PRIVACY AND RESPECT FOR INDIVIDUALITY:
A PHILOSOPHICAL CRITIQUE OF SOME CONTEMPORARY
EDUCATIONAL TRENDS

A thesis presented
in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree
of Doctor of Philosophy in
Education at
Massey University

NICOLE MARIE BISHOP

1993
The threats to privacy which arise from technologies and institutions are of considerable contemporary interest, as is illustrated by a large literature upon such threats within the liberal tradition. Of particular contemporary concern are the subjective routes through which privacy may be undermined. This concern arises from the contemporary trend for institutions to become concerned with the internal and subjective lives of their charges. In education, these trends may be found in an advocacy of increased self-disclosure in the classroom, and in a call for increased personal and emotional involvement in the activities of the classroom.

The purpose of this thesis is to extend and develop the liberal case for the importance of privacy in the development of a respect for individuality in a way which pays special regard to the significance of the inward and subjective dimensions of human experience for the development of, and respect for, individuality. I argue that a regard for the distinctive character of such processes is crucial to the fostering of individuality. Central to my case is a defence of the critical role which privacy plays in preserving the virtues of character which develop through a sensitivity to these subjective dimensions of human experience.

The methodology involves, firstly, a normative characterisation of the attitudes and dispositions which are required for the exercise of respect for individuality, with a particular emphasis placed upon their subjective and inward features. This task involves an analysis of the distinction between on the one hand, the personal forms of respect, which pertain to individuality, and whose character is essentially subjective; and, on the other hand, those impersonal forms of respect whose character is essentially objective and impartial. Secondly, I undertake an analysis of some, crucial ways in which these dispositions and attitudes may be undermined by values and practices which disregard their subjective character. This analysis proceeds by way of a critical examination of two trends which may be found in some educational literature: a/ Classroom self-disclosure; and b/ Cooperative Learning.

The thesis contains two sections. In the first section, I delineate the essential features of a respect for individuality, and the virtues of character required for the proper exercise of such respect. This will involve showing this form of respect differs, both conceptually and normatively, from impersonal forms of respect. In the second section, I show the special significance of a context of privacy for the development of the virtues of character which are required for the proper exercise of personal respect.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to thank my supervisor, Professor I. Snook, for his encouragement and helpful criticisms of my work. Thanks also to Professor Graham Oddie, my second supervisor, for his comments and criticisms.

I wish to thank also my fellow students whose interest, conversation, and criticism were of help to me during my work on this thesis: Celia Short, Jenny MacKenzie, and Rosemary Mercer. I am also grateful to those who provided helpful advice in seminars and academic conferences, especially John Hattie, Donald Vandenberg and Brian Hill.

Thanks also to the patient and dedicated efforts of my mother, Sharon Bishop, who offered to proofread this thesis, and to Kip Marks, for his helpful editorial suggestions.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS iii

INTRODUCTION 1

SECTION ONE
THE TWO FORMS OF RESPECT 5

CHAPTER 1 THE IMPERSONAL FORMS OF RESPECT 6
1.1 The Basic Features of Impersonal Respect 6
1.2 Generic Respect 7
1.3 Evaluative Respect 9
1.4 Claims on Others: Character and Limits 17
1.5 Conclusion 21

CHAPTER 2 THE PERSONAL FORMS OF RESPECT 22
2.1 The Basic Features of Personal Respect 22
2.2 Personal Respect for the Self 27
2.3 Personal Respect for Other Selves 39
2.4 Constraints 52
2.5 Conclusion 56

CHAPTER 3 CONCEPTS AND CONTEXTS 58
3.1 Introduction 58
3.2 Concepts 59
3.3 Contexts 68