented people working for charities is again discussed.
- The power of the specific individual and his/her story is addressed: "we need to get better at storytelling to build connections and push for change" (195). Storytelling and appeals to

pathos have proven to be more of a motivating force for empathy and engagement than appeals to logos via data.

- In the “Lessons from a Master Pastor” vignette, issues of philosophy, policy, and religion are addressed; reductive dichotomies such as “liberal/conservative” and “secular/religious” are examined.
- Organizations addressed: Operation Smile, Smile Train, WonderWork, Save the Children

### **Chapter 13: Scaling Social Good**

- Possible disciplinary connections: math, business, economics; the vignette at the end of the chapter on Revolution Foods would work well in a culinary arts class . . .
- Big questions: Is there a way to marry social responsibility and profitability? Does social responsibility always produce a financial “drag” in business?
- Content-based questions: What are some of the socially conscious corporations discussed in this chapter and why is their work significant? (What do they do that others do not?)
- This chapter might provide a good segue into a discussion of SRIs (socially responsible investments).
- Questions of “impact investing” are explored.
- An argument that charities are increasingly savvy is made: the new generation of social entrepreneurs “have much more sophisticated business skills than those of an earlier generation” (207).
- Organizations addressed: Acumen Fund, Change.org, Better World Books, Revolution Foods

### **Chapter 14: Doing Good While Being Big**

- Possible disciplinary connections: nursing, allied health, environmental science, culinary arts, marketing, business; engineering is addressed in the vignette at the end (how to design a portable water filtration system) . . .
- Big questions: Should we automatically be skeptical of a for-profit’s acts of altruism? Does the motive matter as much as the outcome?
- Content-based questions: Explain one creative solution to the problem of malnutrition. Describe the product and the strategies used for its promotion and distribution.
- Creative solutions to pressing problems are addressed: e.g., Danone developing and selling a yogurt with micronutrients to combat malnutrition in Bangladesh.
- Issues of production and distribution are addressed.
- Organizations addressed: Danone Foods, CARE, JITA, Corporate Service Corps

### **Chapter 15: The Neuroscience of Giving**

- Possible disciplinary connections: biology, sociology, anthropology, philosophy . . .
- Big question: Is pure altruism ever possible?
- Content-based question: What makes charity:water’s pleas for money so effective?
- According to recent research (using fMRI scans), we all have a “set point for happiness.” Ordinary means of gratification will only raise our happiness levels temporarily. However, “connecting with a cause” is one way to achieve a more lasting state of satisfaction.

- Organizations addressed: Helen Keller International, Carter Center

### **Chapter 16: When Social Networks Dig a Well**

- Possible disciplinary connections: math, computer science, photography, marketing, sociology, philosophy, nursing, biology, engineering . . .
- Big questions: When it comes to charity work, which will achieve the greatest good: competition or cooperation? What assumptions are present in the answers to these questions?
- Content-based questions: What do the authors say is one of the most basic promotional problems in the humanitarian world? Why are so many non-profit organizations largely unsuccessful in moving people to care about humanitarian issues?
- Issues of marketing and networking are addressed: “a basic problem in the humanitarian world: people who do amazingly good work in the field are often abysmal at telling their stories” (251).
- Charity:water’s progressive marketing strategies are again discussed.
- The science and psychology of generosity are also addressed in this chapter.
- Organizations addressed: charity:water, Mercy Ships, International Rescue Committee, Full Circle Fund

### **Chapter 17: Survival of the Kind**

- Possible disciplinary connections: biology, philosophy, psychology, history, anthropology, health science . . .
- Big questions: Is it possible to make a convincing casual argument that a pattern of behavior is based on one’s genetic code? What do such questions say about the existence of “free will”?
- Content-based questions: “Isn’t life a Darwinian struggle, and, if so, why haven’t the selfish genes rooted out the generous genes?” (263).
- This chapter addresses questions about the survival of the “generous gene.”
- Recent research in neuroscience has deterministic philosophical implications: some scientists have speculated that “people who are the most empathic have two copies of the G allele . . . [while] those with two copies of the A allele are less able to put themselves in the shoes of others . . .” (265-66).
- Organizations & charities: Restore Leadership in Uganda, The Mentoring Project

### **Chapter 18: Healing Through Helping**

- Possible disciplinary connections: nursing, psychology, gender studies . . .
- Big questions: Is empathy be cultivated by the rational intellect or must it come from our emotions? Is true understanding of another person’s struggle ever possible?
- Content-based questions: What are some of the mental and physical health benefits of volunteering?
- This chapter focuses mostly on women—those that have lost their babies and those that have lost their independence (due to violence and sexual slavery).

- Both women and men are addressed in a discussion of possible paths to recovery after PTSD, one such path being “healing through helping.”
- Organizations addressed: Juan Felipe Foundation, The Mission Continues, Experience Corps

### **Chapter 19: A Hundred Flowers Bloom**

- Possible disciplinary connections: this is an especially rich chapter that addresses critical thinking and the difficulty in making a convincing causal argument in the real world; this chapter can be used in many disciplines, particularly in composition, education, sociology, psychology, anthropology, history, gender studies, business, marketing, and math . . .
- Content-based questions: Name some problems that were addressed in the chapter. Are these problems surprising in that their solutions are largely taken for granted in other places?
- Big questions: Can an individual be responsible for sweeping changes in the world or is the individual simply a symbol or spearhead for social and historical forces? Is this idea of “leaders” vs. “followers” harmful to the greater human good?
- In this chapter the authors argue that the individual does more good by joining an established organization devoted to a cause rather than going it alone and creating something new.
- The controversial Bridge teaching program is addressed, but the issue of the privatization of education and the treatment of teachers as professionals capable of making curricular decisions is not discussed.
- In the vignette at the end, issues of business management and sustainability are raised.
- Organizations addressed: SHE (Sustainable Health Enterprises), First Book

### **Chapter 20: A Giving Code**

- Possible disciplinary connections: psychology, philosophy . . .
- Big question: When faced with a massive problem, does one individual’s small contribution really matter?
- Content-based question: What can be done to make people more involved in the solving of global problems?
- Provocative points, which may serve as springboards into lively debates, are made: “One reason we in the West are sometimes less generous is that we learn to ‘otherize’ people” (305).
- “We sometimes paralyze ourselves with the conviction that global problems are hopeless, but in fact this should be a remarkably hopeful time to be alive . . . serious diseases are on the decline and the child mortality rate (of those under five years old) has almost halved since 1990” (307).
- Organizations addressed: Hero Rats, Room to Read, Beers for Books, GiveWell, Focusing Philanthropy

**FINAL QUESTIONS:**

What issues matter to YOU? How can you translate your thoughts and feelings into action?

**FINAL POINT:**

By expanding the circle of people you care about, you're expanding yourself and your presence in the world.