ACTUALIZING THE DEMOCRATIC PROMISE
OF AMERICAN PUBLIC EDUCATION

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The health of American democratic society is linked to the practice of American education. The American public educational system has been charged with defending democracy through the education of a capable citizenry. However, recent educational practices and policies have had the collective impact of sublimating the rhetoric of liberal democratic philosophy with free market capitalism, resulting in an increasing failure to fulfill education’s democratic promise. Furthermore, the emphasis on market-driven motivations and framing in educational rhetoric has transposed itself into an increasing fragmentation of community and neglect of civic participation. If we are to reconcile democratic theory with practice, and realize the dream of American democracy, the system of American public education must itself practice a more community-minded pedagogy.
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INTRODUCTION

We are a nation at risk. The Reagan administration said it in the ‘80s and now I say it again. We are facing a critical moment in our nation’s history, an issue of national security. The stakes have changed since the National Commission on Excellence in Education (NCEE) released their seminal report in 1983. Whereas then the threat of losing our status as a global superpower was of primary concern, now, we stand to lose something greater: our very identity as a democracy.

The same urgency that incited Secretary T.H. Bell to advocate the immediate reform of our nation’s schools must now move us again. While the NCEE cited instances of declining achievement on standardized test scores, low literacy rates, and ignorance in the fields of science and technology as indicators of a “rising tide in mediocrity that threaten our very future as a Nation and a people,” we are currently faced with a decline in communal spirit, a lack of commitment to public and civic life, and an ignorance of democratic values and practices.

The symptoms of our ailing democracy abound: students continue to drop out of high school and college at “alarmingly high rates,” crime and poverty rates are up, and the gap between classes grows while the middle class disappears. When policy-makers and educators look for signs of change and hope in the younger generation, they are met with disappointment. America isn’t at the polls; America is at the mall. Our democracy

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2 “According to most estimates, today’s teenagers are dropping out of school at an alarmingly high rate – about 30 percent, a statistic that researchers say is very close to what it was in the 1970s, when the educational reform movement was getting under way” (Ruben Navarrette Jr. for The San Diego Union-Tribune, 24 Sept 2006).
3 For a more detailed discussion of the “indicators of the disastrous direction in which our political guardians are taking us,” please see David T. Sehr’s notes in Education for Public Democracy (1997), particularly pages 14-16.
has been hijacked by corporate media and consumer culture, turning our citizens into mall zombies,⁴ our sense of agency atrophied from instant access and instant gratification. We live in an America that would sooner vote for its next “Idol” than for its next President.⁵ Reality TV has replaced lived reality. This isn’t real life; this is reel life.

While globalization comforts us with the idea of the ever-growing “glocal,” we lose connection to our selves, each other. The inescapable spectacle⁶ of the media onslaught has captured the general public’s attention so that we identify more with distant celebrities than we do our own community members, concern our days more with the plot twist in last week’s Grey’s Anatomy than with the fate of the writers’ strike that wages on in the streets of Hollywood. We are distracted and blunted by spectacularization⁷: we are spectators of our own lives, rather than participants.

The youth of America are expressing a lax commitment to even the most basic of civic duties. Voting among 18-24 year-olds in the 2000 elections was at “a record low” (Colby et al. 7), as roughly 32 percent actually voted, while 45 percent were registered. This, however, was still considered an improvement over past years, such as 1998, when only about 19 percent of the 18-24 demographic voted, even though nearly 44 percent

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⁴ As in George A. Romero’s satire Dawn of the Dead (1978).
⁵ In an article for The Guardian, Mark Sweney reports that 2006 American Idol Taylor Hicks won in “the biggest single voting night in the five-season history of the show […] in which 63 million votes were cast.” For comparison, “in the 1984 US presidential election, 54.5 million voters backed Ronald Reagan – the most votes obtained by a president” (“American Idol Outvotes the President,” 26 May 2006).
⁶ From Guy Debord’s The Society of the Spectacle (1967), “Chapter 2: The Society as Spectacle”: “The world at once present and absent that the spectacle holds up to view is the world of the commodity dominating all living experience. The world of the commodity is thus shown for what it is, because its development is identical to people’s estrangement from each other and from everything they produce.”
⁷ Again, from Debord: “The spectacle is not a collection of images; it is a social relation between people that is mediated by images.”
registered to do so. According to Anne Colby et al., “Americans growing up in recent decades vote less often than their elders and show lower levels of social trust and knowledge of politics” (7). Political scientist Robert Putnam suggests that weak voter turnout is just one aspect of a “chronicled widespread lack of trust in and respect for U.S. democratic processes and an overall decline in civic and political participation.” Putnam is not alone in his observation; political theorists, cultural scholars, and even students themselves regard the waning dedication to civic democratic life with great fear of what’s to follow, and vocal suggestions for what’s to be done.

In their “Civic Engagement Resolution,” nineteen Oklahoma college students – members of Campus Compact’s Raise Your Voice campaign – offered this critique of political culture and explained the shared sense of “political disaffection” described by Colby and others:

Our generation’s definition of “politics” includes words such as greed, intimidation, complex, power, money, and authority. Our peers’ apathy of the political process has led to a decline in voter turnout and has disengaged our generation. […] Political activities are indifferent to the issues that address the immediate needs of the younger generations. We feel powerless and separated from the political process.

Furthermore, the Oklahoma students identify the younger generation’s civic disengagement as a problem primarily concerning education:

We, as Oklahoma college students, and citizens of this state and nation […] feel it is necessary for all citizens to become civically engaged. […] We value education and the knowledge required to become informed citizens. However, the higher education institutions do not provide adequate education and knowledge about our civic responsibilities.

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8 See Appendix A: Voter Registration and Turnout by Age, Gender & Race, 1998 and 2000.
We often do not know how to address civic issues. Higher education institutions’ primary focus is to produce professionals, when instead they should be producing citizens.

This commentary offers a significant critique of the existing educational system, further supported by leading voices and scholars in educational policy and politics (namely Mortimer Adler, Henry Giroux, Peter McLaren, and Ernest Boyer, among others). The widely shared implication is that our institutions of higher and secondary education are failing to educate for citizenship. It would seem that our school system, which once provided hope for change through the education of future leaders, has now become an accessory to the continued loss of our democratic ideals. The time has come to reclaim education for democracy.

The cry for education to return our nation to its democratic roots is not unique to our present situation, but is echoed in the history of democratic theory and educational policy, equally present in both the writings and philosophies of our nation’s Founding Fathers, and the founding fathers of the American school system itself. It is the democratic philosophy underlying American education that interests me in this analysis, and how the democratic promise came to be conceived, negotiated, and appropriated in policy and practice. Furthermore, it is my contention that this promise remains unfulfilled in current educational practices, bearing more likeness to myth than reality.¹⁰

What follows is a discursive analysis of the origins of the democratic promise in education, beginning with a brief history of democratic theory, and the historical role education has played in the articulation and mystification of the democratic dream. Chapter Two discusses the policies and politics of the modern educational system, with a

¹⁰ With *myth* being the ultimate *dream*, a theory or promise left unrealized.
particular focus on the sublimation of free market capitalist ideology in the conservative restoration of the 1970s and ‘80s. Furthermore, it explores the growing conflation of business rhetoric with the language of democracy, and how a market-oriented definition may be at odds with the democratic ideals set forth by our Founding Fathers, driving us further away from our commitment to democracy.

Finally, this text proposes to reconceptualize the meaning of democracy to include a community-based model that respects the contributions and experiences of various community members. Through this community approach to education, we may possibly achieve the promise of American democracy.
CHAPTER ONE:
EDUCATION FOR DEMOCRACY

Education, then, beyond all other devices of human origin, is the great equalizer of the conditions of men – the balance-wheel of the social machinery.

Horace Mann, The Republic and the School (1848)

[The assumed aim] of education is to enable individuals to continue their education – the object and reward of learning is continued capacity for growth. Now this idea cannot be applied to all the members of a society except where intercourse of man with man is mutual, and except where there is adequate provision for the reconstruction of social habits and institutions by means of wide stimulation arising from equitably distributed interests. And this means a democratic society.

John Dewey, Democracy and Education (1916)

Above all things I hope the education of the common people will be attended to; convinced that on their good sense we may rely with the most security for the preservation of a due degree of liberty.

Thomas Jefferson, in a letter to James Madison (1787)

The importance placed on the American educational system is overwhelming. Our schools should equip students with the basic skills necessary to function in society, should teach us to hunger for knowledge, prepare us to be good citizens, should help keep social order and preserve common culture, in addition to ending poverty and supporting our national economy. All these various purposes of education distill into one common theme: education for the sake of democracy.

These various conceptions represent the spectrum of definitions of democracy in America, and the role of education in its implementation. Inherent in this discourse is an acknowledgement of the democratic idealism found in larger American culture, and recognition of “the school” as a particular social space in which the values and perceptions of our ideal society may take shape. That is, “the school” as the site of intellectual development, the head – and heart – of cultural consciousness. Democracy
may be found in the practices and performances of everyday life, but the school is where we start to believe it. Democracy, in this sense, begins as an abstract idea, a philosophy, and the school is the physical locus of its practice, where democracy is realized. It is the nexus at which the social and the individual meet, where the symbolic cultural mind and body fuse into one.

**THE SCHOOL AS SOCIAL CENTER**

“As the first and only nation built upon an educational foundation” (Bullough 6), democracy and education have long been inextricably linked in American public discourse. Social and political problems have historically been interpreted as problems for the educational system to resolve. Writes Robert V. Bullough, a professor of Educational Studies:

> Schools were supposed to do it all: provide showers for filthy kids, food, courses in personal hygiene, morals, brick-laying, and later, drivers’ education, careers, sex education, and several levels of math, English, history, and science. And, they were, and still are, expected to ameliorate economic and political problems: provide a means for economic mobility, soften social class differences, defend the free enterprise system, civilize the uncivil – especially the foreign-born – prevent crime, instill good work habits, and teach patriotism. (6)

Nothing short of the very health and life of civic society were left to schools to defend.

It became apparent early on in our nation’s history the significant role education would play in determining the future of American democracy. In his “Paper on the Academy” (1750), a proposal to the governing council of Philadelphia, Benjamin Franklin asserted that a school should have as its cardinal goal “the preparation of youngsters for public service to the community” (Pangle and Pangle 98). In his “Bill for
the More General Diffusion of Knowledge,” presented to the Virginia legislature in 1779, Thomas Jefferson “speaks first and foremost of the enlightenment of the mass of the citizenry, so as to instill in them not only an awareness of their individual rights but also a shrewd vigilance against tyranny” (Pangle and Pangle 108). These hopes and views of education charge the school system with responsibility to educate for citizenship.

The concerns of perpetuating a democratic society fell upon the school because of the unique place the school occupies within the social and political spheres. This relationship originates with the idea that the school is primarily a social center. It is the realization of education’s critical role in the creation and maintenance of an abstracted system of democratic values that has placed such significance on, and created such fervor in, the discourses on education, because “the battle for control of education reflects the larger struggle for control of America.”

Russian social constructivist Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934) was one of the first educational psychologists to theorize on the social construction of knowledge. He posited that “cognitive skills have their origins in social relations and are embedded in a sociocultural backdrop” (qtd. in Santrock 51). That is, the cognitive development of the individual is a communal process, contextualized in social activity. Furthermore, Vygotsky’s work suggests that learning is itself a social activity; it cannot, should not, be left to the individual.


__12__ Vygotsky’s theories on language, and particularly his theory regarding “inner speech” and oral language (best outlined in his work *Thinking and Speaking* [1934]) are also worth mentioning. Vygotsky believed language (or externally directed speech) originates as a tool for communication with other people – it develops first as a social mechanism, and, Vygotsky argues, separate from thought. Language is then internalized, in what Vygotsky calls “inner speech,” a form of language employed by the child to monitor and mediate his/her actions and thoughts. The use of this “inner speech” is thus a significant
Similarly, American philosopher John Dewey links education to its social function, explicitly connecting the learning contained in schooling to the activities of larger society. In a speech\textsuperscript{13} given to the National Education Association of the United States, Dewey stated: “the function of education, since anything which might pass by that name was found among savage tribes, has been social” (373). Going beyond Vygotsky’s theory that learning is best done in the context of society, Dewey suggests that the very purpose of education is its social function. As he stated in 1902:

\begin{quote}
The pressing thing, the significant thing, is really to make the school a social center; that is a matter of practice, not of theory. Just what to do in order to make the schoolhouse a center of full and adequate social service, to bring it completely into the current of social life – such are the matters I am sure which really deserve the attention of the public and that occupy your own minds (“The School as Social Center” 373).
\end{quote}

The prominent concern Dewey expresses is one of negotiating theory with practice. In order for education to accomplish its social function, education should be made a social endeavor. And thus, the school as social center.

The link between the individual and society is one of education. This idea contains two complementary interpretations: while Vygotsky traces the source of learning to society, American educational philosophy has tended to emphasize influence in the other direction. Vygotsky’s theory places education in society for the sake of individual development, while American public schooling has (historically, anyway) placed the individual in schools for the sake of society. This practice suggests the importance of education to social and public life, but also the role of schooling in reconciling individual cognitive development: the child coming into consciousness with him/herself, as well as a process of socialization.

\textsuperscript{13}“The School as Social Center” (1902).
desires with the needs of society. Here, we see the birth of the sociopolitical democratic philosophy that will come to undergird and influence the system of American public schooling.

THE MEANING OF DEMOCRACY

Democratic theory, much like educational theory, deals primarily with issues of equality and freedom, the relationship between the individual and society, and particularly individual freedoms and choices as they come to affect his/her community. To understand the role of education in a democratic society, we must also understand the current conceptions of democracy, and the history of the philosophies that informed it.

The philosophers of classical republicanism (most noted among them being Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero) “conceive[d of] human beings as naturally seeking their fulfillment, not as independent individuals but as participants in and dutiful contributors to the civic community” (Pangle and Pangle 37). Virtues, such as justice, good judgment, and self-restraint, were seen as “the chief aim of civic life,” rather than merely the means by which freedom and survival are maintained (Pangle and Pangle 37). For these forefathers of democratic thought, civic virtue was vital to the maintenance of a free republic, and education was the best means of achieving a virtuous citizenry.

Aristotle concluded both his Ethics and Politics with a discussion of education’s central role to society and community (Bellah et al., The Good Society 145). Education, in Aristotle’s view, was not limited to schooling, but applied more broadly to the system of laws and practices that would engender communal sentiments among a responsible
It was the primary function of society to “educate citizens into a life of virtue, for only such citizens would make a good [society] possible” (Bellah et al., *The Good Society* 145). Citizens were then responsible “to deliberate about the laws and to concern themselves with the common good” (Bellah et al., *The Good Society* 145). Moreover, “for many of the ancient Greeks [political] participation was a good in itself. Their term for the private individual was *idiotes* (idiot). Such a person was literally a fool as she or he was not interested in public affairs.”

The classical republicans understood that the successful creation and maintenance of a republic depended on its citizens balancing their self-interest with a commitment to community.

### I. “PROPERTY”

The classical understanding of republican virtue was decisively challenged in the revolutionary “unclassical” conception of politics first put forth by Machiavelli and later altered by Hobbes, Locke, and Hume, leading to the “liberal” republican or democratic outlook of the American Founders (Pangle and Pangle 37). The new republicans argued that the qualities of the virtuous community extolled by the classical republicans were “unreasonable, because such a community demands a self-transcendence, a sacrifice of material and individual interests, a subordination of commerce and acquisitiveness, that is simply contrary to human nature” (Pangle and Pangle 37). According to political scientist

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14 “It was not schools that Aristotle was thinking of […] when he discussed education, but the laws and the mores of the whole community” (Bellah et al., *The Good Society* 145).
15 I have substituted Aristotle’s original use of the term *polis* with the modern parallel “society.” As Bellah et al. write on page 145 of *The Good Society* (1991): “polis – a term that is usually translated as ‘city-state’ but that includes the idea of society or community as well.”
C.B. MacPherson, the individual right to the acquisition of “property”\textsuperscript{17} superseded any moral claims of the society (MacPherson 220-21). This “possessive individualism” lay at the heart of Lockean liberalism that would come to inform our Founding Fathers’ conception of democracy (Sehr 32).

While classical republicanism emphasized authoritative government and education as ways of protecting individuals’ rights to pursue their needs and desires, liberal republicanism posited that “government or politics has no legitimate authority to promote the health or excellence of men’s souls” (Pangle and Pangle 39). That is, government should have no role in enforcing beliefs or behaviors. The care of each soul “belongs to each individual… the lawgiver hath nothing to do with moral virtues and vices” (Pangle and Pangle 38).

Locke “elevates to the center of educational attention the individuality of human beings” (Pangle and Pangle 59), denying the innate nature of moral ideas and asserting the \textit{tabula rasa}: “Because humanity is so little defined by nature, humanity can largely define itself – once we acknowledge the absence of essential or natural or predestined character and recognize the molding power of education” (Pangle and Pangle 59). Here, Locke more or less paves the way for a “bootstraps” theory of education, asserting the role education could play in the formation of a self-made man.

It was Locke who articulated most fully the principles of justice and morality underlying legitimate republican government. The new political doctrine, elaborated in Locke’s \textit{Two Treatises of Government} (1689), takes as its foundation the idea that human beings are all essentially free and independent beings, equally possessed of inalienable

\textsuperscript{17} “Property” being the general term Locke used to refer to “life and liberty” (Locke 184). Locke’s word choice here is particularly revealing. By defining “life and liberty” as “property” (read: “possessions”), Locke articulates the transposition of market ideology onto our current understanding of democratic freedom.
personal freedoms or rights. “All obligations, and in particular all civic obligations, are understood to flow from the rational contractual consent of the free and by nature independent individuals seeking to protect and augment their personal interests” (Pangle and Pangle 38). Government therefore finds “its only legitimate basis in the consent of the governed and contracting individuals […] in securing their rights” (Pangle and Pangle 38). In particular, the right to “the pursuit of happiness” and its most “naturally prevalent expression in the exercise of the right to acquire, produce, and increase property or material possessions” (Pangle and Pangle 39).

John Locke shares his view of government and self-interest with Adam Smith, whose seminal tome *The Wealth of Nations* (1776) is widely considered the progenitor of modern free market economics. In it, Smith writes: “every individual, it is evident, can, in his local situation, judge much better than any statesman or lawgiver can do for him” (*Wealth of Nations* 572-3). Furthermore, in *The Theory Of Moral Sentiments* (1759), Smith suggests that “every man […] is first and principally recommended to his own care; and every man is certainly, in every respect, fitter and abler to take care of himself than of any other person” (Smith 321). Smith suggests, “By pursuing his own interest [the individual] frequently promotes that of the society more effectually than when he really intends to promote it” (*Wealth of Nations* 572). The *laissez-faire* philosophy, it would seem, was a political philosophy, before it became an economic one.18

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18 “*Laissez-faire,*” a phrase that literally means “let do” in French, is associated with the practice of strict free market economics. *Laissez-faire* economics are informed primarily by Smith’s theory of “the invisible hand,” a belief in the ability of market competition to correct and benefit society, without the intervention of the government or state.
II. CIVIC VIRTUE

Personal and communal interests, however, were not necessarily seen as mutually exclusive. On the contrary, early democratic theorists believed them to be mutually dependent. It became readily apparent to even the most ardent of individualists that a “good society” was in the best interest of all involved. Moreover, their very freedoms as individuals depended on it.

In his visits to America in the 1830s, Frenchman Alexis de Tocqueville sought to observe and report to his countrymen on American practices of democracy and the nature of freedom in a democratic society. In *Democracy in America* (published in two parts, the first in 1835, the second in 1840), Tocqueville reflected on what he called “habits of the heart,” the “notions, opinions and ideas” as well as “habitual practices” that comprise “the sum of moral and intellectual dispositions of men in society” (Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart* 37). He argues that, more than anything else, the social mores of American citizens have been “the key to the Americans’ success in establishing and maintaining a free republic” and furthermore, “that undermining American mores is the most certain road to undermining the free institutions of the United States” (Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart* 37).

Tocqueville regarded the growing individualism (“egoism”) of the time with great suspicion. “Individualism,” Tocqueville writes, “is a calm and considered feeling which disposes each citizen to isolate himself from the mass of his fellows,” to withdraw and “leave greater society to look after itself” (*Democracy in America* 506). Tocqueville

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19 Tocqueville also recognizes the role “physical circumstances” and laws of the United States have played in maintaining a democratic republic (Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart* 37).
20 Tocqueville was one of the first to use the term “individualism” to describe certain aspects of American character (Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart* vii).
feared that American individualism caused many to think of themselves “in isolation,” and that this may eventually lead them to “be shut up in the solitude of [their] own hearts” (*Democracy in America* 508). Such people came to forget their ancestors, their descendants, as well as their contemporaries (Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart* 37).

Furthermore, and most importantly, “Tocqueville saw the isolation to which Americans are prone as ominous for the future of our freedom. It is just such isolation that is always encouraged by despotism” (Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart* 37-8). Echoing the sentiments of the classical republicans, Tocqueville recognized the indispensability of “habits of the heart,” because they engendered the civic-mindedness necessary to keep self-interest in check and protect against a deteriorating society.

Even Adam Smith, whose *Wealth of Nations* would come to influence centuries’ worth of free market economics, conceded to the importance of self-restraint in the interest of maintaining a free society where free individuals could co-exist. While Tocqueville spoke of “mores” and “habits of the heart,” Smith contributed his own theory of “moral sentiments”:

> How selfish soever man may be supposed, there are evidently some principles in his nature, which interest him in the fortune of others, and render their happiness necessary to him, though he derives nothing from it, except the pleasure of seeing it. (*Theory of Moral Sentiments* 3)

Furthermore:

> Nothing pleases us more than to observe in other men a fellow-feeling with all the emotions of our own breast […] Man, conscious of his own weakness, and of the need which he has for the assistance of others, rejoices whenever he observes that they adopt his own passions, because he is then assured of that assistance. (*Theory of Moral Sentiments* 10)
Smith was careful to acknowledge that individuals could not practice strict self-interest without regard for the larger social fabric. Indeed, what Smith ultimately advocates is the cultivation of civic virtue:

In directing all our actions to promote the greatest possible good, in submitting all inferior affections to the desire of the general happiness of mankind, in regarding one’s self but as one of the many, whose prosperity was to be pursued no further than it was consistent with, or conducive to, that of the whole, consisted the perfection of virtue. (Theory of Moral Sentiments 444)

Unlike the strict utilitarian individualist approach to social relations most often attributed to his work, Smith envisions a “global citizen” who

[…] ought to regard himself, not as something separated and detached, but as a citizen of the world, a member of the vast commonwealth of nature. To the interest of this great community he ought at all times to be willing that his own little interest should be sacrificed. (Theory of Moral Sentiments 198, emphasis added)

Self-sacrifice, rather than self-interest, was Smith’s suggestion for social order. Smith’s theories on the importance of virtue, as a counterbalance to self-interest, mirror those of Tocqueville and the classical republicans. And like Tocqueville and Jefferson, Smith feared that a widespread possessive individualism paired with a lack of interest in the common good would inevitably lead to corruption:

The disposition to admire, and almost to worship, the rich and the powerful, and to despise, or, at least, to neglect persons of poor and mean condition […] is the great and most universal cause of the corruption of our moral sentiments. (Theory of Moral Sentiments 84)

21 In The Wealth of Nations, Smith wrote: “Man has almost constant occasion for the help of his brethren” (23). This phrase is often ignored in favor of the more often quoted second half of the same sentence: “it is in vain for him to expect it from their benevolence only” (Wolfe 28).
Furthermore, Smith warned that the unbridled pursuit of individual wealth and power would erode the virtues of society and make community impossible. “To attain to this envied situation, the candidates for fortune too frequently abandon the paths of virtue” (Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments* 88). “Self-love,” writes Smith, “was a principle which could never be virtuous in any degree or in any direction. It was vicious whenever it obstructed the general good” (Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments* 444). Smith suggests that the greatest virtue and the betterment of society came, not through the singular achievement of wealth, wisdom, or power, but in the practice of these moral sentiments.

These concerns for the future of a free society were, of course, not lost on our Founding Fathers. James Madison, responsible for the checks and balances of our Constitution, is often criticized by some political scientists as having put too much trust in governmental architecture (he was, after all, its principal architect), and too little faith in the American people. While Jefferson advocated for widespread democratic participation as a check on the corruption of government leaders, Madison favored “strong leadership and central direction” because he anticipated the “commercially oriented republic” would eventually “dissipate itself in endless factional battles” without a common allegiance to the state (Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart* 253). In *The Federalist Papers*, Madison wrote that “the public good, the real welfare of the great

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22 In contrasting Jefferson and Madison’s opinions of government and the role of the people in governance, David T. Sehr writes: “Madison seemed content to rely on the mechanisms of constitutional government to protect against the corruption of power. In his view, the government, with its separation of powers, would keep itself in check and avoid the illegitimate amassing of power. Madison’s major concern was in keeping the direct influence of the people out of government […] In short, Madison exhibited a profound mistrust of the people” (Sehr 34).
body of the people, is the supreme object to be pursued; and that no form of government
whatever has any other value than as it may be fitted for the attainment of this object.”

Despite their varying positions on the role and power of government, Jefferson
and Madison and the other Founders were in agreement that “our form of government
was dependent on the existence of virtue among the people” (Bellah et al., Habits of the
Heart 270). “The tension between private interest and the public good is never
completely resolved in any society” (Bellah et al., Habits of the Heart 270). Nevertheless,
the freedom to pursue private interest could not continue to exist whilst wholly
disregarding the interests of greater society. It would be the task of the citizen in a free
republic “to cultivate civic virtue in order to mitigate the tension [between private interest
and the public good]” (Bellah et al., Habits of the Heart 270). Our nation’s founders
agreed that the fostering of a civic-minded citizen was necessary to the preservation of a
democratic society, but was ultimately to be achieved through the free public school.

Founding Father and noted republican theorist, Benjamin Rush, reconciled the
liberal democratic philosophy of his fellow Founders with its classical precedent. In a
1786 proposal, Rush spoke emphatically about the need for Americans to use classical
republican educational thought to evoke focus on civic duty: “Let our pupil be taught that
he does not belong to himself, but that he is public property” (Pangle and Pangle 32).
Rush demands that “in the education of youth, let the authority of our masters be as
absolute as possible. By this mode of education, we prepare our youth for the
subordination of laws and thereby qualify them for becoming good citizens of the
republic” (Pangle and Pangle 33). Furthermore, Rush argues that the health of a republic
is best achieved and defended through the education of its youth: “the youth [Rush had

23 From Madison’s Federalist No. 45, quoted in Habits of the Heart (Bellah et al. 253).
in mind ‘must be taught to amass wealth’ – although ‘it must be only to increase his power of contributing to the wants and demands of the state’” (Pangle and Pangle 34). Here, the implied practice of democracy is the freedom to pursue personal wealth and well-being, with the assumption that individualism contributes finally to a republic of consenting individuals willing to defend their right to those freedoms.24

Thus, a precarious tension between the meaning and priority of community and equality begins to evince itself. For though the founders of our democratic republic emphasized and placed trust in enterprising individuals who advance themselves for the betterment of the state, they also suspected that in the pursuit of self-satisfaction, the community may be ignored. It would seem that as a complement to the right to individual property, the other paramount tenet of the new democracy was a sense of community. Building community would come to be the greatest mission and challenge posed to American society, and American public education in particular.

THE ROLE OF EDUCATION IN A DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY

In a society with a government “for the people, by the people,” it became crucial that the public, with whom political responsibility rested, could be trusted to defend it. Our Founding Fathers, and most prominently Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson, insisted on “public, government-sponsored and -supported schools as an essential foundation of a truly self-governing republic” (Pangle and Pangle 91). Public education

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24 It should be noted that this conceptualization of the “citizen” as a consumer, of having his/her primary role in society be one of consumption, is a Lockean belief, and signifies the beginning of a tendency in our political history to equate democracy and freedom with free market economic practices. This connection, earlier alluded to in the pages on Lockean liberalism, will be further expanded upon in the following chapter.
was thus charged with the purpose of informing the public, providing common experiences for the creation of a common culture, and equipping them with the knowledge and skills (indeed, the “mores”) necessary to produce responsible citizens and therefore ensure the survival of a democratic polity.

Jefferson wrote in his *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1781) that, “Of all the views [in favor of public education], none is more important, none more legitimate, than that of rendering the people the safe, as they are the ultimate, guardians of their own liberty” (Jefferson 274, printed as written). Jefferson believed there existed “an intimate link between democracy and education” (Bullough 7), that an education in the understanding of common interests “was essential to obtaining wide participation within the public world” (Bullough 8). According to Jefferson, “our liberty can never be safe but in the hands of the people themselves,” but it would be necessary to train the people for the task (qtd. in Bullough 8).

Jefferson saw two major goals for education: first, that it “enable every man to judge for himself what will secure or endanger his freedom” (qtd. in Pangle and Pangle 108), and second, “the cultivation, in a spirit reminiscent of the classical tradition, of the ‘natural aristocracy’” (Pangle and Pangle 109). In his Bill for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge (1779), Jefferson proposed the formation of a system of schooling that would “bring together all young people, regardless of background, and treat them to an identical education,” and in so doing, “the public schools would eventually help a ‘natural aristocracy’ form” (Bullough 8). Thus, through education, a select group of

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25 Jefferson’s bill would eventually be defeated in the Virginia assembly.
leaders (those “naturally endowed with politically relevant superior capacities”\textsuperscript{26}) would arise, possessing the knowledge necessary to protect the interests of society.

An interesting split in the perceived role of education in a democratic society occurs here. For while liberal republicanism of the type that informed our Founders emphasizes individual interest in the service of community, it could not be denied that a sense of community, of shared experience, could not develop at the expense of (and in the absence of) equality.\textsuperscript{27}

Horace Mann, one of the founding fathers of the American public education system, had the view that “the public world was a place where men met as equals to work together to achieve perfection” (Bullough 9, emphasis added). More than just imparting the knowledge necessary to make decisions in the interest of the public good, Mann envisioned the school’s very purpose to be the public good itself. According to Mann, “Men came together within the public sphere to participate in and extend a shared vision of the good. And, for this good, they voluntarily accepted limitations to their freedom” (Bullough 9). In contrast to Jefferson’s proposed system of education, Mann advocated first and foremost for equality as a means to achieve community. In Mann’s work, we see the formation of a democratic promise in education, to ensure not only the survival of a democratic state and the cultivation of a sense of community, but also the equality and freedom of all Americans:

\begin{quote}
Education, then, beyond all other devices of human origin, is the great equalizer of the conditions of men [...] It gives
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{26} Pangle and Pangle, \textit{The Learning of Liberty} (1993), p.110. This idea of “sorting” would re-emerge as a prominent theme in the educational reforms of the 1970s and ‘80s. This is further discussed in Chapter Two.

\textsuperscript{27} It is this fundamental split that will inform the radically different perspectives on schooling policies and practices in the later half of the twentieth century, most clearly seen as a split between careerism and community-based educational philosophy. See Chapter Two for further discussion.
each man the independence and the means, by which he can resist the selfishness of other men. It does better than to disarm the poor of their hostility towards the rich; it prevents being poor. [...] Education prevents both revenge and madness. [...] The spread of education, by enlarging the cultivated class or caste, will open a wider area over which the social feelings will expand. (Mann 87)

Mann advocated for free public schooling because he believed this form of education would enable equality and promote democracy, by tempering the class divisions among the citizenry. Like Tocqueville and Smith before him, Mann believed democracy depended first upon “the social feelings” that would engender a sense of community. It was a matter of community values that necessitated the social role of education. Writes historian Lawrence A. Cremin in “Horace Mann’s Legacy”:

Mann understood well the integral relationship between freedom, popular education, and republican government. [...] A nation cannot long remain ignorant and free. No political structure, however artfully devised, can inherently guarantee the rights and liberties of citizens, for freedom can be secure only as knowledge is widely distributed among the populace. Hence, universal popular education is the only foundation on which republican government can securely rest. (7)

Similarly, democratic political philosopher and prominent educational founding father, John Dewey, stressed the importance of an egalitarian, community-minded approach to education. According to theorist Herbert Gintis, Dewey saw that “there [was] only one contingent requirement that the good society must satisfy in order to render educational goals harmonious. This condition is that society be democratic” (Holtz et al. 52). Dewey saw democracy as:

 [...] A pervasive set of social relations among people which [he] summarized as “conjoint communicative experience.” Democracy requires that individuals treat each other in some fundamental sense of equals, and that the rules of society promote social interaction as conjoint and
According to Dewey, the very survival of a democratic society, which depends on the education of its constituents, depended first on their equality.

In *The School and Society* (1900), Dewey wrote:

> We are apt to look at the school from an individualistic standpoint [...] Yet the range of the outlook needs to be enlarged. What the best and wisest parent wants for his own child, that must the community want for all of its children. Any other ideal for our schools is narrow and unlovely; acted upon, it destroys our democracy. (7)

Here, Dewey illuminates the tension between our individual sentiments and our practice of education and democracy. Moreover, he warns against the growing individualism he saw as dangerous to social harmony and democracy. Where the possibility of a natural aristocracy existed, division of communities would result and the domination of one group over another would prevent the survival of a cohesive society. “The devotion of democracy to education is a familiar fact,” wrote Dewey,

> The superficial explanation is that a government resting upon popular suffrage cannot be successful unless those who elect and who obey their governors are educated. [...] But there is a deeper explanation. A democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience. (*Democracy and Education* 87)

To reduce the practice of democracy to the act of voting\(^2\) – and to conceive of education in the same way – was simplistic, and ignored the fundamental need of every democracy: a sense of community. Dewey saw education as a “deliberate effort to sustain and extend” the “broader community interest” (*Democracy and Education* 87). Dewey writes,

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\(^2\) Quoted in the essay “Education, Personal Development, and Human Dignity” by Herbert Gintis (Holtz et al. 52).

\(^2\) Is voting really all there is to democracy? Apparently, that’s what most people think. See Appendix B, “Is this what democracy looks like?”
“obviously a society to which stratification into separate classes would be fatal, must see to it that intellectual opportunities are accessible to all on equable and easy terms” (Democracy and Education 87). Dewey echoes Mann’s opinion that the schools should function as “the balance-wheel of the social machinery” (Mann 87). For Dewey, ever the pragmatist, equality was a justifiable goal of education in that it functioned to maintain the spirit of democracy. It was thus equality that Dewey defended as one of the central aims of education.

For radicals and critical theorists, this is primarily what distinguishes Dewey’s views on education from those of the Founding Fathers. Dewey believed education ought to serve three functions in society: first, that it “be dedicated to the personal growth of every young member of society;” that “education should be a major instrument facilitating what Dewey called the ‘social continuity of life’”31; and finally, that “education ought to act as a clear and decisive force promoting social equality… helping to rectify the inequalities of income and social position” (Gintis 50). For Dewey, “the aim of education is to enable individuals to continue their education […] this idea cannot be applied except where intercourse of man with man is mutual […] And this means a democratic society” (Democracy and Education 100). The fates of our systems of education and democracy would thus be intertwined.

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30 Such as reproduction theorist Herbert Gintis, whose work was quoted above.
31 “Transmitting the dominant culture, the received wisdom, the accepted morality, and the norms of proper and appropriate behavior from one generation to the next” (Gintis 50).
COMMUNITY MATTERS

When Horace Mann and John Dewey spoke of democracy, they most fervently advocated the need for community (and its prerequisite, equality), because of their belief in the importance of community to fostering a commitment to public and civic participation. When Mann created the common school, “[his] quest was for a public philosophy, a sense of community which might be shared by Americans of every variety and persuasion” (Mann 8). It was this need for social harmony they believed would transcend the selfish pursuits of individual human beings and encourage their collaboration for the shared public good.

The ideas of equality, collaboration, dialog, and shared experience that formed the foundations of democracy in America were always in danger of being eclipsed by an emphasis on individual freedom and its various mirrors: personal material gain, freedom of choice, and competition. Just as democracy came to take on an individualist bent, the philosophies and practices of schooling would come to resemble that of business rather than community. And, as our forefathers predicted, with the expected results. As democracy has increasingly come to manifest itself in the practice of a free market- rather than community-based model of social and political relations, the democratic promise of education remains unfulfilled.

As a market-based ideology has come to dominate our culture and influence the policies and practices of the schooling system itself, what we ultimately compromise are the sense of community, collaboration, and selflessness that were once advocated as necessary to the health of democracy and its pursuit of the public good. As political
theorists would begin to note, with national attention turning increasingly towards the accumulation of capital, we came to forget the importance of community.

What follows is a discussion of how the individualism advocated by our Founding Fathers’ liberal republican philosophies developed into the dominant ideology of free-market capitalism, and how this market mentality came to infiltrate educational discourse. Moreover, Chapter Two deconstructs the language and policy of the educational reform efforts of the 1970s and 80s, tracing the gradual abandonment of the community ideals espoused by Mann and Dewey, in favor of a more industrial and business-like approach to education in America. Furthermore, it explores the conflict between the democratic promise of American education, and the presence of a market mentality in school curricula.
CHAPTER TWO: 
POLICIES & POLITICS IN EDUCATION

We are all sufferers from our continued failure to fulfill the educational obligations of a democracy. We are all the victims of a school system that has only gone halfway along the road to realize the promise of democracy.


We educate students to be citizens because we want the future of the republic to be in their good hands. And we maintain high schools because learning is good in and of itself, the lifelong expression of our sense of wonder. To the extent that we abandon these lifelong goals for the shortsightedness of Gradgrind, we insult the experiment called democracy.


From Plato to Rousseau to Jefferson to the early John Dewey […] almost everybody who wrote about education took it for granted that it is the community and the culture – what the ancient Greeks called paideia – that educates. The contemporary American is educated by his paideia no less than the Athenian was by his. The weakness of American education is not that the paideia does not educate, but that it educates to the wrong ends.

Charles E. Silberman, Crisis in the Classroom (1970)

As seen in Chapter One, the history of democracy in America has been characterized by a precarious tension between market- and community-based philosophies. These two opposing visions of democracy were characterized thusly by political scientist Robert Dahl:

We Americans have always been torn between two conflicting visions of what American society is and ought to be. To summarize them oversimply, one is a vision of the world’s first and grandest attempt to realize democracy,

32 Gradgrind is the schoolmaster from Charles Dickens’ Hard Times (1854), characterized by his rigid utilitarianism and appeal to self-interest; he is "a man of realities. A man of facts and calculations. A man who proceeds upon the principle that two and two are four, and nothing over, and who […] with a rule and a pair of scales, and the multiplication table always in his pocket [will] weigh and measure any parcel of human nature, and tell you exactly what it comes to. It is a mere question of figures, a case of simple arithmetic.”
political equality, and political liberty on a continental scale. The other is a vision of a country where unrestricted liberty to acquire unlimited wealth would produce the world’s most prosperous society. In the first, American ideals are realized by the achievement of democracy, political equality, and the fundamental rights of all citizens in a country of vast size and diversity. In the second, American ideals are realized by the protection of property and of opportunities to prosper materially and to grow wealthy. (162-3)

It would soon become clear that the public and private visions of democracy could not coincide. Write educators Bellah et al., “to a degree unique in the industrial world, the United States placed its faith in the capacities of the market system to promote the general welfare” (The Good Society 98). Despite the warnings of our Founding Fathers, market-based ideology would come to transform the American experience of democracy, as business began to dominate the curricula and practices of schooling in the conservative restoration of the 1970s and ‘80s. Contrary to its democratic promise, the American education system in this critical period would play the role of accessory, rather than antidote, to the growing privatism that our Founders saw as inimical to democracy. As the attentions of educators and policy-makers turned away from community and toward an increased faith in the market in the 1970s and ‘80s, the democratic promise would come to be broken, if not altogether forgotten.

THE CRITICAL PERIOD:
EDUCATIONAL REFORM IN A TIME OF CRISIS

French sociologist Émile Durkheim wrote, “the theories that celebrate the beneficence of unrestricted liberties are apologies for a diseased state” (54). In this sense, America in the 1970s and ‘80s was ailing. Novelist Tom Wolfe summarized the zeitgeist
of the 1970s when he coined the phrase “the me-decade” to characterize the shift from political awareness to self-absorption. In the 1980s, Ronald Reagan would strive “to see above all that this country remains a country where someone can always get rich”\(^{33}\) and whose presidency would commence with the assertion that “We the people” are a “special interest group.”\(^{34}\) The American people would increasingly come to experience their democracy in terms of the market.

According to educational historian R. Freeman Butts, “the decade of the 1980s [brought] us to the 200\(^{th}\) anniversary of the decade American historians have commonly called ‘The Critical Period’” (1). Butts explains that in the 1770s, the American colonies had just declared their independence from the British and were beginning to test the strength of their newfound democracy. But, by the 1780s, “a sense of crisis” led many to declare that “the Revolution, in the face of accelerating self-interest, was failing for want of a sense of the public good” (Butts 1). Furthermore, as historian Gordon S. Wood would suggest, “the American people were showing by their intense interest in making money that they were not the stuff republicans were made of. Classic public spirit was being eclipsed by private interests, individualism, and selfishness” (qtd. in Butts 1). To combat the growing privatism that was threatening to dismantle the new republic, Americans of the 1780s sought an urgent revitalization of political community, with common public education taking a central role in the development of civicism.\(^{35}\)

\(^{33}\) Quoted in Bellah et al.’s *The Good Society*, p.87.

\(^{34}\) From his inaugural address (January 20, 1981): “We hear much of special interest groups. Our concern must be for a special interest group that has been too long neglected. [...] They are, in short, ‘We the people,’ this breed called Americans” (paragraph 11).

\(^{35}\) Butts notes that civicism: “refers generally to the ‘citizen principle’ as envisioned in the ancient Greek and Roman republics, especially the tradition of self-sacrifice for the public good. It came then, by extension, to mean the principles of good citizenship” (10).
Sociologist Alan Wolfe explains that the need to preserve community and civil society motivated Americans “to establish boundaries around schooling to prevent the market – always viewed as efficient, rarely as moral – from coming in” (70). The schools were seen as a sanctuary for civic life: “For Americans in search of a common life to counterbalance the effects of individualism, no institution was more public than the school. […] Education would take its place alongside family and community as a place where public morality and virtue could flourish” (Wolfe 70). The market would kill community, but common public schooling could revive it.

Butts illuminates a stark contrast between the critical periods of the 1780s and 1980s. For, while “the 1770s and 1780s witnessed an extraordinary process of constitution making, it is ironic that the Constitution’s bicentennial in the 1980s may become a critical period of constitution unmaking if forces partial to private rather than public enterprise have their way” (2). Butts notes that in the 1970s and ‘80s, a number of opinion polls verified “growing cynicism and skepticism about government [and] alienation from politicians and public institutions” (5). Writes Shor, “the bad news and hard times of the 1970s reduced public support for the traditional leaders and institutions of American life to all-time lows” (106). This diminished trust should have triggered the same resurgence of civic community-building experienced in the 1770s. It is thus troubling that instead, “the recurrent theme was the escalation of special interest politics and the decline of concern for the public good” (Butts 5). As many critics would note, “as an institution, the public schools took shape around the turn of the century as a reflection of our respect for and trust in American business” (Bullough viii). More than being “unfit
republicans,” as suggested of the Americans of the 1780s, contemporary Americans would prove themselves to be idiots!  

As the strength and integrity of our democratic values would come to be tested in the new critical period, educators, politicians and the media would respond with a series of ironic missteps toward addressing a perceived “crisis” in education and democracy. Test scores were shown to be dropping across the subjects and grades, employment rates were low, and disaffection and distrust of public institutions were peaking. A series of reports released in this critical period indicated a national security crisis: "We stand at the hinge of history," declared one government report in 1983. Unless the United States improves its ability to compete […] it will be increasingly difficult – if not impossible – to maintain a just society, a high standard of living for all Americans and a strong national defense” (Business-Higher Education Forum iv). A Nation At Risk (1983) would report to the American people that

The educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and a people. What was unimaginable a generation ago has begun to occur – others are matching and surpassing our educational attainments. (National Commission on Excellence in Education)

The unmistakable message was, "if education did not help restore American competitiveness in the world, democracy could be lost along with prosperity" (Shor 116).

A Nation At Risk would extend a market-specific understanding of democracy into the culture of schooling. Career education, it was believed, would fulfill the promise of

36 Sociologist C. Wright Mills would write in his Power, Politics and People (1963): “If we accept the Greeks’ definition of the idiot as an altogether private man, then we must conclude that many American citizens are now idiots” (24).
37 See Shor’s Culture Wars and Butts’ The Revival of Civic Learning for discussion of the growing indicators of social unrest during the 1970s and ’80s.
American democracy by granting equal opportunity to advance personal wealth through participation in the job market. This demand for reform in education reflected an urgent need for change in society, but would limit its definition of society to a system of economic exchanges. As business increasingly influenced education in the 1970s onward, school policies not only began to reflect and contribute to business pursuits, but in the process, reformed society to be more business-minded as well.

**POSESSIONS / PROFESSIONS: THE PURSUIT OF ‘PROPERTY’ IN EDUCATION**

While schools responded to the critical period of our Founding Fathers by reviving civic community, the new critical period would inject the problem of privatism right back into the heart of democratic life, by enforcing market ideology and its emphasis on material reward and competition in the schools. The message transmitted through this “hidden curriculum” was that “education, itself, is ‘a matter of [private,] individualized consumption in a market of differentiated educational products…” Education as a public, collective and social process [would] disappear” (Ginsburg 174).

In the conservative reform movement, the meaning of democracy and the role of education in its achievement would submit to the influences of the market. Whereas the democratic vision for public education had once been to provide citizens with the common experience necessary to foster community, in the conservative restoration, the schools were re-imagined as a site for the development of capitalist individualism. The dominance of market logic in the policies of the conservative restoration would transform

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39 Educators Longstreet and Shane define “hidden curriculum” as “the kinds of learning children derive from the very nature and organizational design of the public school, as well as from the behaviors and attitudes of teachers and administrators” (46).
the purpose and method of schooling, as it turned our collective attention away from the importance of equality and community and toward the singular pursuit of “excellence” and self-advancement. Schools would not become the social centers for democratic learning that our Founding Fathers had envisioned, but would develop policies and practices more in line with business interests than community. The transposition of business priorities into schooling is seen most clearly in the “careerism” movement of the 1970s and ‘80s.

Career education originated with Sidney P. Marland, the Commissioner-Designate of Education for the Nixon Administration. He saw “job-training, wage-earning, the transition to adulthood, writing and reading” as “powerful intersections of school and society” (Shor 32). Marland interpreted youth discontent as a response “rooted in their lack of job skills” (Shor 36). He responded to the 1960s student activists’ demands for educational “relevance” by “making all courses relevant to work” (Shor 36). Careerism would thus come to transform the curriculum. While occupationalism’s hidden curriculum connected democracy and opportunity to freedom of participation in the job market, the null curriculum excluded the political dimension of work. This ostensibly

40 In *Culture Wars* (1986), Ira Shor discusses careerism as part of a triumvirate of reform movements in the conservative restoration. He enumerates the literacy and excellence movements as well, but for the sake of my analysis, I will focus primarily on career education as it came to inform and shape schooling in this period. Careerism deserves particular attention in my work because of what I have perceived to be its lingering influence on students of my generation. In conversations with peers regarding their decision to attend college, many have revealed to me the tenacity of the belief that “people go to school to get a job.” This says a lot about how students approach their education, and by extension, their understanding of community and democracy. I will elaborate on these ideas in the next section of my analysis.

41 Educator Elliot W. Eisner would define this term in his examination of school curricula, noting that “schools have consequences not only by virtue of what they do teach, but also by virtue of what they neglect to teach. What students cannot consider […] have consequences for the kinds of lives they lead” (103). Furthermore, he argued, “that what schools do not teach may be as important as what they do teach. Ignorance is
“de-politicized” method of education was, as Shor points out, a shrewd political move on the part of conservative restorationists. By bleaching the curriculum of social relevance and framing educational achievement in terms of the market, career education acquired the compliance of generations of students who, in their pursuit of personal gains, would learn not to challenge the system.

Emphasizing career-oriented education would accomplish a range of effects. By teaching students to think only of their individual futures, careerism would conceptualize education as a primarily material endeavor – a relation of work to commodity. Do the work, get the reward. This singular pursuit of self-interest would, as Adam Smith and others predicted, erode our dedication to the democratic values of community and equality. Furthermore, it would discourage the critical reflection necessary for responsible democratic citizens to maintain “a shrewd vigilance against tyranny” (Pangle and Pangle 108). To participate in “democracy,” which would increasingly be confused with “the market,” students would submit themselves to the operations of a business-model of education, identifying themselves as workers or consumers in a system that had use only for these roles. Schools during the careerism movement would no longer function as democratic social centers, but would socialize students into a business model of social relations, encouraging passivity rather than activity, consumption rather than

not simply a neutral void; it has important effects on the kinds of options one is able to consider, the alternatives that one can examine, and the perspectives from which one can view a situation or problems” (Eisner 97).

“Career education did not recognize the long history of labor-management strife, that trade unions had emerged despite corporate-government interference. Neither did it recognize that many jobs were unattractive, unrewarding, underpaid, unhealthy or unnecessary wastes of labor and resources” (Shor 36-7).

Shor astutely writes, “like every pedagogy, [career education] was never politically neutral” (37).

Author Alfie Kohn examines the idea of “do this, get that” in his book Punished by Rewards (1993), a critique of “pop behaviorism.” I will discuss his work and the idea of “do this, get that” in the following pages.
production, hierarchy rather than equality, isolation rather than solidarity. By restructuring curriculum to meet the demands of the market, the educational reforms of the conservative restoration would effectively abandon the dream of democracy.

**DISCIPLINES & PUNISHMENT: CURRICULUM CHANGES AND LIMITATIONS**

As with most misdeeds, the material emphasis in education began with good intentions. “The egalitarian credentials of careerism lay in its proposal to orient every course and every grade into a single career focus” (Shor 34). Careerism sought to employ an “upbeat rhetoric of democracy and success” (Shor 34), by promising a future in the job market and, it was implied, finally fulfilling the democratic promise of equality.

Mortimer Adler would set a framework for careerism and the “back-to-basics” movement with the release of his *Paideia Proposal* in 1982. In it, Adler outlines “the objectives of basic schooling” that he believed would unite “the whole school population” in the pursuit of “the common future which all children are destined” (Adler 142). These uniform objectives were threefold:

1. Our society provides all children ample opportunity for personal development. Given such opportunity, each individual is under a moral obligation to make the most of himself and his life. Basic schooling must facilitate this accomplishment.  
2. All the children will become, when of age, full-fledged citizens with responsibilities. Basic schooling must do everything it can to make them good citizens […]  
3. When they are grown, all (or certainly most) of the children will engage in some form of work to earn a living. Basic schooling must prepare them for earning a living. (“Paideia” 142)

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45 Hierarchy is an important characteristic of capitalist states. See Appendix C.
Adler’s *Paideia* ostensibly recalled the democratic promises of Mann and Dewey. His three objectives of education echoed those of Dewey, and evoked Mann’s belief that “education is the gateway to equality.” Adler proposed “the new academic regime as the fulfillment of democracy through education” (Shor 120). Adler’s perspective on education extended the idea that American democracy would remain intact, so long as Americans could obtain jobs and experience the freedom to earn money and buy things (Sehr 43). The logic surrounding career-centered reform was based on the Lockean notion that democracy depended on America’s ability to sustain a free market economy that would protect individual freedoms to pursue personal wealth. Thus, to ensure democracy, “everyone must be prepared for [these] jobs for the security of young people themselves and that of the nation. To this end, the entire curriculum [was] reorganized; the purpose of education [was] to gain one of these jobs” (Bullough 11).

The influence of this idea on our educational experiences is still felt today. When asked why they attend school, most students would probably respond that they’re in school “to get a job.” Only upon further consideration would they think to say that they enjoy the company of people their own age, or that they enjoy the process of learning itself.

46 See the earlier section of this paper titled “The Role of Education in a Democratic Society,” pp. 24-25.
47 Adler quotes Mann (and Dewey) in the opening section of *The Paideia Proposal* entitled “Democracy and Education.” This particular quote from Mann is found on page 5.
48 In a presentation explaining the findings of the 2001 Annual Brown Center Report on Education, Tom Loveless, the director of the Brookings Institution’s Brown Center on Education Policy, reported that in a survey of high schoolers, the two most common reasons kids gave for going to school were: “to see their friends […] and to prepare for college.” Foreign students would show a marked preference for “learning for learning’s sake… that the reason [they] go to school is to learn math, science, literature and history.” American students would not show the same enthusiasm, preferring instead to play sports or work part-time jobs. Loveless would remark that this wasn’t specifically a problem among American teenagers, “this is an American problem, period” (Loveless).
Furthermore, careerism practices a theory and approach to education that reduces learning to job training, requiring students to acquire a specific set of skills before they can be employed. In *Paideia*, Adler would prescribe “the new basics” curriculum that would inculcate students with the “general learning that should be the possession of all human beings.”\(^49\) Adler’s basics curriculum consisted of “a required core in language, literature, fine arts, math, science, history, geography and social studies” (Shor 120). This type of knowledge would be gained primarily through a process devoid of social relevance and largely dismissive of students’ experiences and individual abilities and talents. Though Adler took care to note the necessity of different pedagogical styles, the most widely practiced form became “the method of instruction using textbooks and manuals,” a “didactic” style of teaching in which “the teacher lectures, invites responses from the students, monitors the acquisition of knowledge, and tests that acquisition in various ways” (Adler 143).

In an ironic perversion of Dewey’s philosophy of democratic education, Adler and the basics movement would promote democracy in name, while seeking to control the behaviors and thoughts of its students.\(^50\) By promoting “the great books approach to learning,” teacher-centered classrooms, and the use of testing and standards to sort and

\(^{49}\) Adler defines *paideia* in these terms on the dedication page of his *Paideia Proposal* (1982). Interestingly, Adler fails to mention the Greek’s original intention of *paideia*, which was *community*. Adler’s proposed version of *paideia* would be starkly individualistic in comparison (see Silberman’s commentary in the epigraph to this chapter).

\(^{50}\) Dewey believed oppressive authority, especially when enforced in an educational setting, was dangerous to democracy and to individuals’ experiences of education as a lifelong process. He apparently found this point significant enough to reiterate the same quote from Plato in all three of his major works, *The School and Society* (1900), *Democracy and Education* (1916), and *his Experience and Education* (1938): “[the slave is] one who accepts from another the purposes which control his conduct” (*Democracy and Education* 85). Dewey probably would have been alarmed to find his work inspired the authoritarian practices promoted by Adler and the back-to-basics movement.
classify students into academic and vocational tracks, the basics movement would actively counter Dewey’s belief that the democratic society must “repudiate the principle of external authority” and cultivate “voluntary disposition and interest” through education (*Democracy and Education* 87).

Writes education critic Alfie Kohn, "it is unsettling to reflect on the fact that our educational system functions within a particular economic system and that the latter's interests may conflict with the goals of thoughtful educators" (342). Structuring curriculum toward the obtainment of jobs would enforce rigid discipline on students. Students would experience discipline in two ways: as a limited school curriculum intended to track students toward different vocational goals, and as a practice of authoritarian rules and controls on behavior. Students would be disciplined, as they would be forced to adopt narrow educational focuses pointed towards limited occupational futures, and punished, as their enthusiasm and aptitude for learning and exploration outside of the classroom was limited, even discouraged.

Writes Kohn, "job applicants [would] appear having already been trained to accept as natural such things as competition, hierarchical control, and extrinsic motivation. By what may not be an astonishing coincidence, these are just the values that schools seek to instill" (342). The diploma would function as a quality inspection stamp at the end of the educational assembly line, “[signaling] to employers that a young person has learned how to behave and to work hard" (Bullough 11).

Students’ experiences in public schooling would condition them to accept – indeed, *respect* – rules and authority, to compromise their capabilities for inquiry and creativity to the operations of a mechanistic process of education. The material and practice of the traditional form of education – Adler’s didactic style of teaching, or what
educator Paulo Freire would call “the banking concept of education” – is “static,” with little regard for the dynamic nature of life, and without regard for change or progress. It tends to “transform the organic into the inorganic” (Fromm 41). Writes Paulo Freire in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), one of the key texts of critical pedagogy,

Narration (with the teacher as narrator) leads the students to memorize mechanically the narrated content. Worse yet, it turns them into ‘containers,’ into ‘receptacles’ to be ‘filled’ by the teacher. [...] Education thus becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositaries and the teacher is the depositor. [...] This is the ‘banking’ concept of education, in which the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filing, and storing the deposits. (71-2)

The banking concept of education is inherently demeaning and punitive, with an approach to education that is “overwhelmingly controlling” and “necrophilic; it is nourished by the love of death, not life [...] Based on a mechanistic, static view of consciousness, it transforms students into receiving objects. It attempts to control thinking and action, leads women and men to adjust to the world [rather than transform it], and inhibits their creative power” (77). Banking education mirrors the top-down model of business and capitalism, and ignores the flow of energy and information from peer-to-peer learning, or the ability of students to contribute knowledge and experience in the educational setting.

Freire would write that “a careful analysis of the teacher-student relationship at any level, inside or outside the school, reveals its fundamentally narrative character” (71). In the process of being narrated, “the contents, whether values or empirical dimensions of reality [...] become lifeless and petrified” (Freire 71). Studies of schooling culture in the

51 See Appendix D for comparisons of the structures of business and education models of “management.”
1970s and ‘80s would corroborate Freire’s critique of traditional pedagogy, revealing schools’ growing tendencies to demand students’ subjugation to authority and control, while teaching within the limited scope of the classroom and neglecting to prepare students for achievement in life outside of school. “Education,” declares Freire, “is suffering from narration sickness” (71).

Journalist and education critic Charles E. Silberman would note in his 1970 study, *Crisis in the Classroom*, “the purpose [of tests] should be diagnostic […] But schools rarely evaluate in this way. They make it clear that the purpose of evaluation is rating: to produce grades that enable administrators to rate and sort children” (138). Writes Silberman, "almost from the first day, students learn that the game is not to acquire knowledge but to discover what answer the teacher wants" (148). Students would find the majority of their learning directed toward socialization “in the conviction of their own inferiority” (Richmond 8). Silberman notes that schools would teach students to live their educational experiences in passivity and deference to authority and fail to foster a critical awareness of their own roles as students and citizens.

Similarly, educational researcher John Goodlad would comment on the social relevance and critical inquiry missing from the school curricula:

> The topics commonly included in the social sciences appear as though they would be of great human interest. But something strange seems to have happened to them on the way to the classroom. The topics of study become removed from their intrinsically human character, reduced to dates and places readers will recall memorizing for tests. (Goodlad 212)

Even when teachers developed explicit goals to the contrary, the use of tests in the classroom revealed an inability to foster critical reflection, tending instead to encourage a passive approach to learning.
Social studies, as a field of learning, appears to be particularly conducive to the development of reasoning [...]. Teachers at all levels listed [reasoning] as intended learning. Their tests reflected quite different priorities. The tests we examined rarely required more than the recall and feedback of memorized information. (Goodlad 211-2)

Schooling and testing would “shrink and distort” the social nature of education, reducing life to easily forgotten facts and formulas. “The public world is studied at a distance; young people rarely venture out into the community, nor are members of the community […] invited into the classroom” (Bullough 106). Schooling would promote a Cartesian dualism, separating theory and practice, mind and body, learning and action.

Goodlad noted the “relationship between teacher and classes of students was almost completely devoid of outward evidences of affect. Shared laughter, overt enthusiasm, or angry outbursts were rarely observed” (229). The majority of school lessons and teacher-student interactions would be carried out “all with little emotion, from personal warmth to expressions of hostility” (Goodlad 330). According to educator Robert V. Bullough, “one outcome of holding to the view that teaching is telling, and the essence of being a good student is the ability to listen well, is that classrooms are for the most part devoid of shared laughter, enthusiasm, or even of anger honestly expressed” (28). Not only would the school curriculum be missing in social relevance, schools would lack signs of social life. Educational researcher Ernest L. Boyer would report that “educators and politicians have taken the pulse of the public schools and found it faint” (1). While “classrooms appear emotionally flat,” signs of vibrant, ebullient social life abound outside of the confines of the classroom, “life that begs expression and struggles for appropriate forms” (Bullough 28).

By disciplining students to think of their education in the narrow terms of careerism and standardized testing, traditional public schooling would alienate students,
as the goals of education came to increasingly reflect the workings of business rather than community life. As Bullough writes, in the school system

    passivity is rewarded, conformity honored. Through their school experience, young people are well prepared to become organization men and women, but certainly not well prepared for the kind of bold and intelligent risk taking, or even thoughtful cooperation, that is essential to a vital society. Moreover, talent withers under a system that encourages students and teachers to come to accept life spent 'in a state of spectatorship.' (31)

The apparent lack of dedication to the learning process in educational practice would send a message to students and teachers (and society at large) that education was no longer a social endeavor.

**DIVIDE & CONQUER: EXCELLENCE, HIERARCHY, AND COMPETITION**

The conservative language during the restoration would pit “quality” against “equality” (Shor 7). In 1978, educational psychologist Robert Ebel would denounce the egalitarian sentiments of the 1960s as he reaffirmed the need for educational measurements and standards. In a meeting with members of the Educational Testing Service, Ebel condemned the “commitment to democratic equality” in schools for “identifying excellence with elitism” (Shor 8). Ebel blamed 1960s egalitarianism for “warm-hearted but soft-headed pedagogy” that would threaten America’s place as a global superpower (Shor 9). To counteract declining educational standards, America

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52 It should be noted that the Educational Testing Service specializes in marketing standardized tests (such as their best-seller, the SAT) as a form of measuring and evaluating student and teacher performance. In decrying the ‘60s, Ebel was not only reflecting the greater conservative sentiments of the time, he was also appealing directly to personal business interests.
would need to refocus on quality control. Reformists issued a cry for “excellence” in education.\(^{53}\)

Of course, the very idea of “excellence” begs the question: excellent compared to whom? What began as a comparison between America and its international competitors soon became framed as a dichotomous comparison between the loose, egalitarian ‘60s and the authoritarian conservative reformation. The excellence movement would create a sense of panic as conservatives clamored for educational reforms and increased accountability in education. Heightened testing was demanded as a way to measure the quality and efficacy of American education. As national attention shifted toward the pursuit of “excellence,” testing services and textbook publishers would profit from marketing standardized materials, while students and teachers suffered the effects of increased competition for scarce funding and resources.

Critical theorist Bill Readings would write that “[the notion of excellence] functions to allow the University to understand itself solely in terms of the structure of corporate administration” (29). Furthermore:

Excellence serves as the unit of currency within a closed field. [...] Excellence is [...] a means of relative ranking among the elements of an entirely closed system. [...] Henceforth, the question of the University is only the question of relative value-for-money, the question posed to a student who is situated entirely as a consumer, rather than as someone who wants to think. (Readings 27)

\(^{53}\) Interestingly, in *A Place Called School* (1984), Goodlad observed that pedagogical practices had not changed significantly over time, that the crisis situation in education was a fabrication, worsened by “inflamed rhetoric” (13). He would conclude that “the back-to-basics movement did not have a pedagogical revolt to contend with […] the normative pedagogy of the schools was a passive one,” and had been for a long time (Shor 210). Educator and rhetorician Richard Ohmann would write an article for *The Chronicle of Higher Education* in 1976 declaring that “The Literacy Crisis is a Fiction, if Not a Hoax.”
“Excellence” is therefore an abstraction, a means for institutions in power to rhetorically justify the accumulation of capital and the preservation of hierarchy. Prioritizing excellence and competition would de-emphasize democratic participation and educational value, and teach us to understand and practice education in terms of business and capital.

The market-specific conceptualization of democracy is problematic for many reasons. First, it replaces the values and responsibility of the citizen with those of the consumer. To exercise agency, individuals must buy things (and buy into the idea of buying things), and so, spend their time pursuing material wealth as simulacra of political agency. Political agency is thus confused with consumer choice, with the latter being the preferable, more common manifestation of democratic practice.

In addition to weakening critical agency, market-based conceptions of democracy destroy the foundation of community necessary to maintain a cohesive democratic society. Career-oriented education is thus crucial to understanding and addressing our current misguided conceptualization of democracy in America. A Nation At Risk and Paideia enticed the American public with the possibility of social mobility and equality.

54 Theorist Stuart Ewen observed that America’s “culture of abundance” (and particularly the “me-decade” of the 1970s) led to “the flowering of a provocative, if somewhat passive, conception of democracy… consumer democracy” (qtd. in Sehr 50).
55 Deteriorating trust in social institutions “[increases] the urgency of providing the population with even more material benefits” (House 9), so that an “illusion of a growing egalitarianism in terms of people's material possessions” would distract from growing disparity in political power (Sehr 50). Writes Sehr: “When symbols of material egalitarianism became widespread in the United States, it was easy for people to associate those symbols with, and even substitute them for, the idea of the political egalitarianism of democracy” (50).
56 “It is no wonder that many Americans see their prime freedom in democracy not as that of participation in running their government. They have, practically speaking, no experience with that. Rather, they rejoice in what they see as their true freedom, their consumer freedom: their right to head for the stores to buy their happiness. So Washington's birthday, Lincoln's birthday, Memorial Day, Independence Day [...] become occasions for giant sales at the malls. Privatized democracy is symbolically reaffirmed in the ritual of holiday sale shopping” (Sehr 56).
But, as discussed earlier, this was a compromised vision of democracy that replaced the potential of genuine democratic participation in a free society with superficial consumerism in a free market. This free market approach to democracy prefers the patronage of consumers to the participation of citizens. As Bullough writes, when

the essence of democracy is the right of the individual to choose among competing products in the same sense as selecting among brands of soup [...] such a view reflects an emaciated and hollow conception of citizenship, presenting the public world as nothing more than an arena within which competing and self-centered individuals [...] exercise their freedom independently and without consideration of the interests of others. (9)

Educational critic and author Alfie Kohn discusses the danger in this one-directional approach to education. In *Punished by Rewards* (1993), Kohn discusses the influence of "pop behaviorism" in our culture, suggesting its "incarnation in our collective consciousness affects what we do every day," so that "we are not in control: we do not have the idea; it has us" (3).[^57] This reflects the general view of Marxist and reproduction theorists, who argue that capitalism has infiltrated every aspect of our experience, influencing our understanding and practice of democracy and education as an extension of capitalist economic practice. This capitalist hegemony has proliferated in modern American society and been established as “common sense,” so that we no longer question its assumptions (Sehr 19). Though Marxism can occasionally come across as an academic conspiracy theory,[^58] there may be some validity to their claims regarding

[^57]: Remember what Dewey and Plato said about the slave. From *Experience and Education*: “Plato once defined a slave as the person who executes the purposes of another.” Furthermore, “a person is also a slave who is enslaved to his own blind desires” (67).

[^58]: In my own work, I have been vehemently discouraged (on multiple occasions) from adopting an explicitly Marxist viewpoint, lest I sound too reminiscent of a “leftwing radical nut.” I heeded the warnings; you will hardly find any explicit critiques (“rants”) against Capitalism in this particular text, as I preferred to focus more specifically on the
capitalist hegemony. "The core of pop behaviorism" is essentially an idea of exchange: "Do this and you'll get that" (Kohn 3). This idea of exchange has pervasive influence on the practice of behavior control in the workplace, in parenting, and of course, in schools. Furthermore, it should come as no surprise that this idea finds its basis in free market theories of exchange and social relations. The main tenet of behaviorism repeats, almost verbatim, the words of Adam Smith, who, in *The Wealth of Nations*, writes, "Give me that which I want and you shall have this which you want" (23).

Careerism's carrot-and-stick model of education, its "do this, get that" approach to what should essentially be a social endeavor, "is fundamentally a means of controlling people" and "is by its nature inimical to democracy" (30). In the schools, teachers and administrators would use grades and institutional awards to demand obedience from students. In this way, students would be conditioned into passivity. In the pursuit of reward and in avoidance of punishment, people adopt a state of subservience, of supine acceptance of the status quo. To get what we want, we too often learn not to voice too much opposition, lest our desired reward be taken away. This would accomplish the use of business/economics-oriented practices of schooling. However, it should not go without mentioning that these are all facets of the same problem: capitalist imperialism and hegemony. In the foreword to Paula Allman’s *Critical Education Against Global Capitalism* (2001), Peter McLaren reminds the reader that a “‘critical/revolutionary praxis’ is grounded in Marx’s revolutionary theory of consciousness” and integrates “thought and human practice, consciousness and material reality” (McLaren xxii). Furthermore, Marxists’ historical materialist approach is necessary in “the analysis of schooling practices from the perspective of the underlying system of exploitation that deploys them” (McLaren xiv). It is this historical materialist critique that “makes it aggressively possible to read the world of global capitalism critically […] and to lay bare the way it has been internalized and integrated into the labyrinthine dimensions of our everyday subjective awareness” (McLaren xiv).

59 In Dr. Lisa Weems’ Fall 2008 EDL 334 class, guest lecturer C.P. Gause put it thusly: “Why aren’t more students like you participating in activism or social change? For a lot of you it’s very simple: you have to pay off student loans. Everything else can wait. And I can understand. But that’s why things aren’t changing; we’re all waiting.”
quashing of critical inquiry and reflection necessary to democratic citizenship, as people would accept their own domination in the pursuit of material gains.

Furthermore, this market-based system of social relations creates dependence on authorities for validation and reward. Rather than a community-based model in which "peer-socialization builds solidarity at the grass roots," a corporate or business model of "socialization by the elite breeds authority-dependence. The bottom is divided against itself by the top" (Shor 47). When rewards or material gains are to be had in a situation, all others are seen as potential competition. Rewards and incentives pit one community member against another, as "the central message of all competition, in fact, is that everyone else is a potential obstacle to one's own success" (Kohn 55). Writes Kohn, "the behaviorist theme practically guarantees enmity [...] That, of course, is the whole idea: divide and conquer" (56).

Kohn suggests that this economized view of motivation is actually counterproductive; moreover, it may even be detrimental to self-interest. In pursuit of what we want, argues Kohn, we often cease to think about what we are doing. "Our objective is not really to succeed at the task at all [...] it is to succeed at obtaining the reward" (Kohn 65). In focusing our efforts and attention toward the end reward, we become blind to the process. We forget to "extract the full meaning of each present experience" and sacrifice "the potentialities of the present" to a "suppositious future" (Dewey, *Experience and Education* 49).

Furthermore, "if you have been promised a reward, you come to see the task as something that stands between you and it" (Kohn 65). If we perceive of education as a
means to an end, a process to be endured and tolerated\textsuperscript{60} so long as it earns us a promised reward (a job, a good grade, a scholarship, etc.), we may come to view our education negatively, as an obstacle to happiness. Dewey would wonder: "What avail is it to win prescribed amounts of information about geography and history, to win ability to read and write, if in the process the individual loses his own soul: loses his appreciation of things worth while, of the values to which these things are relative?" (Dewey, \textit{Experience and Education} 49). Emphatically, the message seems to be that the process of education cannot continue to exist in what Readings described as an “entirely closed system” (27) of intellectual capital and economic value, but must reconnect with its original social purpose.

\textbf{IDIOTS & JACKASSES: WHY THE MARKET ALONE WILL NOT REALIZE OUR DEMOCRATIC DREAMS}

Career-based education is detrimental to the existential health of our citizens. Not just because it engenders single-minded selfishness and materialism, nor because it reduces the process of learning to a set of irrelevant tasks and obstacles, but because people modify their behavior in the pursuit of rewards. And, when the rewards aren’t granted, people feel alienated and disingenuous. Writes Kohn, “some people do not get the rewards they were hoping to get, and the effect of this is, in practice, indistinguishable from punishment” (52). Career-based education, with its guarantees of rewards, wealth

\textsuperscript{60} In a section of his book \textit{The Forgotten Dream of American Public Education}, Robert V. Bullough details a list of metaphors often used in discussions of schooling. Among these is the idea of “school as necessary evil”: “A metaphor embedded in how young people and junior high school teachers talk about schooling, is school as a necessary evil. When interviewed about why they go to school young people admit that they have few other choices, they have to be in school so they may as well make the best of it” (125).
and prosperity, indeed, the very fulfillment of democracy itself, would fail to deliver on its promises:

School has to present itself as a mobility machine and as a nation-builder, a place for work credentials and a place for melting us all into one country. Of course, it has not influenced the rate of mobility [...] and it has yet to create a racially integrated and sexually equal society. (Shor 85)

Educator Henry Levin would note that "in [his] view, [back-to-basics] reform [was] not likely to succeed with the vast majority of youth because it [was] based on empty promises" (Shor 84). Generations of students would begin to sense that their educations meant very little, as they left their colleges and high schools and found no jobs waiting for them. Their educational promises remained unfulfilled; the American dream was broken.

Writes Kohn, "what rewards do, and what they do with devastating effectiveness, is smother people's enthusiasm for activities they might otherwise enjoy" (74). The “do this, get that” approach to education interferes directly with cultivating a sense of enjoyment for one’s education, what Dewey would call one of the chief aims of education.61 Kohn suggests that incentives and external rewards fail to address the deeper motivations underlying human behavior, and often seek to control behavior through the manipulation of self-interest.

Beyond destroying our enjoyment of our work, rewards and incentives may suggest our work is not even worth doing. Rewards may be interpreted as bribery, compensation for enduring a particularly arduous, painful, or unappealing task. Rewards,

61 In Democracy and Education (1916), Dewey wrote that "the aim of education is to enable individuals to continue their education" (100). In Experience and Education (1938), Dewey would write on the importance of “the experiential continuum” (33), the need for educational experiences to be “accessible and enjoyed” for future growth (34).
though they may help get the job done, may also produce long-term aversion that will prevent us from doing the job again.

This has been empirically proven in several research studies. Psychologist Leann Lipps Birch and her colleagues at the University of Illinois conducted a study on the effects of external motivators or rewards on children's enjoyment and preference for kefir (a liquid yogurt drink). The children were split into three experimental groups: some were simply handed a full glass and asked to drink it, others were praised, and others were given a free movie ticket if they finished it. Birch et al. were interested in seeing how the extrinsic motivators affected the children's long-term enjoyment and preference for the drink. They found that the children who received no external prompting for drinking it liked the beverage just as much, if not more, a week later. Those who received rewards – and, to their astonishment, even praise – found the drink less appealing.⁶²

Researcher Leon Festinger would also find a connection between incentives and attitude change regarding a boring or unpleasant task. In 1959, Festinger and his colleague J. Merrill Carlsmith conducted an experiment in which they had participants complete a series of boring and unchallenging menial tasks. Afterwards, participants were asked to convince others (actually confederates) of the task's enjoyability. The participants were told they would receive either $1 or $20 as compensation. When the experiment ended, they were evaluated to determine how much they themselves actually enjoyed the task they had completed. Festinger and Carlsmith found that those who received less money for deceiving others experienced a greater change in attitude – they convinced themselves they enjoyed the task, to reduce cognitive dissonance. Those who received a larger compensation remained unenthusiastic about the boring task. Festinger

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⁶² Experiment details paraphrased from Kohn 72.
and Carlsmit concluded that the large compensation was enough for participants to justify their behavior, whereas the smaller monetary incentive prompted a change in attitude.  

Consider the possible implications these findings have for the use of incentives and rewards in education: if we are promised a pay-off, compensation for our time and effort, or even congratulatory praise, we may come to see our education as something incapable of being enjoyed for its own merits. It should therefore not be surprising that students, teachers, and parents alike approach education as a “necessary evil” rather than a lifelong process of growth and self-discovery, or that policy-makers may see education as an unworthy investment. The practice of incentivizing education decreases enjoyment, and, at its worst, gives the student/teacher the feeling of being cajoled or “bought.”

As psychologist and corporate consultant Daniel Goleman suggests, even from a strict business standpoint, the use of incentives at the expense of enjoyment and intrinsic motivation is counterproductive. In regards to motivation in the workplace, Goleman discusses "flow" and how a genuine interest in one's work increases productivity. Writes Goleman, "flow is the ultimate motivator. Activities we love draw us in because we get into flow as we pursue them. [...] When we work in flow, the motivation is built in – work is a delight in itself" (106). This offers a radical alternative to the prevailing attitudes and misconceptions regarding work, motivation, and the need for incentives.

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63 From Stephen L. Franzoi's Social Psychology, p. 178. See Appendix E for a graph of their experimental results.

64 Psychologist Mihály Csíkszentmihályi discusses flow as "joy, creativity, the process of total involvement with life" (xi) that is necessary to achieving "optimal experience." In his book Flow: the Psychology of Optimal Experience (1990), Csíkszentmihályi writes: "We have all experienced times when, instead of being buffeted by anonymous forces, we do feel in control of our actions, masters of our own fate. On the rare occasions that it happens, we feel a sense of exhilaration, a deep sense of enjoyment that is long cherished and that becomes a landmark in memory for what life should be like. This is what we mean by optimal experience" (3).
Flow indicates that “the most powerful motivators are internal, not external” (Goleman 106).

Furthermore, Goleman argues that the potential rewards from a community-based approach are better for business and productivity:

High levels of commitment are, of course, more likely in companies where people see themselves as 'shareholders' rather than simply as employees. But workers who are inspired by a shared goal often have a level of commitment that is greater than any financial incentive. (119)

As this view points out, no one likes to feel used or undervalued or that their work has little meaning or purpose. People like to feel part of a team, and that's why a community-based, democratic system of education or business-management is more productive and fulfilling. This sense of community could be seen as a reward in and of itself. Material rewards, by contrast, “overlook the nature and value of group interaction" (Kohn 54). "At best, rewards do nothing to promote collaboration or sense of community. More often, they actually interfere with these goals," creating power differentials and asymmetrical relationships where one person controls the other (Kohn 54, 55). The basic units of a democratic community are "good working relationships," which must be "characterized by trust, open communication, and the willingness to ask for assistance" (Kohn 57). You can't have that in a relationship where the threat of punishment is hanging over your head, "flattery [is] emphasized in place of trust," and you feel you are being "evaluated rather than supported" (Kohn 59). Thus, even in terms of business, a community-based model is preferable and more rewarding than a strict economic practice.
Finally, rewards and incentives dehumanize the learner. "It is not an accident that the theory behind 'Do this and you'll get that' derives from work with other species, or that behavior management is frequently described in words better suited to animals" (Kohn 24). Similarly, Dewey would criticize traditional education for its dehumanizing approach to the learning process: "The student is trained like an animal rather than educated like a human being. His instincts remain attached to their original objects of pain and pleasure. But to get happiness or to avoid the pain of failure he has to act in a way agreeable to others" (Democracy and Education 13). Incidentally, adjusting personal goals and behaviors to avoid punishment and receive rewards characterizes the majority of behavior engendered by the culture of schooling.

Kohn suggests that we’ve been misguided in our use of rewards and incentives in schooling and workplace practices. Attributing our behaviors to external rewards over-determines self-interest as the primary motivator for human action, ignores the intrinsic need for community and social order for which individuals will temper their individualism, and limits human interaction to a context of economic exchange. The overuse of incentives conditions us, not to do our work, but to expect rewards. When we focus our energies and motivations on external rewards, rather than finding compelling reasons for the work itself, we become dependent on rewards to give us cause for action. Writes Kohn:

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65 In Crisis in the Classroom (1970), Charles E. Silberman would find that “It quickly becomes clear [to students] that approaching a question on a test by saying 'What is my own response to this question?' is risky indeed, and totally unwise if one covets the highest grade possible (and the school system teaches the student that he should). Rather, the real question is clear to any student who knows anything about how schools work: 'What is the answer the teacher wants me to give? What can I write that will please the teacher?'" (148).

66 This may explain why more students and young people are not more actively involved in their communities, and almost never engage in activism, choosing instead to “defer
With respect to the workplace or public policy, we talk casually about the use of 'carrots and sticks,' and there is food for thought here, too. Before these words came to be used as generic representations of bribes and threats, what actually stood between the carrot and the stick was, of course, a jackass. (24)

Like the jackass tricked into doing its master’s bidding with the lure of the carrot at the end of a stick, we are being blindly led around, with little to no understanding of our purpose or direction. In our failure to understand the dehumanizing effects of our economic approach to social relations, we are committing grave missteps in our practices of schooling and educational policy. If we are to realize the democratic potential of American public education, we must purposefully redirect our efforts toward a more community-based, collaborative model of education.

responsibility” to after they graduate or land their first jobs. Or, why most young people choose to be involved in community service projects only in the context of school clubs or recognized honor societies, such as the Beta Club, Anchor Club, National Honor Society, or Key Club – because participation in such activities usually garners reward or recognition. This is, of course, part of Kohn’s and my argument: that rewards are remarkably successful at creating a need for more rewards. And, by extension, a need for the system that provides those rewards. I do not intend to demean or criticize these service organizations; I was actually an active member and participant in these groups, among others, when I was in high school. However, the point remains that when policy-makers and educators express frustration at the current generation’s lack of civic participation, perhaps they should examine more closely the imposed methods of schooling, and the kinds of messages they are sending youth about the meaning of “citizenship.” See Appendix F for a look at No Child Left Behind’s recommendations for raising “responsible citizens.”
CHAPTER THREE: ACTUALIZING DEMOCRACY

The school itself shall be made a genuine form of active community life, instead of a place set apart in which to learn lessons [...] The mere absorbing of facts and truths is so exclusively individual an affair that it tends very naturally to pass into selfishness. There is no obvious social motive for the acquirement of mere learning, there is no clear social gain in success thereat.

John Dewey, *The School and Society* (1900)

Education should prepare people not just to earn a living but to live a life – a creative, humane, and sensitive life. This means that the schools must provide a liberal, humanizing education. And the purpose of liberal education must be, and indeed always has been, to educate educators - to turn out men and women who are capable of educating their families, their friends, their communities, and most importantly, themselves.

Charles E. Silberman, *Crisis in the Classroom* (1970)

Throughout our nation’s history, education has been linked to the promise of democracy. Yet over the past century the connection between democracy and education has too often been confined to the classroom. This is harmful to education – it puts too much pressure on a single institution. It is also harmful to democracy – it dismisses the role of the many institutions that educate, and overlooks the potential connections between them. In short, we are failing to expand the circle to make communities real partners in educating for democracy.


Throughout my analysis, I have taken a critical view of the formal/traditional education system, suggesting that our current practices of education are unworthy of their democratic charge. However, underlying my critique is a more hopeful and empowering message. For, if we recognize education as a social process, we acknowledge the possibility, indeed, the inevitability, of change. It thus becomes the role of the liberating educator – the critical pedagogue – to facilitate educational experiences that will allow

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67 Recall from Chapter One that Lev Vygotsky and other educational theorists agree on the inherently social nature of the learning process.
students and citizens to see “the reality of oppression not as a closed world from which there is no exit, but as a limiting situation which they can transform” (Freire 49).

**TRANSFORMATIVE INTELLECTUALS: THE SCHOOL AS VEHICLE FOR SOCIAL CHANGE**

Hegemony is frequently understood as "a complex social process that results in the manufacture and reinforcement of public consent to the existing social order” (Sehr 19). Louis Althusser would write in his essay “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes Towards an Investigation)” (1970) that “Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs) function massively and predominantly by ideology […] to contribute to the same result: the reproduction of the relations of production, i.e. of capitalist relations of exploitation” (138, 146). The school, Althusser argues, plays a particularly central role in the production of ideology. "In fact, the Church has been replaced today in its role as the Ideological State Apparatus by the School" (149). His correspondence theory “establishes theoretical beliefs about the relationship of school to society,” suggesting that schools “serve only to reinforce the existing social order,” and therefore “could not be used as instruments of social change” (Rust and Laumann 37).

However, “if hegemony is understood as a dynamic process, and if schools are seen as sites of ideological contestation, then it is possible that there is a transformative role that schools can play in advancing democratic possibilities" (Sehr 28-9). If we genuinely care about the future of democracy in America, we must turn back the tide of growing individualism, and refocus and rededicate efforts towards cultivating citizenship and civic engagement in public education:
If the United States wishes to halt its current slide toward social decay and begin to build a just, inclusive, prosperous, and democratic future, the current hegemonic ideology of democracy will have to be challenged. It will need to be replaced by an alternative ideology and related practice of public democracy. (Sehr 18)

Rather than dismiss schools for being part of the problem, schools must be revived as democratic social centers and entrusted to foster civic life. Through civic education in schools, we must change the dominant hegemony to emphasize and naturalize community instead of self-interest, collaboration instead of competition, love and respect instead of enmity, and democracy instead of business.

COMMUNITIES OF POWER: RELATIONAL ORGANIZING AT THE GRASSROOTS

Democratic educational practice relies on a process of building and strengthening relationships and communities to counteract and overcome the oppressive, controlled hierarchies of capitalist hegemony. If applied widely, this model of community engagement and activism could realize a more critical democratic educational praxis, because it recognizes that knowledge is power, and that there is power in collaboration. Rather than limit productive activities to a prescribed series of discrete and disparate labors, the relational approach to education emphasizes community. This is what educator and civil rights organizer Myles Horton called a “yeasty” concept of education (57). Freed from the rigid top-down structure of traditional education, community-based education opens itself to the possibilities of lateral movement and information exchange. This gives new meaning to the idea of “power”: education that is empowering, but also self-sustaining, multiplicative, and exponentially growing.
In *Deschooling Society* (1970), Ivan Illich would propose “the self-organization of 'learning webs' and 'convivial networks.' The imagery of webs and networks was a visually democratic antagonist to the mainstream pictures of school as funnels, channels, tracks, factories and delivery-systems” (Shor 169). Illich’s ideas “challenged the logic of the schools” by breaking with authority and recognizing that “most learning requires no teaching […] each of us was personally responsible for his or her own [education]” (Shor 169). The concept of education based on “convivial networks” is crucial to realizing stronger community and freeing us from the authority-dependence engendered by the banking style of education. When the learning process is relational, as opposed to mediated by institutional rewards, we are all responsible for, and to, each other. This process of relational power-sharing is a radical form of pedagogy that seeks to recognize students and teachers as equals. Indeed, there is no difference between the two. The basis of equality, rather than hierarchy, is crucial to a democratic educational practice, but is rarely seen in practice within formal, institutionalized education. It is, however, manifest in the relational organizing practices of student groups and grassroots movements. The local example of Miami University’s Students for Staff may provide some understanding of the process and practices of relational democracy.

Students for Staff[^68] created an educational grassroots movement from the ground up, cemented with bonds of friendship and respect. We learn by doing together. Students for Staff preserves/sustains itself through the passing down of histories of experience through individual relationships. The content of these experiences are found in the web of

[^68]: The Miami University living wage campaign started as a meeting between friends in the various peer centers on the Western College campus. I got involved in 2005, at the beginning of my second year, when my friends Justin and Dylan approached me and asked me to join the campaign. I didn’t know it at the time, but this was a relational organizing tactic; I would go on to recruit friends and community members in a similar way in future semesters.
interactions extant among the members of this community. Because of the lack of a hierarchical power structure (as in the capitalist model), every individual has responsibilities and potentialities, multiplied by their roles in the community, and their commitments to its individual members. The potential for growth within such a community is thus exponential; as each member interacts and forms relationships with every other member, the strength of the connecting fibers mushrooms. The power in grassroots organizing is its rhizomatic potential: lateral roots whose blossoms continually reappear, never able to be stomped out.69

A community-based, relational model of education is potentially more economical and productive than a model based solely on competition and enmity. As Dewey would write in *The School and Society*, “all waste is due to isolation” (64). We are more empowered and productive when working in solidarity, rather than divided against one another in competition for limited resources. Rather than viewing others as adversaries or obstacles to your personal progress, in a community-based model, everyone’s interests are intertwined and connected, so that achieving positive change requires collaboration, rather than competition.

Community-based education "shifts the focus from a scarcity model of limited resources to the creation of a civic culture with an abundance of civic resources" (Longo 5). Rather than the current top-down model of knowledge exchange seen in the traditional school system, the social method of education is exponentially more profitable and

69 The idea of the rhizome in philosophy comes from understanding of the rhizome in biology, and is best illuminated by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, who used the term "rhizome" to describe theory and research that allows for multiple, non-hierarchical entry and exit points in data representation and interpretation. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, they opposed it to an arborescent conception of knowledge, which worked with dualist categories and binary choices. A rhizome works with horizontal and trans-species connections, while an arborescent model works with vertical and linear connections. (See Appendix G for an illustration.)
efficient. Communities of shared knowledge are communities of power. Uniting disparate communities in collaboration = infinitely more reward.

Whereas capitalism thrives by dividing and conquering communities, democracy depends on us adequately building and nurturing communities of empowered transformative intellectuals. As long as communities are divided into units of production (as with the reduction of life into a hierarchy of discrete labors), the interests of business will continue to be served, while communities of individuals continue to be exploited.

Capitalism is the problem underlying the fragmentation of our communities, and the cold, mechanical pedagogical approach of our schools. Modern educational policy has extended Capitalism into the schools, prescribing hidden curricula enforcing the learning and internalizing (and naturalizing) of market ideology, so that we learn to process reality through a lens of gain/loss duality. This over-determines learning as an exchange of capital, and places an immaterial materiality on experience. Grades are emphasized as a way to make tangible unquantifiable volumes of knowledge. Intellectual energies are misdirected toward achieving these grades, rather than knowledge itself.

To reclaim educational experience and restore community, one must work to challenge existing ideologies and pursue alternative spaces and practices of democracy. Student-directed activist movements reveal the potentialities of pursuing non-traditional learning experiences. By breaking away from conditioned beliefs in the value of formal education, one can see the potential reward of community, and the reality of democratic practice, when removed from a context of reward and bureaucracy.
ACTUALIZATION ACTIVISM: CREATING A NEW SPACE FOR DEMOCRACY

In the course of educational reforms and policies, education has veered away from its commitment to community. It is time now to revive our dedication to the moral sentiments and civic virtues once seen as vital to our democracy, by enacting a “critical-democratic praxis” that combines critical inquiry with reflection on social situations, and uses a relational style of organizing to transform situations and apply education to a wider range of social experiences.

Dewey defines education as a democratic process, a product of interactions between individual learners.\textsuperscript{70} Paulo Freire, similarly, argues that education is a collaboration of community efforts, with \textit{humanizing} and \textit{liberating} potentials.\textsuperscript{71}

Furthermore, Freire defines education as a process of existential questioning, “the critical intervention of the people in reality through praxis” (Freire 53). That is, education as the process by which we acquire the theories, philosophies, and methods by which to evaluate our experiences, to reflect on our situations, and to discover our own ethical values, which we later put into practice, in the service of social change and progress. As Dewey emphasizes, “not all experiences are genuinely or equally educative” (Dewey 25).

For experiences to be meaningfully educative, they must create in the learner a feeling of agency. Education should be a process of \textit{empowering} yourself with knowledge, so you can in turn empower others with the hope – and agency – for change. Thus, a transition must occur, so that young people can begin to see themselves as history makers and as

\textsuperscript{70} As most clearly elucidated in his \textit{Experience and Education} (1938).
\textsuperscript{71} \textit{Pedagogy of the Oppressed} (1970), pages 43-54 in particular.
part of the public world. This change requires education to become more social and, more importantly, *political* in its practice.

Whereas careerism ignored politics in the classroom and denied the existence of class and poverty, student movements actively seek to apply students’ knowledge and intellect to the resolution of real-world problems. Student activists should be commended for striving to reconcile the gap between schools and society, but are often demeaned, dismissed, even demonized. Usually, the efforts to engage the university community in an open dialogue about political issues (especially if they pertain to the management of university funds or fiscal priorities) are met with scorn and disparagement. What message does this send to students about their role as citizens or community members? It is no wonder students and youth of the current generation are withdrawing more and more from community projects and civic engagement. When they do become involved in these activities, parents, teachers, and administrators chide them for “immature” or “reactionary” behavior, urging them to stick to their studies, to leave “practical matters” to grown-ups to resolve. Repeatedly, the message seems to be that students have one role and one role alone – that of passive, obedient students, not engaged citizens.

Student panelists at the Wingspread Summit on Student Civic Engagement identified this problem as “deferral of responsibility.” According to *The New Student*

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72 The Students for Staff mission statement reads: “We are undergrads, graduate students and alumni who believe in living the VALUES of liberal education and critical thinking by putting research and KNOWLEDGE into ACTION” (from the SFS website: [http://www.orgs.muhio.edu/spi/sfs.htm](http://www.orgs.muhio.edu/spi/sfs.htm)).

73 See Appendix H for an open letter from Miami University’s administration on the living wage movement.

74 This panel discussion consisted of a group of thirty-three juniors and seniors representing twenty-seven colleges and universities (March 15 – 17, 2001, the Johnson Foundation in Racine, Wisconsin).
*Politics* (2001), “higher education is complicit in compartmentalizing public civic-life and the private-economic life of students. This is illustrated in pedagogy that requires students to live in bifurcated worlds of theory and action” (Long 10). This implicates education, suggesting that the increasing levels of political disengagement in youth are immovably connected with our educational experiences. Because we see civic engagement as something we are not equipped (or welcome) to participate in until later, students are too easily absolved (and neglectful) of our responsibility for determining the course of social and governmental policy.

If only we could change the academic institutions, we might witness a growth in student involvement in politics or decision-making. Oftentimes, however, the bureaucracies and established hierarchies of power and control are so rigid as to exclude and *preclude* student voice. What administrators and politicians may fail to realize is that the rigid rules we encounter in formal institutional politics and education often restrict, discourage, and even *devalue* our contributions to shaping community dialogue.

Another, albeit short-lived, student movement was the “Keep Western Whole” campaign, a student-led effort to preserve the Western College Program’s core values as it underwent program review. The students were appalled to learn that our educational program (which taught many of us the value of community and integrating living and learning experiences) could be restructured drastically or even terminated at the whim of the administration, without student or community input. When student leaders attempted to meet with administrators and demand a voice in the review and decision-making process, we were denied seats on the advisory committee and forced
to watch as administrators and faculty members decided what would best suit students’ educational interests.

In a speech I delivered to University Senate on April 3, 2006, I made this plea to the University community:

President Garland, at last Thursday’s Open Forum with students, said that students don’t have the experience or the knowledge to make an educated decision regarding the changes of an academic program. I don’t think the President is giving the students enough credit. Our experiences in the Western College Program qualify us as experts of our program, as much as the President’s experience in administrative roles qualifies him to make administrative decisions. [...] Students should have representation in the process, as we have unique and irreplaceable/unequaled perspectives on the implementation of our education. We ask you now, the members of University Senate, to consider and recognize the value of students’ voices, as we ask for adequate student representation in the decision-making process.

This blatant disregard and disrespect for students in decision-making processes, even in regards to their own education, sends a strong message to youth that their opinions and experiences are not valued or respected. This can have the effect of a self-fulfilling prophecy, as today’s youth are increasingly withdrawing from conventional politics.\footnote{Voting statistics repeatedly indicate declining participation from youth. Long cites a 1998 National Secretaries of State study, which showed the numbers of voting youth aged 18 to 24 decreased from 52 percent in 1972, to “only 32 percent” in 1996 (16). Also revisit Appendix A. [I would like to note too that the very fact that voting is cited as the primary measure of civic participation and engagement should be an indicator in itself of our waning faith in public democracy. By now, it should be clear that citizenship means much more than the basic civic duties implied by voting. In that youth are failing in even this respect leaves little room for optimism about the state of our current democracy.]}

However, the youth of my generation should not be so easily dismissed. There is hope yet, and this can be seen in the various and innovative ways in which we are...
engaging each other and our communities, and practicing a form of radical politics that evades institutional compartmentalization. “It may be true that many college students are not interested in politics or in discussing political affairs; however, […] it can be legitimately argued that students’ service activities have a deliberate and recognizable political dimension” (Long 17). As the Wingspread study showed, students have become more actively involved in local politics, overwhelmingly more so than at the national or global level, because they “can make direct connections and experience feedback that reassures them that their actions have a meaningful impact” (Long 5). It is this sense of impact and validation of action that my generation is seeking. It is not accurate to characterize the lack of civic engagement based on institutional measures, such as voter turnout, since it is likely that disappointment with “the institution” is what is driving so many of my peers away from conventional political practices in the first place.

As conventional education may delude students through its emphasis on the materiality of institutional reward,\textsuperscript{76} students are finding ways to escape from these prescribed avenues of engagement and reclaim their sense of agency and power through unconventional means. The Wingspread students contend that “in fact, [they] are

\textsuperscript{76} That is, rather than emphasizing or prioritizing community projects, relation-building, or the development of out-of-classroom engagement; the greater attention thus being given to the accumulation of material capital, at the cost of ignoring and neglecting the value and power of social capital. This can have the cumulative effect of what Paulo Freire termed “dehumanization,” in which students experience a kind of alienation from their intellectual labors. They are no longer empowered with the opportunity to seek and develop meaningful pursuits via their education, but are made to labor to reach material ends, which they themselves may not deem important. Thus, rather than finding value in the pursuit of knowledge itself, they are made to believe and trust in the value of the ends to which this knowledge brings them. That is, grades, diplomas, and careers, rather than knowledge, engagement, and relationships.
politically engaged, although [they] participate in politics in unconventional ways” (Long 15). Though I would agree that community service and volunteering are devoid of political purpose or intent, they are no less politically charged in motivation. While community service may be defined as “lacking a political component” in that it fails to address or engage political issues directly, it is no less a recognition of social ills and an attempt to address them. The seeking of alternate outlets for civic engagement is an extension of an effort to escape from the limits of institutionally prescribed exchanges.

Student organizations thus create for themselves new democratic spaces outside of extant political institutions and conventions. This does not signify, as many in the older generation say, that the younger generation is apolitical or apathetic, but rather, that in finding no place for our participation in conventional politics, we had to go outside of it to create our own. And what we discover in the practice of student politics is a new brand of democracy, one that could arguably rejuvenate our current political system at a time of its greatest need.

**STUDENTS AS COLLEAGUES AND SCHOOLS AS CENTERS OF SOCIAL CHANGE**

For the school to become a site of social change, it must be more encouraging of students’ political engagement. A lack of institutional support for student activities and community projects sends a discouraging message to those students actually willing to pursue and explore their education as a means of transformative practice. As author Sarah Long noted in her report on students’ civic engagement, “students are subtly conscious of and respond to the campus climate as it relates to political activity” (10). If the college or
university does not provide a “safe place for civic engagement” (Long 10) and encourage its development through the allocation of resources and through proper integration into the broader curriculum and institutional development, the spirit of civic engagement will not be perceived as a worthwhile pursuit and will thus never grow.

Incorporating civic engagement into schools could provide one alternative means of politicizing the university. As a group of Oklahoma student leaders point out, “higher education institutions do not provide adequate education and knowledge about our civic responsibilities.” They expressed a deep concern with what they saw as the skewed priorities of “higher education institutions’ primary focus to produce professionals, instead of citizens.” Similarly, the Wingspread students were “confounded to realize that higher education does not concentrate its full potential upon alleviating social ills. [They] do not express anger at this revelation; they express disappointment” (Long 11). It would seem that “institutions of higher education are uniquely positioned to create engaged community members and stronger communities” (Cone, Kiesa, Longo 32), if only those resources could be harnessed in effective ways. The question thus remains: what should the role of the institution of higher education be?

As educator Nicholas V. Longo and student Ross Meyer point out, “there is widespread agreement in the literature about the great political potential of this generation of college students; and that colleges and universities need to do more to educate the next generation for democracy” (3). The Oklahoma students call for “institutions [of higher education] to prioritize and implement civic education in the classroom, in research, and in services to the community.”

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77 Oklahoma Students, “Civic Engagement Resolution.”
If we are to realize the dream of American democracy, we will need to revive our faith in the masses of people and their ability to defend democracy through action and critical inquiry, and foster a community in which we can all be contributing and valued members. This means trusting in students and youth, and seeing them as fellow collaborators in the educative process. “Trust the people is the indispensable precondition for revolutionary change” (Freire 60). “The revolutionary educator,” writes Freire, “must imbue his efforts with a profound trust in people and their creative power. To achieve this, they must be partners of the students in their relations with them” (75).

I have attempted to enact a revolutionary democratic classroom practice through my creative project, a co-facilitated seminar called “Education for Social Change.” Taught as an advanced seminar in the Western College Program, the class sought to create a space for creative inquiry and critical reflection on our educational experiences. In our “professorless classroom,” we had the opportunity to experience a more democratic and egalitarian form of pedagogy, where we were all simultaneously students, facilitators, and community members. Students were asked to contribute ideas and revisions for the syllabus from the very first day. Classes were adjusted to organically meet the interests and curiosities of the students. Students were treated as experts on their educations, and were asked to share their expertise at every available opportunity. The class also sought to practice an experiential philosophy of education, where student experiences were used as a point of entry into critical reflection and action to change some aspect of society. The theory and discussion from class arose from, and hoped to inform, the everyday practices and experiences of the members of the course. The only

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Throughout the course, I used the term “co-facilitator” in place of the usual words “teacher,” “professor,” and “student.” I consistently reiterated the idea that we were all students and teachers, that we all had things to learn and things to contribute.
goal for the class was to "learn by doing: practicing democratic education in the study of it." The class implicitly encouraged the development of a transformative intellectualism.

As stated on the course syllabus under “Course Themes and Objectives”:

We will look at the role of education in society, examine and reflect on our own educational experiences, and use this as an entry point to engaging in social change. I started this class out of my own desire to "change the world," and because I believe that significant social progress can take place in our lifetime, if we are empowered and encouraged to create it. I believe education provides this hope, and I believe the critical-democratic practices of popular education in particular will free students to pursue their dreams. […] We will explore our roles as students, citizens, community members, practicing intellectuals, and agents of social change. We will reflect on our work and everyday actions and practices, and strive to holistically combine theory and practice into praxis.⁷⁹

If we are to transform education and practice revolutionary pedagogy, we will also need to expand our definition and understanding of what acceptable, “excellent” education is. If we limit ourselves to the current perception of education as occurring strictly inside a classroom, we are eliminating the potentials of community collaborations and solidarity action in the process of civic revival. In order to foster a sense of community and apply education toward transforming society, rather than “perpetuating unchanged the existing industrial order of society” (Dewey, Democracy and Education 316), education will need to be brought “completely into the current⁸⁰ of social life” (Dewey, …)

⁷⁹ For my personal philosophy and approach to enacting democratic education, see Appendix I, the course syllabus I wrote for “Education for Social Change.” And for an understanding of how democracy can be practiced in a classroom setting, see Appendix J, “The Constitution of Democratic Education,” a document co-authored by members of the Education for Social Change class.

⁸⁰ “The current of social life.” That is, constant change and fluidity, but also immediacy (“the current,” the now). The school as social center would need to encompass both the need for change, as well as the ability to apply relevancy of students’ present experiences in the process of change. Dewey would note that "the ideal of using the present simply to
“The School as Social Center” 373). The curricula and practices of education should be embedded in community endeavors, should arise out of the urgency of social life, should inspire activity and reflection on social issues, rather than limit itself to the discussion of ideas and theories in the abstract.

Writs Lawrence A. Cremin, “the essence of republican education could never be merely intellectual; values inevitably intrude” (7). Horace Mann would state that “the greatest of all the arts in political economy is, to change a consumer into a producer […] an end to be directly attained, by increasing his intelligence” (89). Thus, public education should strive to educate citizens and enable them to intervene and transform society, not merely by participating as consumers, but by creating change. It should be the role of public education and the responsibility of educators to “engage young people in projects of study, dialogue, and action that will enable them to begin to reconstruct the current hegemonic ideology of democracy along more participatory, public, egalitarian, and just lines” (Sehr 29).

To expect anything less of our public education system limits the potential of our citizens and makes a mockery of our great vision of democracy. Current hegemonic conceptions of democracy "encourage individualistic, privately oriented activities" and often demobilize public democratic action (Sehr 26). However, because "hegemony is a living social process, it carries within it seeds of change […] Intellectuals play a central role in this process" (Sehr 19). Italian philosopher Antonio Gramsci, who is credited for first using the term hegemony to describe the dominant narratives that affect our social get ready for the future contradicts itself. It omits, and even shuts out, the very conditions by which a person can be prepared for his future. […] All this means that attentive care must be devoted to the conditions which give each present experience a worth-while meaning” (Dewey, Experience and Education 49).
experiences, extends hope in the ability of "organic intellectuals" to intervene and change society. Gramsci's progressive view of education seeks to "develop the critical intellectual capacities of every [individual], to develop each member as a potential leader – an organic intellectual – who will create new, liberating conceptions of the world and work with others to bring them into existence" (qtd. in Sehr 24).

This widens the potential for change, and places it in the hands of a larger group of people, who, if they work together, could advance the interests of the community. The idea of organic intellectualism is empowering, because it implies that knowledge is not necessarily esoteric or exclusive to those with privilege, and that it is accessible and applicable by the great masses of people. It fosters a sense of agency and control, and imparts meaning to those who practice it. "Anyone can potentially become an organic intellectual, working to expand American democracy. This is an egalitarian conception of intellectuals and of political leadership. It contrasts sharply with other views [...] which see intellectuals as a natural elite, separate from, and above common people" (Sehr 25). It is this form of education that must be cultivated if we hope to see the dream of American democracy actualized in practice.
WORKS CITED


**APPENDIX A**

**Voter Registration and Turnout by Age, Gender & Race, 1998 and 2000**

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APPENDIX B
Is This What Democracy Looks Like?

The Wikipedia entry for “Democracy” includes a picture of a ballot box, and the caption “Voting is an important part of the democratic process.”

I find this particularly telling. As a democratic medium, Wikipedia represents the popular understanding of various topics. People contribute entries, which others edit, thus achieving “accuracy” of representation. It is ironic that democracy is seen in practice in various forms (recently enabled by increasing access to user-empowered media), but when considering democratic practices in the context of formal politics or government, most would still fail to mention much else beyond voting.

APPENDIX C
Capitalism and Its Representations

From the “Capitalism Represents Acceptable Policy (CRAP) Society”* website, under the subheading “How Capitalism Works”:

* A satirical art project from The Northern Arts Tactical Offense (http://www.beyonddtv.org/nato/index.htm).
The Society provides the following explanation of the above illustration on their website:

This diagram from 1867 perfectly illustrates the inherent genius within the capitalist system and how it is indestructible: it has a strong base built on inequality. Like the ancient pyramids of Egypt, the capitalist system is based upon the pyramid shape which yields great unknown powers and like those great historic monuments, was built from the sweat and blood of slaves. If we stay strong the capitalism will stay with us for thousands of years to come just like the great pyramids. (CRAP)

These diagrams make visible the influence of business in the structure and organization of schooling. Note the similar top-down organization in “the hierarchical structure of the modern business enterprise” (Figure 2.1) and “the hierarchical school organization” (Figure 2.2).

Figure 2.1 The hierarchical structure of the modern business enterprise at the turn of the century. Source: The Visible Hand: The Managerial Revolution in American Business by Alfred D. Chandler, Jr. ©1977 by Alfred D. Chandler, Jr. Reprinted by permission of Harvard University Press.

Figure 2.2 Cubberley’s plan for the hierarchical school organization. Source: Public School Administration: A Statement of the Fundamental Principles Underlying the Organization and Administration of Public Administration. (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1916.)

Festinger and Carlsmith’s 1959 study was influential in formulating cognitive dissonance theory. Participants were asked to complete a series of “monotonous” and “boring” tasks. Afterwards, Festinger and Carlsmith asked the participants to lie to other participants (actually confederates) and tell them the tasks had been “very enjoyable” and “fun.” Festinger and Carlsmith promised the participants either $1 or $20 to tell their lies.

They found that those participants who received less money for lying to confederates about the enjoyability of the tasks “came to believe that [the tasks] were enjoyable to a far greater degree than those who said so for $20” (Franzoi 178).

Writes Franzoi:

The reason the “$1 participants” showed more attitude change toward the boring task than the “$20 participants” was that they experienced a greater amount of cognitive dissonance. Festinger and Carlsmith reasoned that the $20 participants would not need to change their attitudes because they could justify their actions and, thus, reduce dissonance by adding a third cognition that makes the original cognition less inconsistent: their high payment was sufficient justification for their counterattitudinal behavior. (179)

APPENDIX F
Is This “Responsible Citizenship”? 

The cover of a booklet released by the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools suggests volunteering in charity food drives as a way to “become a responsible citizen.”

(Note the No Child Left Behind logo in the bottom right-hand corner.)
In a section titled “Citizenship and Patriotism”:

*Citizenship* requires doing our share for our community and our country. Being a good citizen means caring about the good of society and participating actively to make things better. […] *Patriotism* is an important part of good citizenship. Patriotism is love of and loyalty to our country. It involves honoring the democratic ideals on which the country is based and expecting elected officials to do the same, respecting and obeying its laws and honoring its flag and other symbols. It also involves accepting the responsibilities of good citizenship, such as voting, volunteering and serving the country in times of war. (16)

APPENDIX G
The Rhizome and Convivial Networks

Rhizome:

Aborescent Model:

(Compare the aborescent model to the illustration of capitalist hierarchy in Appendix C and the structure and organization of business and education in Appendix D.)

Then, compare the rhizome to the following illustration from On Learning and Social Change (1969), by author and leader of the Berkeley Free Speech Movement, Michael Rossman. These are what Ivan Illich would call “convivial networks” and “learning webs”:
Writes Rossman:

These diagrams describe typical patterns of evolution of new social energy as it appears in youth communities and is manifested in organized group action. The campus sequence sketches five phases[...] By Phase 5, the range of activities is appropriate to a small live city. (295)

Image sources:

Rhizome: [link]

Tree: [link]

APPENDIX H

Miami University Administration’s Open Letter to Miami Faculty on a Living Wage

Dated October 7, 2003 (emphases added):

[…] And now let us return to the topic of a “living wage.” The living wage movement began a few years ago at Wesleyan and Harvard universities and has gradually spread to other campuses throughout the nation. The goal of the movement is to focus attention on the plight of the lowest paid workers in our society – the “working poor,” who earn too little to afford decent housing, medical care and many of the other necessities of life. The movement has had varying impact, but in some communities and campuses has led to an increase in the minimum wage paid certain classes of employees. One of the obstacles faced by living wage advocates is the challenge of developing a compensation plan that accurately tags wages to the differential needs of workers. The resistance to the concept does not so much reflect an insensitivity by university and township administrators to the need of employees, but rather to the conceptual and practical problems with implementation.81

Miami’s living wage student activists argue that, despite the university’s marketcompetitive [sic] pay structure and benefits, some of our own employees are to be found among the working poor. Although they may have exaggerated the numbers in the passion of debate,82 there is little doubt that the students are basically correct: some university employees struggle greatly to make ends meet, and one reason for their struggle is because they do not earn a high enough income.

The debate, therefore, is not over the existence of a problem, at Miami and elsewhere, but rather over the solution to the problem. To many students and their supporters, the solution seems straightforward: the university should simply “do the right thing” by raising its starting wages so that all employees earn at least a living wage.

Here is how the reasoning goes. Is it not possible for Miami University, with its high tuition and manicured lawns and well-paid administrators, to come up with enough money to help its least fortunate workers provide for their families? Should we not be setting an example for our society? How can we speak of a “Miami family,” and of treating each other with dignity and respect, when we do not pay some of our own people enough to have the quality of life that most of us take for granted? How can we be so hypocritical? How can we be so hard-hearted?

We phrase the challenge in this stark way to make a point: the living wage movement is fundamentally an appeal to our innate sense of humanity. One would have to have a beanbag for a heart not to be troubled by the fundamental inequities of life, and for those

81 Read: the logistics of business management and bureaucracy.
82 Implying that student activists are sensationalist and “impassioned,” overcome with sentiment and negligent of reason. This is more a comment on the difference in ideologies (“logics”) than the reasoning involved in their arguments.
of us who live and work and study at an institution that espouses humane values, it is especially troubling to find these ugly inequities on our own campus. What reasonable person could possibly fault our students for being passionate about this issue?

But it is the hallmark of maturity\(^{83}\) to realize that difficult problems do not have simple answers. And of all the problems that the human race has faced throughout the centuries, few have been more challenging than the unjustness of economic inequality. Wars have been fought and great civilizations have fallen because of this issue.\(^{84}\) It is one of the great worldwide challenges of our time, and the living wage movement is the embodiment of that challenge on college campuses. Our role as educators is to help our students dig beneath the surface of this complex issue and to understand its philosophical, economic and social implications, so that their humane desires to improve the lives of the less fortunate can be channeled into constructive directions.\(^{85}\)

So why can’t Miami just pay everybody a living wage?

[…] A subtle reason why the living wage concept is difficult to implement pertains to free market economics. Miami University is not an island, but is coupled to a larger society where the price of labor is governed by the laws of supply and demand. Sometimes these laws lead to results that violate common sense, such as the fact that the labor of the school teachers who educate our children is worth less than one percent of the labor of professional baseball players. The prevalence of such anomalies, however, illustrates the enormous and virtually unstoppable power of a market-driven economic system. As a practical matter, neither Miami University nor any other university or business can unilaterally buck that system.\(^{86}\)

By highlighting these problems – and there are others as well – we do not intend to disparage the intent of the living wage movement. On the contrary, we wish all of our employees could earn a living wage. But Miami’s approach is to provide opportunities for employees to move up the economic ladder, as is consistent with our academic mission. Thus, we have provided incentives for workers to upgrade their skills, bonuses that reward performance and initiative, and tuition waivers for employees and their

\(^{83}\) The administration again implies that the student activists are ignorant and misled, reducing their work to reactionary theatrics. The implication seems to be that students can’t be trusted to reach their own conclusions, or at the very least, that these conclusions are not to be acted upon (and especially not if they challenge or impede the functioning of the university as a business).

\(^{84}\) Who’s being sensationalist now?

\(^{85}\) The administration urges faculty to redirect students’ attentions toward their studies in the abstract sense, turning the living wage issue into a theoretical exercise to be pondered over, rather than acted upon. The message seems to be clear: students should be quiet, obedient, and studious (rather than critical thinkers).

\(^{86}\) If all institutions of higher education approach their role in society as Miami’s administration seems to, the school will never become an instrument of social change but will only continue to reproduce unchanged “the existing capitalist relations of exploitation” (Althusser 146).
Our hope is that all of our employees, especially those at the low end of our wage scales, will take advantage of these opportunities and thereby raise the standard of living for themselves and their families. The great success of America’s economic system has been the economic mobility it has provided for most of her citizens, and we want Miami to lead other academic institutions in making certain that our own employees benefit from that mobility.88

Please note that we said “most” of her citizens. To its credit, the living wage movement has drawn attention to the fact that there are those among us who have not experienced the growing prosperity enjoyed by the majority. The growing income disparity between rich and poor is the dark side to America’s economic system. As the new century unwinds, this growing income gap may turn out to be our country’s largest social problem. Thus the living wage movement provides an important educational opportunity for the university community to study these larger social and economic issues. We hope that one positive outgrowth of the current dispute is to awaken our students to these important social issues and to prompt a thoughtful and reasoned discussion about them.89

Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

James C. Garland  President
Ronald A. Crutcher  Provost
Richard M. Norman  Vice President for Finance and Business Services


87 Paulo Freire would write in Pedagogy of the Oppressed that “indeed, the interests of the oppressors lie in ‘changing the consciousness of the oppressed, not the situation which oppresses them’; for the more the oppressed can be led to adapt to that situation, the more easily they can be dominated” (74).
88 The invocation of the American dream serves to distract from the fact that democracy in the sense of civic participation and critique of authority is being suppressed in favor of defending the university’s operation as a business.
89 In response, one of the core leaders of the Living Wage Campaign would have this to say: “look at the closing statement […] the implication here is that the campus has no physical reality as a social space: it's being rendered as a temporary phase of critical intellection and thinking devoid of any kind of active political response. it's the old mind/body split, at the core of capitalism, at the core of puritanism, at the core of western metaphysics in general. […] the point is that they talk about how important the living wage movement is, then how impossible it is to implement” (katKO).
APPENDIX I

WCP 333 – “Education for Social Change”

Course Syllabus
Spring 2008
W 7-9:40 pm
PBD 21

Stephanie Lee, primary facilitator
leesj@muohio.edu
cell: 859 608 3545
Office Hours:
Mon 12-4 pm
Tappan Computer Lab
(appointments upon request)

Dr. Nick Longo, faculty mentor
longonv@muohio.edu
campus phone: 9-9295
Office Hours:
Mon 9-11 am
Kreger 217
(appointments upon request)

The Miami Plan for Liberal Education emphasizes four basic goals:

* **Thinking Critically.** Students achieve perspective by combining imagination, intuition, reasoning, and evaluation. Critical thinking develops the ability to construct and discern relationships, analyze arguments, and solve complex problems.

* **Understanding Contexts.** Because how we know may be as important as what we know, examining assumptions is an important part of learning. Knowledge of the conceptual frameworks and achievements of the arts, sciences, technology, and the character of global society is crucial to our future.

* **Engaging with Other Learners.** A healthy exchange of different ideas and viewpoints encourages rethinking of accepted perspectives. Therefore, diversity among learners, a supportive atmosphere of group work, active listening, and opportunities to critique results encourage learning through shared efforts.

* **Reflecting and Acting.** By making thoughtful decisions and examining their consequences, students may enhance personal moral commitment, enrich ethical understanding, and strengthen civic participation.

Course Themes and Objectives

The American educational system has a history of democratic promise and hope. The idea of the free public school was conceived in order to achieve equality of opportunity and as a protector of our nation’s democratic ideals. But somewhere between theory and practice, schools have forgotten the dream of democratic education.

This class will challenge some of the assumptions regarding education in America, and will deconstruct the narratives surrounding educational access and practice. We will challenge the conventions and expectations of the traditional classroom, as we examine democratic and popular education, their histories, theories, philosophies, practices, and applications. We will look at the role of education in society, examine and
reflect on our own educational experiences, and use this as an entry point to engaging in social change.

I started this class out of my own desire to "change the world," and because I believe that significant social progress can take place in our lifetime, if we are empowered and encouraged to create it. I believe education provides this hope, and I believe the critical-democratic practices of popular education in particular will free students to pursue their dreams. Students in this class will thus "learn by doing": practicing democratic education in the study of it.

We will explore our roles as students, citizens, community members, practicing intellectuals, and agents of social change. We will reflect on our work and everyday actions and practices, and strive to holistically combine theory and practice into praxis.

A Note on My Personal Philosophy of Education

I strongly believe that students are “experts” of their own education. Being in school for 14+ years qualifies us as such. We may know more about the ins and outs of the educational system, the tricks and loopholes, the failures and successes of the schooling system than administrators or policy-makers. And we know what motivates us, what inspires us, what fascinates us and what we want from our educations more than our administrators do. However, the way traditional educational systems are structured inhibits us from actively taking part in our own educational experiences. Furthermore, this disconnect translates into a withdrawal and apathy that transposes itself onto our engagement in larger society, in our communities, in social organizations, in our own efforts for change. The student is in a constant state of static, of lethargy. Constantly relegated to passive roles as students, our education typically silences us, rather than encouraging us to find our own voice.

Education is a formative, transformational, and complex existential process. It should also be a process of empowerment and collaboration, but unfortunately, is rarely practiced as such. However, I maintain the position that education provides our best hope for social change. It is the charge of this class to explore the possibilities of our educational experiences to transform our social, political, and existential experiences. It is the ultimate goal of this class to reclaim our educations, and redirect our intellectual efforts towards a meaningful purpose (what this means will be determined later on, and may, of course, differ from person to person).

I believe that education is best practiced through the collaborative dialog of community members. As students, you have the right and responsibility to dialog with me and with each other about your hopes and expectations for this class. I trust you to exercise your freedom and choice to make this class something that matters to you personally, and something you enjoy. You will have the opportunity to democratically determine assignments, assessment criteria, and the content of the curriculum, as we strive to practice participatory democracy in the classroom.

Expectations for Course Conduct

As the course facilitator and your peer, I expect our class to uphold and respect the following guidelines for class conduct:

1. Respect
   - This class should be a safe place for the exercise of democracy, agency, and personal voice. I expect us to be respectful of one another and our contributions to
a shared continuing dialog. This respect is critical to developing a sense of trust
that will allow us to learn from one another and our experiences.

2. Accountability
- It is crucial to a democratic educational experience that authority be minimized to
facilitate dialog. This class should be thought of as a small community or social
organization, and as such, we are all accountable to each other for the actions we
take as a class.
- I expect each of you to be personally responsible for upholding the expectations
of the course, the course themes and objectives, and to ensure that this educational
experience is a rewarding one.
- I expect us to hold each other accountable for our actions. This is the “call out”
rule. If anyone acts in a way that disrespects or disempowers another, I expect all
of us to “call them out” on it.

3. Attendance
- Attendance is the most basic form of participation in class. Furthermore, we will
only be meeting once a week. Therefore, I expect you to attend EVERY class.
Failure to do so communicates a lack of dedication and respect for the class, your
peers, and myself.
- I will only excuse absences if given notice (email/written note/one-on-one
conversation) AT LEAST ONE WEEK before. You will be held responsible for
course material regardless of absence, and will be expected to complete a short
reflection paper or Blackboard post in lieu of class participation for that day.
- Missing class more than TWICE, regardless of excuse, will reflect very poorly on
your performance in the class, and I will hold you accountable for it.

4. Participation*
- This class is important to me. I expect it to be important to you, too. Since this
class will be the product of our shared efforts and interests, I expect you to
contribute meaningfully to it in a consistent way.
- I trust you to co-facilitate the course with me. I expect you to honor the
responsibility that comes with that trust by participating meaningfully in class
discussions and bringing your experiences and insights to the table.
- I expect you to come prepared to every class with questions and points of debate.
I expect class discussions to be fiery and exciting. If I am not facilitating
discussion in an exciting way, I expect you to hold me accountable to that and
assist me in doing better.

5. Reflection and Application
- As active participants in the educational process, I expect you to constantly
engage with the course content through reflection and application to your other
studies, experiences, and activities. It is this critical process of reflection and
application that transforms theory into practice, and I expect you to become
practitioners as a result of this class.
- This is also a process of critical thinking and self-awareness. In asking you to
reflect on the class, I am really asking you to constantly ask yourself if the class is
still engaging you in a meaningful way, and if it’s not, to change it so it does. If I
am doing something to disengage you, I want you to recognize it and bring it to
my attention as soon as possible.
*Participassion*

- You’ve got to *love* what you *do*. If you’re not enjoying this class, you will not be enjoying your work. PLEASE let me know if you cease to be engaged and interested in the course material and we will make the necessary changes.

**A Note on Grades and Punishment/Reward**

I will state outright that I do not care much for grades. I consider them tools for the control and modification of behavior, or the reward of subjugation and appeasement. In my honest opinion, these have no place in the educational process, and serve only to distract us from the pursuit of knowledge.

However, that does not change the fact that grades will be given for work completed in this class. I understand that the quantification of quality or value is subjective, and can be frustrating and disempowering. (Who am I to judge the products of your intellectual labors? Who am I to assess your performance and growth as an individual?)

In line with the philosophy and purpose of this class, we will take a democratic approach to the grading process:

1. **Facilitator evaluations**
   a. I will keep a journal of each class and provide regular (once a month – more frequently upon request) individualized feedback on holistic course performance (written work, participation in discussions, engagement in/outside the classroom)
   b. To ensure fairness in the grading process, all papers should be submitted WITH BANNER #’s, rather than names.
   c. Dr. Longo and I will collaborate to determine finalized grades. Any concerns about the grading process should be brought up with me first and foremost. If we cannot resolve it in personal conversation, the issue will be taken up with Nick, who has final say in the matter.

2. **Personal assessment**
   a. On all major assignments, you will be asked to complete a personal evaluation of your work. This is your opportunity to give an artist’s statement or rationale. Here, you will discuss your writing/inquiry process, the existential questions you sought to answer or address, any difficulties or concerns you had in the process, and justify your work in light of this reflection. These will be taken into consideration in the determination of final grades.
   b. You will also be asked to provide regular (as often as every week) feedback about the class, reflecting on your role in the class and evaluating my work as a facilitator. Please take these seriously as I will use these to inform my own practice as a teacher.

3. **Peer evaluations/feedback**
   a. Because our classes will be largely discussion-based, your contributions to class not only matter to me as a facilitator, but to your peers as co-facilitators. Thus, we will conduct regular evaluations of each other’s performances in class, and these will be taken into consideration in the grading process.
b. For larger projects in which we present our work to the class, we will also conduct peer evaluations, in which your peers assess your grasp of course content.

Finally, I urge you to think of your performance and assessment in the class not in terms of the work you need to do in order to get the grade you want, but in terms of what you need to do to get the most out of your experience in this class as a whole. I encourage you to think critically and introspectively about what you want from your experiences in the class, and urge you to go about your work in a way that makes it meaningful to you. If you can claim your work for yourself and act on it accordingly, the grade will be an additional benefit, but certainly not the focus of your efforts.

Furthermore, learning is a process, and I will determine grades accordingly. That is, I will not place more weight on certain papers over others, nor will your grade in the class depend primarily on your final project. Rather, I will assess your performance in terms of your growth in the class. If you can evidence a process of growth and reflection, your grade will come to reflect that.

Assignments and Work

Prepare to do lots of reading, writing, and discussing, as these are part of a process of reflection and engagement with theory that is necessary before we can embark on informed practice. Prepare as well to do work outside of the classroom as we explore different social spaces, and our places and roles therein.

We have a lot of material to cover in this course, but I will do my best to be reasonable in assigning readings and assignments. That said, here are the projects and assignments I have in mind for the class. These are, of course, subject to change.

1. Statement of Purpose/Intent (DUE: ________________)

I want you to think of yourselves as agents of social change, each of you an organization or movement waiting to be built up. Write a mission statement for yourself as an activist/student/citizen/etc. What is your hope for change? What do you plan to do to achieve that change? What do you wish to accomplish through your actions? How do you see this class as aiding or facilitating your ongoing work?

As activists, we use “our stories” to engage others and explain our actions. You should use this opportunity to write your story as a moment of empowerment, to mark your entry into a radical posture, or to claim your activism. What is your story of engagement? Why do you do the work that you do? I want you to look deep and reflect on the particular experiences and beliefs that brought you to this particular moment. What causes you to act on something you see? (These responses will inform the course of our work in the class.)

These should be 3-4 pages in length, and will not require formal citations (unless you find them helpful in creating your statement).

2. Educational Autobiography (DUE: ________________)

This is a chance to reflect on your educational experiences and examine them through a theoretical lens. I want you to examine specific instances in your education, moments of empowerment and disempowerment, realization and disillusionment, agency
and resistance. Deconstruct these experiences: what made them disempowering/etc.? Can you locate the source of the problem in each situation? That is, where was the power, if not in your hands? How was this power used? What would have made these situations better? Alternatively, what worked? What was empowering or significant? Compare and contrast your positive and negative experiences. Try to link these back to the structures and methods of the educational system.

5-7 pages in length.

3. Theory/Action Journal (ONGOING)

I would like you to keep a journal in which you write and reflect daily/weekly about the theories and philosophies we examine in class. How are these ideas useful to developing a philosophy on education and praxis? How are they limited in scope? What criticisms might you have? How does the theory inspire/empower you to act, how do they affect your daily actions and activities? How will you use these theories to inform your practice?

These will be turned in weekly, either on Blackboard or in person, but you can (and probably should) write on a daily basis. These needn’t be polished pieces of formal writing. In fact, I expect you to use personal voice, to occasionally draw or map out ideas, to include many chunks or “nuggets” of thought, rather than cohesive paragraphs. Be as creative and/or non-linear in your reflection as you want, as long as you demonstrate engagement with the texts.

Approx. 500 words per entry. You will have 12 opportunities to write journal entries. Because of the workload expected for this class, I will only require you to submit 10 entries in total. You may choose, however, to do all 12 to help your grade.

4. Class Facilitation/Presentation (DUE: ____________)

I believe we all bring meaningful experiences and ideas to the table; no one idea is more important or acceptable than another. The idea of authority in the classroom is inimical to democracy and dialog, and for this reason, we will avoid reading from “the canon,” and will instead develop our own curriculum based on your interests and your own reading. In line with the democratic nature of the class, you will be asked to facilitate discussion on an article/book excerpt of your choice. This is your opportunity to “be the expert,” to go outside of the parameters of the assigned reading list and bring in something new. This should be a piece of writing that inspires or informs your activism, and should be something in addition to what’s already on the syllabus. Maybe it’s a piece of writing that addresses an important complexity of activism or community work that the existing syllabus failed to include. Or, it could be something that takes the ideas of those we’ve already read and synthesizes them or expounds on them in a new way.

Everyone will choose one class to facilitate. You are responsible for scheduling a meeting with me to discuss your choice of writing AT LEAST ONE WEEK before your chosen presentation date. At our one-on-one meeting, you will provide me with a copy of your chosen work so I can read and approve it. After your article has been approved, we will post the selections to Blackboard for the class to read in preparation for your presentation day. On the day of the presentation itself, you will be expected to prepare these things as part of your facilitation:

1) **Handouts for the class.** These will include important quotes pulled from the body of the text on which you are presenting. You should also provide some background information on the author, a short paragraph explaining why you
chose this particular piece, and some topic/theme suggestions for discussion. Facilitator name and date should be at the top of the handout. Please bring enough copies for everyone, or send a copy to me by noon on the day of your presentation so I can make copies for you.

2) **An analysis** connecting your chosen piece with the other readings from class, and with your work in the community. Your paper should explore theory and course themes, and should position your reading in conversation with the other readings from class. You should conclude your paper explaining how you will apply theory towards informing your work outside of the classroom. Papers should be 3-5 pages in length.

5. **Action Plan and Rationale (Final Project, DUE: _______________ )**

Organize/coordinate an activity or event that synthesizes our studies in theory with a deliberate action or activity, a critical intervention in an established social space. These needn’t be political, and can take any form you wish, such as (but not limited to) a protest, forum or debate, performance or art installation, or a flyer/literature campaign. This should represent a critical re-imagination or appropriation of a daily activity in a way that generates critical dialog and re-assessment of social convention. This will consist of both the action itself, and a reflective piece in which you evaluate the activity using theory discussed in class, providing rationale for your action.

This project represents the culmination of our work as a class. We will plan these throughout the semester and keep each other updated on our activities. For the final, you will turn in a portfolio of works:

1) **The project rationale**, in which you explain your intent, inception of the idea, and synthesize the relevant theory that informed your action. You should also evaluate your project as the praxis of these theories (5-7 pages).

2) **Documentation of action** (photos, interviews with participants, self-reflection, publications and/or press, flyers/literature, etc.)

3) **Presentation of project**. You will prepare a presentation of your action and the theory that informed it, to be shared with the class in the final 2 weeks of class. These presentations should last 15-20 minutes.

I also expect you to invite the class to participate in your actions. Class members should participate, collaborate, and attend, if possible.

**Tentative Readings**

Excerpts from the following texts, in no particular order:

*Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Paulo Freire
*Experience and Education*, John Dewey*
*The Long Haul*, Myles Horton*
“*Snare of Preparation, ”* Jane Addams
*Teaching to Transgress*, bell hooks
“*Unto the Last, ”* John Ruskin
“*On the Poverty of Student Life, ”* Situationist International
*On Learning and Social Change*, Michael Rossman
*The New Student Politics*, Sarah Long
*De-Schooling Society*, Ivan Illich
*An Aristocracy of Everyone*, Ben Barber
Dry Bones Rattling, Mark R. Warren
Punished by Rewards, Alfie Kohn
One-Dimensional Man, Herbert Marcuse
Society of the Spectacle, Guy Debord
The Politics of Everyday Life, Paul Ginsborg
Excerpts from Prison Notebooks, Antonio Gramsci
Articles from Keeping the Promise, C.P. Gause and Dennis Carlson (eds)
+ Works by Ira Shor, Peter McLaren, and Henry Giroux

(*These are the only texts you are required to purchase for the class)

A Note on the Syllabus

I have intentionally left the majority of the syllabus open for discussion. This is a skeleton that we can flesh out together. I have many ideas and hopes for this class, and I expect you to as well. These will be given equal weight in determining our work and projects as a class. If you have a concern regarding the course load or content, you are welcome and encouraged to bring it up for discussion with the rest of the class.

I understand that learning is a process, and will make every effort to respect the class’s needs for flexibility and adjustment. At the same time, we have a considerable amount of content to cover in a very limited amount of time. What follows is an idea of what I expect us to cover per week.

Schedule of Activities and Assignments

*All assignments are due the day of.

**All readings will be made available via Blackboard under Course Documents, unless otherwise noted. Most readings are available online and the link has been provided.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>In-Class</th>
<th>Work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1/16</td>
<td>Introduction of course and overview of syllabus, ground rules and goals for class.</td>
<td>Bring stories of dis/empowerment to share in class. Bring list of expectations and goals for the class to turn in. Read “The School as Social Center” by John Dewey (pp. 373-383 in Addresses and Proceedings of the National Education Association – check BB for pdf – the reading begins on p.386 of the pdf).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/23</td>
<td>Discussion of the role of experience in education. Definition of terms: democracy, education, empowerment, community, informal vs. formal education.</td>
<td>Read Experience and Education, chapters 1-3 and “Key Words” excerpt from The Politics of Everyday Life (handout). Begin theory/action journals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/30</td>
<td>“Value” in the education system and the importance of “leading from where you are.” Formal vs. informal education. Community, society and education.</td>
<td>Read Introduction – Chapter 6 of The Long Haul. Due: Statement of Purpose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Assignment</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/6</td>
<td>Intro to critical pedagogy.</td>
<td>Read <em>Pedagogy of the Oppressed</em>, chapters 1-3 (<a href="http://www.marxists.org/subject/education/freire/pedagogy/index.htm">http://www.marxists.org/subject/education/freire/pedagogy/index.htm</a>).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/13</td>
<td>Education for social change.</td>
<td>Chapter 5 of <em>We Make the Road by Walking</em> (check BB). Discuss class goals and project ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/27</td>
<td>Enacting an educational politics.</td>
<td>Read from <em>On Learning and Social Change</em> OR <em>Theory and Resistance in Education: A Pedagogy for the Opposition</em>. Also read Monique Wittig’s “Trojan Horse.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/19</td>
<td>SPRING BREAK</td>
<td>HAVE FUN!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/26</td>
<td></td>
<td>Presentation 1: Presentation 2:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Session</td>
<td>Activities</td>
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<tr>
<td>4/2</td>
<td></td>
<td>Begin class facilitations. Presentation 1: Presentation 2:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/9</td>
<td></td>
<td>Presentation 1: Presentation 2:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/16</td>
<td></td>
<td>Presentation 1: Presentation 2: Wrap up class facilitations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/23</td>
<td>Education for social change.</td>
<td>Draft a statement of educational purpose as a class for publication. Bind copies of class projects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/30</td>
<td>Reclaiming education.</td>
<td>Begin final project presentations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/5-9</td>
<td>FINALS</td>
<td>Wrap up project presentations, do final evaluations.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX J

THE CONSTITUTION MANIFESTO OF DEMOCRATIC EDUCATION

April 23, 2008

Co-authors:
Susan Dirr, Stephanie Lee, Megan Miller, Laura Runyan, Will Runyan, Robert Winslow

The situation:

Grading systems are inherently oppressive and inimical to democratic education.

Standardized tests should not be the basis of advancement in democratic education.

We must be aware that coercion can be subtle and participation can be tyrannical.

The content and process of education must be relevant and applicable to our communities.

In order to realize a democratic education, we must acknowledge that:

We should be accountable to each other and not to imposed standards.

Authority structures must be constantly challenged.

We have the right to determine the course and purpose of our education.

We have the right to learn about democratic education.

Decisions will be made collectively and with the equal participation of all.

Education must be empowering, not disempowering.

Democratic education must be multicultural and egalitarian.

Democratic education must include the study of non-democratic structures.

Democratic education must empower us to create positive change in our communities.

Democratic education requires an awareness of power relationships in society.

Democratic education is a lifelong collaborative process, NOT a commodity, service, or competition.
Democratic education should recognize underlying, systematic causes of oppression.

Democratic education should make us agents of change, not passive receptacles of ideology.

Democratic education should be self-replicating.

Democratic education cannot coexist with slavery, in any form.

Education should be fun! (and not spiteful)

Democratic education should be accessible and available to all people.

**How to cultivate democratic education:**

Use dialogue.

Use progressive grassroots activism.

Learn in the context of addressing local problems.

Connect theory to action through praxis.