

To whom it may concern:

I am proud to stand with my Latin American colleagues and concur with their critique of Dr. Ames' book, *The Charisma Machine*. I find the work mean-spirited, patronizing, and contradictory. The book displays a facile understanding of learning and contorts constructionism to suit the author's thesis. Not only doesn't the work include the scholarship of Latin American educators, but it also fails to acknowledge any of the well-documented history of laptops in education.

The accusations of misogyny and American imperialism are even more dubious when you learn that the first school in the world to embrace 1:1 computing was an Australian girls school and that the first implementations of ubiquitous personal computing was in Australian schools, beginning in 1989. That work and those educators' commitment to constructionism is well documented. As far as I know, none of the educators engaged in that work for more than three decades were consulted during the writing of *The Charisma Machine*. Thousands of schools across the globe, inspired by the pioneering Australian efforts, "went 1:1," before Ames began her research.

The first doctoral thesis about a widescale implementation of 1:1 computing and Papert's vision was published in 1995. Australia's premiere educational research agency published scholarship on the topic in 1991. Countless peer reviewed conference papers, journal articles, and other forms of scholarship supporting every child owning a personal laptop computer have been published since.

Here are but a few.

Grasso, I., & Fallshaw, M. (1993). *Reflections of a learning community: Views on the introduction of laptops at mlc: Methodist Ladies' College*.

Johnstone, B. (2003). *Never mind the laptops: Kids, computers, and the transformation of learning*. Seattle: iUniverse.

Little, J., & Dixon, B. (Eds.). (2000). *Transforming learning - an anthology of miracles in technology-rich classrooms*. Port Melbourne, Australia: Kids Technology Foundation.

Livingston, P. (2006). *1-to-1 learning: Laptop programs that work*. ISTE.

McDonald, H. J. (1995). *Learning, laptops and logowriter: A study of teacher change*. Monash University.

Ryan, M. (1991). *The queensland sunrise centre: A report of the first year*. ACER.

Stager, G. S. (1995). Laptop schools lead the way in professional development. *Educational Leadership*, 53(2), 78-81.

A more honest account would acknowledge how Papert, Negroponte, and many in the constructionism community have demonstrated a lifelong commitment to social justice and amplifying the potential of each student. This is especially pertinent when mistakenly portraying their actions through the lens of capitalism. Arguing that a sweeping polemic is merely a narrowly focused piece of objective research is disingenuous, especially when one considers the inflammatory rhetoric being used to generate interest in the book.¹

In solidarity,



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Constructing Modern Knowledge

¹ "Ames reveals that the laptops were designed by "technically precocious boys" - idealized younger versions of the designers - rather than the children who were actually using them." (a direct quote from the back cover of the Ames book) This is neither objective nor factually accurate.