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Schooling in America: how neoliberal reform efforts purposefully undermine humanist and critical pedagogies in public schools

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To cite this version:

Nicole Chickering. Schooling in America: how neoliberal reform efforts purposefully undermine humanist and critical pedagogies in public schools. Literature. 2016. dumas-01393461

HAL Id: dumas-01393461

https://dumas.ccsd.cnrs.fr/dumas-01393461

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Schooling in America:

How Neoliberal Reform Efforts Purposefully Undermine Humanist and Critical Pedagogies in Public Schools

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Under the direction of Francis Feeley

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Département de Langues, littératures et civilisations étrangères et régionales

Université Stendhal - Grenoble Alpes

Master 2 Thesis - 2015-2016

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Abstract

Public schools are a principal force in the creation of a fabricated presentation of a "melting pot" of cultures to create the "American" culture. Stories of immigration and the "melting pot" are told in lessons and all children find themselves in public schools. This gives the impression that diversity is valued and all Americans are given the same opportunities for "success" when, in fact, this is not the case. Most importantly in the last decades public schools have been used preeminently to cultivate an efficient workforce. After World War II, much advancement had been made in the fight for equitable education, and more opportunities were readied; however, positive prospects for the evolution of a political economy for the people through schooling have waned. Neoliberal educational reform policies have instead brought only further advantages for the few, rather than the majority, since the 1970s. Blame and fault have been assigned exclusively to those who do not succeed, even though the system has been set up to work against the vast majority of Americans.

The consequences of the rise of neoliberal politics have been fatal for the social, political, and economic structures of the United States and for positive educational reforms. The results of neoliberal policies have been unfavorable for the majority of citizens. A central question to be addressed in this study is not only how to begin to eradicate neoliberal policies from American public schools, but also how we can develop social democracies that prioritize collective interests over individual ambitions and nurture a global environment ready for opposition. To combat looming dangers on the horizon that materializes from these damaging effects of accusative individualism and self-centered ways of thinking which are now taught in an increasing number of American schools.

Dedications

Writing a memoire takes a lot of support. Having a network of people to talk with and explore diverse approaches has allowed me to better understand different ways of seeing education. Many of these conversations have influenced and changed my outlook. Being able to talk about these issues is one of the first steps to making changes to American public education.

As the director of my research this year, Professor Francis Feeley provided me with essential texts and insights into ways in which teachers can begin to assist students in challenging traditional methods of pedagogy. Several of our conversations gave me a better understanding of the possible roles of public education in the United States. Professor Feeley's guidance provided me with support and direction to develop ideas that challenged conventional approaches to educational policy and examined the many purposes for learning.

I also appreciate the support of the faculty and staff at the University of Grenoble Stendhal who assisted me throughout my research. Everyone I have met has been incredibly helpful. Finally, I would like to give a special thanks to Jacques Boutet at the University Library, who assisted me with my research, and the secretariat, Isabelle Mazzilli, who always had responses for my questions.

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Introduction:
Living In A Schooled Society

Puritan and traditionalists values have shaped many public institutions in the United States including schools. As early as the Colonial Period, schools were established by the political elite for the benefit of colonial society These Anglo-Saxon ideas continued to develop after independence, and following the Civil War, the development of public educational institutions took off, and has been a massive undertaking in the United States ever since. The passage of the Morrill Act in 1862 by Abraham Lincoln gave states access to federally controlled lands for the development and endowment of "land-grant" colleges. These state run institutions of education established the importance of democratizing higher learning and expanding meritocratic opportunities through public institutions of education.[1] The Morrill Act founded sixty-nine universities across the United States and marked the beginning of the development of universal, free, secular education in America.

Beginning in the mid-19th Century, providing citizens with public schools has been a principal force for unifying the United States and cultivating an efficient workforce. After the events of World War II, global civilization was shaken. Efforts were taken to try to avoid more tragedy. As the victors came together to form international organizations, such as the United Nations (UN), the importance of education was recognized as being an essential part of the plan for world peace. The ideas shared in 1948 by the UN in Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights included ideas about educational access, opportunity, and freedom. It stated that educational institutions would foster peace, democracy, economic growth, health benefits, and ultimately work to reduce poverty.

> Education is a right, like the right to have proper food or a roof over your head... Everyone has the right to education. Education is not only a right but a passport to human development. It opens doors and expands opportunities and freedoms. It contributes to fostering peace, democracy and economic growth as well as improving health and reducing poverty. The ultimate aim of Education for All (EFA) is sustainable development.[2]

When recognized as a basic human right, education creates the possibility for entire populations to participate fully in the cultural, economical, and political development of a society. Undoubtedly, there are many personal advantages to having a

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1 Michigan State University. (n.d.). *The Nation's Pioneer Land-Grant University*. Retrieved January 8, 2016, from msu.edu: https://msu.edu/morrill-celebration/history.html

2 United Nations. (n.d.). *Education for All (EFA)*. Retrieved March 10, 2016, from un.org: http://www.un.org/en/globalissues/briefingpapers/efa/

well-educated public. The "privilege" of being able to go to school and learn has been offered to a few of the members of a small elite since the earliest civilizations. In modern times, it has become one of the cornerstones for building democratic forms of government. Public institutions such as schools were created to ensure the development of different kinds of cultural, social, and human capital as well as to provide profitable investment opportunities in a "stable" capitalist environment. The roles of the economy and the preconditions for a productive workforce within the economy have greatly influenced the history of public schooling. Often the development and public investment in education, particularly in the more affluent regions of the United States, have promoted positive social changes. However, since the 1970s, there has been a steadily growing movement working to reverse much of the progress that had been made in the preceding decades, during what has been called the "Golden Age" of capitalism from 1945 to 1973. The 1970s saw a steady decline in manufacturing industries in many developed countries, including in the United States.

Several critical aspects of the 1970s impacted American society. Most notably the neoliberal policies that started to gain traction during this decade. The spread of neoliberalism since has come to shape American's perceptions about government and the role of government in economic matters. Excessive use of neoliberal policies in subsequent decades has reduced restrictions, decreased regulations, and exploited the spirit of individualism and responsibility for profit. Neoliberalism works to privatize social structures by cutting social spending, deregulating markets, breaking up unions, and destroying the collective consciousness. The rise of neoliberal politics has brought a different set of rules to the market to allow for total freedom and movement of capital goods and services. The fallacy that unregulated markets can benefit everyone and increase economic growth is revealed through soaring profits, increasing greed, and mounting poverty.

The consequences of the rise of neoliberal politics have been fatal for the social, political, and economic structures of the United States and for positive educational reforms. The results of neoliberal policies have been unfavorable for the majority of citizens, not only in the United States, but also for people beyond our country's boarders. This perspective has become increasingly difficult to remove since it dominates global business markets through multinational corporations. While advocating for the abolishment of government intervention in economic matters, neolib-

erals then try to make all matters economic. This is a natural law for neoliberalism. By allowing private investors unfettered access to an open and free market, only profit and individual gains are sought, no matter what the social damage or cost. A central question to be addressed is not only how to begin to eradicate neoliberal policies from American public schools, but also how we can develop social democracies that prioritize the collective over the individual and nurture a raising of worldwide consciousness.[3]

Political, social, and economic movements have transformed the ways in which societies are structured. Neoliberalism is the most recent movement that has had significant impacts on public schools through educational reforms. Historical movements, like the second Industrial Revolution of the 19th century, created political and economical changes in organizing and structuring social systems. Likewise the current era of digital technology and globalization constitutes a shockwave of change in its path. As industry expanded with new machinery and rapid urbanization, in the mid-19th century, American schools transformed in response. Dramatic economic and social changes followed the growth of manufacturing and urbanization. This contributed to the expansion and development of public education during this time and "*as income grew and the economy became more complex, people attached greater value to schooling. Industry provided an important impetus to the growing school system*".[4] This time of profound transformation saw many important changes in the nation's educational system. The industrial growth increased immigration, and institutions were designed to support the formation of new Americans. Indoctrinating individuals to American national values was an important role public schools were created to fulfill. Traditional white, Protestant, Anglo-Saxon values were the norm to impart to the general public. In this way a non-traditional labor supply could be prepared in advance to work for the dominating culture. Public schools were a critical component in fulfilling this economic goal. Historical evidence reveals ways in which public education could be used to advance efforts for the development of a different society, but many of these approaches for education and learning continue to be superseded by the drive for profit and economic growth.

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[3] CorpWatch. (n.d.). *What is Neoliberalism?* Retrieved March 16, 2016, from corpwatch.org: www.corpwatch.org/article.php?id=376

[4] J. L. Rury. (2016). *Education and Social Change. Contours in the History of American Schooling* (Fifth ed.). New York: Routledge, p 49

Since the 1970s, globalization has created greater economic inter-dependency through increasing international trade, technological developments, global transportation, and growing communication. The division of labor has been reproduced on a worldwide scale. In this new global economy, with an international proletariat, nation states are playing secondary roles in the production of goods and services. The new power of transnational corporations roles has required greater specialization as fewer jobs demand newly skilled workers.[5] Globalization has given rise to a worldwide free market of competition, but at the same time the introduction of new technology has reduced the need for skilled labor.

The response to the economic crises in the United States in the 1970s was dramatically different than the reaction of the American government during the Great Depression in the1930s and the "Golden Age" of Capitalist America. Coincidently, during this time of economic growth, there was also greater industrial regulation, social welfare spending, and unions. Those decades of growth were also a time of government led interventions and regulations. This runs contrary to neoclassical capitalist theories promoting the belief that instability in the economic system can be traced to government interventions in the market, rather than offering an analysis of an inherently volatile market itself. In response to the United State's economic decline during the Great Depression of the 1930s, policies were created that altered the framework of capitalism, and along with it political democratic components. The New Deal created a larger role for government and increased the power of labor unions. Crisis brought about a period of regulated capitalism with government interventions.

Government regulation worked in conjunction with free markets to establish limits and find balance for the general public good rather than the benefit of a few. These government interventions were in response to the decades leading up to the stock market crash of 1929, when wealth had become concentrated within small groups of industrialists and bankers. The prospect of class warfare grew, and the American government reacted to prevent unregulated markets, the accumulation of huge fortunes, the growth of monopolies, and unchecked greed. These government interventions provided vulnerable citizens with necessary help during a time of need, and average citizens still reap the benefits of those policies today. The security the

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[5] J. L. Rury. (2016). Education and Social Change. Contours in the History of American Schooling (Fifth ed.). New York: Routledge, p 6

government provided during that turbulent time in American history established a foundation for a more equitable American society; however, progress has been delayed since the 1970s.[6]

These structural changes led to a period of significant growth for the United States; however, in the 1970s the response to economic crises differed radically from that of the 1930s. American imperialism faced a series of setbacks, such as military defeat in the Vietnam War, the rise of The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Companies (OPEC) in 1973, and the loss of economic dominance and power to international competitors. The response to these setbacks was a new economic policy that proclaimed itself hostile to government intervention, to social welfare programs, and to labor organizations. It was a part of a broader shift to the right in American politics.[7] These economic policies had a significant impact on levels of support and funding for various American public institutions like public schools.

Another significant development of the 1970s was the critical mobilization of private investors. Through the creation and financing of public policy organizations and 'Think tanks', neoliberals began to develop and push conservative policy agendas forward on a larger scale. The Hoover Institution, American Enterprise Institute, the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), and the Heritage Foundation were all created and financed by large capitalist interests during this decade. The efforts to establish institutions like these, at local and national levels, were in order to shape and support long-term corporate reform agendas to benefit capitalist interests exclusively. The shortsighted policies have produced only profitable short-term benefits for a few, but they have been damaging to the evolution of American social democracy.

The mission of these organizations is to increase the size and scale of their lobbying efforts to form American policy in ways that benefit capitalist interests. The growth of these groups in the 1970s produced greater momentum for the eradication of government and any sort of regulation. This has resulted in fewer government interventions and less oversight of the free market. This laissez-faire policy, free of many constraints or other limitations imposed by the government, has wrecked havoc

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6 J. L. Rury. (2016). Education and Social Change. Contours in the History of American Schooling (Fifth ed.). New York: Routledge, p 123

7 A, Reuss. (2009). *What can the crisis of U.S. capitalism in the 1970s teach us about the current crisis and its possible outcomes?* Retrieved March 17, 2016, from dollarsandsense.org: http://www.dollarsandsense.org/archives/2009/1109reuss.html

on world financial markets and on various public institutions. Many former state-owned enterprises that have provided public goods and services in the past have either been eliminated or started to come under control of the free market economy. Neoliberal policies have played a large role in perpetuating increasing inequities within the United States and abroad.

As large corporations gained power, they sought to create various footholds. New major lobby groups, like the Business Roundtable in 1972, brought together the largest U.S. industrial companies, and by 1974, there were 150 members. The members included 90 of the largest 200 industrial companies in the United States. For decades leading up to the 1970s, large corporations were on the defensive as they faced a growing concern over the enforcement of a variety of environmental, labor, health, and consumer regulations. By the late 1970s, "*two major pieces of reform legislation, a labor-law reform proposal backed by the AFL-CIO and a bill to establish a consumer-protection agency, went down in defeat, largely due to the business mobilization against them*".[8] Facing stricter oversight and regulation in order to protect the environment and the public good, these private interest groups sought avenues through which they could use their power to begin to work on reshaping economic and political policy. Their efforts continue today.

Groups like these would come to have a major influence on public education. Their work continues to shape educational policies today. Through partnerships with wealthy foundations, they have no obligation to be transparent or democratic.[9] The policies these groups have come to support have greatly influenced American society and culture in the last 35 years. These groups have used their position of wealth, power, and privilege to shape public social structures to their advantage.

Rapid technical developments, growth of the world market, and the increased power in new international financial markets dramatically changed the way the global economy operated beginning in the 1970s. As the global market grew, the American economy struggled. Energy shortages brought with it a series of economic crises like, high inflation and elevated unemployment. In addition, the end of the Bretton Woods system in the early 1970s was the start of financial deregulation and coincid-

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8 A, Reuss. (2009). *What can the crisis of U.S. capitalism in the 1970s teach us about the current crisis and its possible outcomes?* Retrieved March 17, 2016, from dollarsandsense.org: http://www.dollarsandsense.org/archives/2009/1109reuss.html

9 D. W. Hursh. (2016). *The End of Public Schools. The Corporate Reform Agenda to Privatize Education.* New York: Routledge, p 6

ed with the rise of neoliberal policies in government. Consequently, the ideas, which have emerged from this steadily growing movement, have dramatically altered the vision and perception of roles performed by government and private enterprise. The arrival of neoliberal thinking has narrowed perspectives and has impacted the ways in which many envision society. Government regulation, taxation, and social interventions are now routinely blamed by pro-capitalist forces for the faltering American economy as an unwavering faith in free market principles and a resolute belief in individual choice consumes American culture. Conveniently, the American government has now become the scapegoat for all of the country's problems. Neoliberal principals now have a firm hold in the United States, which has lead to greater division and uncertainty for American society. Public institutions that once provided social support and served as a mechanism for building solidarity have been progressively weakened and challenged by neoliberal thinking.

Following the economic crises in the 1970s, the rapid expansion of privatization began in the 1980s. This development was a part of a global phenomenon that has shifted popular political power into the hands of corporate control. As John B. Goodman and Gary W. Loveman observed in their 1991 article in the *Harvard Business Review*, privatization is on the rise and is growing ever stronger. During the early 1990s, their research shared examples of governments handing over control of public goods and services to private enterprise.

> Throughout the world, governments are turning over to private managers control of everything from electrical utilities to prisons, from railroads to education. By the end of the 1980s, sales of state enterprises worldwide had reached a total of over $185 billion—with no signs of a slowdown. In 1990 alone, the world's governments sold off $25 billion in state-owned enterprises.[10]

Today, these examples have become commonplace. In the 1980s, the Reagan administration adopted tax policies that benefited investors, businesses, and entrepreneurs. As Corporate America benefited from increasing tax breaks, government struggled to raise revenue for public infrastructure and services. Tax legislation has continued to benefit private interest through both Republican and Democratic Presi-

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[10] J. B. Goodman & G. W. Loveman. (1991, November December). *Does Privatization Serve the Public Interest?* Retrieved March 24, 2016, from Harvard Business Review: https://hbr.org/1991/11/does-privatization-serve-the-public-interest

dencies. The debate of the privatization of public services is ongoing as corporations are working even more closely with government, and government has begun to adopt corporate models of operating. As more and more of the public sector, at the local, state, and federal levels, is privatized, public services and corporate interests have started to become indistinguishable.

Neoliberal propaganda has been used to weaken the structural framework and reputations of public institutions. The American public education system has been one of the targets at the center of this assault. Neoliberal reform efforts during the past few decades have cut public spending and have distributed funding unequally to American public schools. Undemocratic policies and underfunding have made it easier to denounce the quality of American public schools. The neoliberal reform movement employs inflated and condemning rhetoric to deliberately erode and undermine authentic efforts for equitable education. The intention of this type of discourse is to divert attention from the necessary role of government intervention to benefit society.

The goal of current neoliberal reformers is to outsource the pubic education system to private interests for commercialization and marketing, thus ultimately eliminating the American institution of public education. In a May 2015 newscast of Democracy Now, Amy Goodman and Juan Gonzalez interview Lisa Graves from the Center for Media and Democracy. The organization's recent report, *New Documents Show How Taxpayer Money Is Wasted by Charter Schools*, shows the neoliberal stance. Within the interview with Lisa Graves, she cites Milton Friedman's support for free market capitalism in public education. A video is shown of Friedman positing the need for the elimination of public schools. This is his solution for solving many of the problems, like those regarding segregation, plaguing the schooling of America. At a 2006 conference, he is recorded saying the public school system should be abolished. He pushes the issue of school taxation further by suggesting Americans should, "*eliminate all the taxes that pay for [public schools]. Then parents would have the money to pay for private schools*". [11] He instead advocates for "choice". Money for a child's education should be provided in the form of a voucher, so parents have individual "choice" and "control". These ideas are not only being

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[11] Democracy Now. (2015, May 8). *As Obama Admin Seeks More Funding for Charter Schools, Questions Raised over Billions Already Spent*. Retrieved February 16, 2016, from http://www.democracynow.org/2015/5/8/as_obama_admin_seeks_more_funding

vocalized by prominent figures on the Right, there are also many who share similar ideas on the Left.

Using the guise of educational "reforms," neoliberal efforts have come to dominate the landscape of public education in America and elsewhere. They have gained traction prominently in the United States. Public education is a powerful force that can be used to advance or impede different social, economic, and political agendas, and private enterprise is looking to shape a new future for education. If the recent educational reform efforts continue, they will ultimately break the public education system and worsen the injustices and inequities that are already so prevalent in American society.

In the United States, neoliberal reforms have transformed the learning environment for students and teachers in most school districts. In general, these so-called reforms have weakened the organization and structure of whole communities. As an educator over the past 10 years, I have experienced ideological and financial attack on American public education firsthand. This assault on public schools goes beyond individual students, teachers, and communities; it is an assault on American society. In my classroom, I witnessed the many contradictions of these educational reforms and felt the lasting damage they inflicted on students. These improvements are not about helping children or making America better; rather they are about making private profits for a few investors, by destroying unions, and inhibiting the advancement of a more equitable society. Using the free market economy as a justification for the destruction of American public schools is simply a convenient pretext for the elimination of a multitude of other social democratic ideas that have evolved with public education.

The intervention of private interests in public education has steadily grown along with the number of students enrolled in public schools. As education has become more accessible, student enrollment has increased, and as a result the required financial investment too.

> This pressure to provide access to American schools on a continually widening scale has necessitated an enormous and ever-increasing outpouring of public funds. In addition, the requirement that education at all levels should be open to all segments of the population – and not just the most privileged or even the most able – has exerted a profound effect on al aspects of the institutional structure… all in order to meet the educa-

tional problems raised by the sheer quantity and diversity of the pool of students.[12]

The challenges are evident but necessary for a properly functioning democratic society. As necessary funding for the expansion of public education has grown, so has private interest. The increased concentration of private investments in education is part of a broader framework for expanding neoliberal policies where government is molded around the needs of Corporate America. Corporate models of efficiency, competition, and reduced spending have increasingly become a common concern for American public schools. Using business models in public education is becoming more and more widespread; it has rapidly grown in the past 15 years.

Neoliberal educational reforms can be challenged and dissent normalized. First we must begin with some key questions to establish the direction forward. These questions will be explored throughout each of the following chapters and prospective answers will be shared more explicitly in the conclusion.

- How does an examination of the past connect us to a better future?
- What are the ways in which a humanist education, rather than schooling connected to economic and class interest, can be recognized as a basic right?
- What are the ways in which neoliberal policies are destroying public education in the United States?
- How can American educators challenge neoliberal ideology?
- In building a critical pedagogy, can American public education begin to address issues of class conflict and looming economic and environmental disasters?
- Can new demographics begin to challenge hegemonic powers and normalize dissent through a supportive counter discourse?
- Through the creation of possibility and a reimagining of public education, can all citizens be given the opportunity to participate fully in the cultural, economical, and political developments of a future American society?

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[12] D. F. Labaree. (1999). How to Succeed in School without Really Learning . The Credentials Race in American Education (New (5 May 1999) ed.). New Haven: Yale University Press, p 22

In critically approaching this topic from the beginning, chapter one will review the central purposes for adopting a system of public education in the United States. In addition, different sources of capital will be examined along with their roles in shaping American society and public schools. Examining the ways in which these aspects contribute to the construction of the educational system situates the research within a framework in order to reference the motivations of the various participants and better understand the appeal for investment. The second chapter provides an overview of the evolution of education in conjunction with societal progression. The final section of chapter two begins to reveal the effects of recent economic and educational reforms. An analysis of the destabilizing impacts of major neoliberal reforms since the 1970s are studied in greater depth in chapter three to discover how they are harmful for future generations. In chapter four, viable solutions for regaining public control are explored to generate alternative approaches. The conclusion then explores how lessons from the past connect to possible approaches for the future and ways in which students, educators, parents, and all Americans can begin to re-envision public education in the United States.

Chapter I:
The Purpose of Education:
An Investigation of Different Perspectives

I.1 Introduction

The current structure and organization of American pubic schools has at times been haphazardly arranged and at others deliberately designed and planned for a variety of purposes and motivations. Significant changes and developments to public schools have coincided with the economic interests of the era. The role of education in America has been and continues to be greatly impacted by economic developments, and in return there is much evidence that public schools have shaped America's growth too. The evolution of America's political economy and the development of American pubic schools are reflective of one another. Together they are embroiled in an ongoing recursive process of social evolution and progression.

The advancement of public education in the United States has been rooted in the economic development of America. The progression of this relationship starts in the colonial era, when the 'New World' was comprised of scattered settlements. For over two centuries, America was a rural agrarian society. In the 19th century, the United States underwent rapid territorial expansion. By financing the development of infrastructure and transportation, manufacturing increased. Soon immigrants were arriving and America's population exploded.

Eventually these and other changes contributed in the making of an urban America, ready to participate in the post-industrial global village of modern society. Through each time period, people began to attach additional value to schooling, formalized training, and credentials. Public schools came to be seen as an essential component for modern societies. The benefits of public education became evident as school has increasingly become a critical factor for economic success.

To improve the existing social structures of public schools, it is essential to analyze the functions of education from a historical perspective to better understand ways in which the process of learning and the role of schools are currently perceived. Throughout the history of education there have been different groups of people interested in making reforms for a variety of reasons. Those in the community most directly affected by the state of America's public schools include students, parents, and teachers; however, there are many others who have shown an interest in schooling. Politicians and businesses have put school reform at the forefront of their agendas too.

The popularity of educational the most recent reforms are driven only by the current global political economy. Economic interests exclusively shape American public education to purposefully benefit the needs of Corporate America.

Funding is one of the core issues for American public education. When we follow the money, different interests' viewpoints on the purpose of education are clarified. It is one of the sources for perpetuating divisions and inequities; therefore, investigating public education means following the money to determine reasons for the flow of funding and evaluate the effectiveness of redirecting expenditures. The essential question that must be asked is who benefits? Have recent reforms brought the intended consequences? Have they created a public education system, which functions in the way the American public intended public schools to function? In general do the educational expectations of private investors coincide with the educational expectations the American public has for teaching our children? If current reforms are not meeting public expectations, then they must be re-evaluated and transformed to ensure others are not profiting at the expensive of the public good.

Education is a pubic service that receives heavy public funding. It is important to know where the money is going and to ask questions to determine the intentions and motivations of those who will be providing the service. The money should be well spent since it is a considerable investment in the future of the United States. Funding for public schools has evolved in coordination with movements, the politics of the time, and the economy.

Americans have collectively decided to invest in education. What are the goals of public school for our children? What purpose do those goals serve for our society? Which educational reforms support those goals? What is the basis for the proposed reforms? Which reforms appeal to select interest groups? What other aspects of American society are in turn influenced by the investment?

I.2 The Critical Role of Capital on Educational Goals

Schools have adapted to social conditions throughout time. As modern society has become more complex so has the structure of public schools and the viewpoints people have about education. Public schools have become an integral part of our culture. They help teach new ideas and shape the attitudes of future generations. Typically the dominant culture has dictated the prevailing traditions of public institutions;

therefore, public schools have greatly contributed to the construction of dominant white and Protestant American customs of behavior and character. The expectation has been for schools to reinforce and strengthen these dominant modes of culture, which undermines authentic teaching and learning.

Public schooling has become a major part of the collective experience for Americans. The United States has undergone different cultural transformations. The role of school is linked to these changes. Major issues in the history of American education have arisen out of the process of cultural transformation. The recent reforms in American public schools are in response to an ongoing cultural revolution in the United States today. America's demographics are changing, therefore, so must the public institutions serving a diversity of cultures gaining numeric power. Public schools must begin to examine ways in which they reproduce existing social, political, and economic structures and withhold opportunity from others, as well as ways in which they can encourage societal transformation.

When looking at the history of public education, Professor Rury stresses the importance of examining various forms of capital. In his book, *Education and Social Change*, he outlines cultural, social, human capital as three important forms of capital related to school.[13] All three of these elements can be used in varying degrees for social advancement and mobility. These forms of capital are important to take into consideration when examining ways in which they can influence individual perspectives on the role and function of public schools.

Cultural capital is comprised of the behaviors, values, and attitudes.[14] Some types of cultural capital are more rewarded than others. Cultural capital can be a certain way of speaking, dressing, or conducting oneself. The cultural capital of a country usually aligns with that of the dominant culture. In return other types of culture tend to be less appreciated or even seen as inferior. This depends on the kind of cultural capital a particular society decides to value. Cultural capital, therefore, is closely linked to social status and inequality. These are two critical elements, central to challenges facing America's public schools.

Those who have access to the dominant cultural capital are more likely to understand how traditional institutions function since they have the critical cultural

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[13] J. L. Rury. (2016). Education and Social Change. Contours in the History of American Schooling (Fifth ed.). New York: Routledge, p 7

[14] Ibid., p 7

knowledge and understanding needed to know how to appropriately navigate these areas led by the dominant culture. This access grants some citizens with greater power and control for movement within the institutions controlled by the dominant culture. Their participation within the prevailing institutions provides social benefits in return. Their inclusion motivates behaviors of assimilation and results in the exclusion of others.

Those who lack the dominant cultural capital miss out on substantial advantages. Public schools have grown in importance since they can assist people in the fulfillment of a number of social benefits. The belief is that the dominant cultural capital becomes accessible through a public education system built on meritocratic recognition and the acquisition of credentials, which will in turn provide more opportunities. There is an underlying assumption within the structuring of public schools that the dominant cultural capital is superior. The system has worked well for the privileged few, but no so well for the vast majority of Americans who are not recognized as being a part of the dominant culture. Understanding how public schools could be designed to support a more multicultural society, that is less reliant on dominant cultural capital, is one of the challenges in reworking the American public education system.

Social capital relates to the advantages that arise from individuals' relationships.[15] These relationships are a valuable asset. They perpetuate social benefits. Social capital is a resource that can be used to overcome numerous disadvantages, if it is available. The advantages of social capital correspond with many of the aspects of cultural capital. Social capital and cultural capital are helpful concepts to better understand the success of particular groups within a given society. The dominant cultural capital manifests itself in different reform efforts for education. Cultural capital and social capital are closely connected to the development of human capital.

Having access to social and cultural capital gives people opportunities to acquire human capital through school or other types of formal training. Human capital is the skills, knowledge, and understanding that can make some people more economically productive than others.[16] This means that human capital has become an increasingly critical component for participation in the modern economy. More jobs

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[15] J. L. Rury. (2016). Education and Social Change. Contours in the History of American Schooling (Fifth ed.). New York: Routledge, p 8

[16] Ibid., p 9

demand specialized skills for the global and technical age to increase productivity and profit. Schools are critical in providing access to human capital, but oftentimes it is the cultural and the social capital that are most helpful for achieving success in school.

Educational attainment is often a result of having access to all of these forms of capital. These notions of capital are closely tied to many of our perceived goals for the public education system. Schooling, rather than education, has come to play an important role in modern American culture. Recent reforms have raised particular functions of education, ones that push for greater conformity and deny diversity.

The establishment of properly functioning public schools has become increasingly important, as the world has become more technologically advanced. Particular skills and knowledge are economically valuable for employers, so schooling has become a substantial part of the perceived public solution for creating social mobility and equal opportunity. When examining who benefits from the different purposes of education, there are particular models and approaches that align with meeting the public good.

Other approaches view education as a private good, just as any other consumer product. As we examine different perspectives and viewpoints of the purpose in providing a public education for all Americans, we must ask: are the models in place truly appropriate for educational institutions? Can they truly produce more skilled and knowledgeable citizens? Will they really strengthen community networks nationally and internationally? And most importantly do they contribute to building a just and equitable society for the future? The comparison between divergent perspectives offers insight into which model is best for an effective American democracy.

Throughout the development of the modern public education system, the values and benefits public schools bring to American society have been thoroughly examined. Three perspectives on the goal of public education are outlined by education professor David Labaree in his article, *Public Goods, Private Goods: The American Struggle Over Educational Goal.*[17] Labaree divides the goal into three different perspectives: democratic equality, social efficiency, and social mobility. Institutions, like public schools, have historically facilitated in the preservation of the dominant

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[17] D. F. Labaree. (1997). Public Goods, Private Goods: The American Struggle over Educational Goals. *American Educational Research Journal , 34* (1), p 41-43

cultural perspective. One's viewpoint for the goal of public education is dependent on one's place within the class structure of American society.

Each goal depends on an individual's role within American society. According to Labaree, one's perception of the purpose of supporting public education changes whether viewing learning through the lens of a citizen, taxpayer, or consumer.[18] In the more recent decades the lens of Corporate America has had a strong influence on shaping the public discourse and rhetoric of education; therefore, it is of primary importance to take this viewpoint into perspective as well.

I.3 Preparing American Citizens for Participation

For some, public schools have come to be seen as an essential component of a fully informed, democratic society. In tracing the history of America's schools, a framework is developed to analyze various ways they have created opportunities for some while severely limiting prospects for others. Throughout time there have been a range of approaches for delivering, improving, and spreading this increasingly essential commodity. By examining methods used to modify, improve, constrain, or expand ideas of public education, we are better able to explore ways in which school has the potential to influence a new generation for the creation of a different political economy for a more progressive future.

Americans must go to the voting booths fully informed with the power of collective agency and individual liberty, to make deliberate changes to social and economic policy using the democratic process. The fundamental strain posed by Professor Labaree, is "*at the core of any liberal democratic society, the tension between democratic politics (public rights) and capitalistic markets (private rights), between majority control and individual liberty, between political equality and social inequality*".[19] Determining a limit between these areas helps citizens determine where and how political equality is undermined when social inequality has spiraled out of control. Educating Americans for their individual political responsibility is not the goal of current reforms. These reforms are focused on schooling American society to respond to solely to the needs of the economy rather than collective economic inter-

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[18] D. F. Labaree. (1997). Public Goods, Private Goods: The American Struggle over Educational Goals. *American Educational Research Journal , 34* (1), p 41-43

[19] Ibid.p 42

ests or for the joy of learning. Promoting effective citizenship and relative equality through preparation of political participation should be the central role of education, and this is rooted in the goal of democratic equality for public schools.

As David Labaree argues, "*political equality and social inequality simply do not mix easily, and institutions that arise from efforts to pursue both of these goals reflect this continuing tension… education has come to be defined as an arena that simultaneously promotes equality and adapts to inequality*".[20] This creates unrest due to political ideals of equality and the economic realities dictated and controlled by Corporate America. If the common interest for the public good is focused on the establishment of institutions that prepare Americans for full participation, then current reforms are not delivering the positive educational outcomes intended for the goal of democratic equality and much of the funding that is being spent on the implementation of these reforms is being misused.

The goal for democratic equality is also related to liberal educational humanism. This educational philosophy forces a confrontation with the relationship of power and knowledge. Humanist educational theories of John Dewey, Antonio Gramsci, and Paolo Freire require educators to engage with students in institutions that are focused on creating an ongoing dialogue focused on positive and critical engagement. Collectively, their theories present alternative approaches to those currently dominating the domain of public education.

At the start of the 20th century, progressive theories presented by John Dewey challenged schools to move education beyond job training. Sociologist Stanley Aronowitz and educator Henry Giroux explain the rethinking of educational reforms in their book *Education Under Siege: The Conservative, Liberal, and Radical Debate Over Schooling.*[21] They claim the humanist educational theories advocated by John Dewey*:*

> Held to Jefferson's belief that an informed citizenry was the best assurance that democracy would not denigrate into dictatorship or authoritarian regimes… For Dewey, the aim of education is to help the student gain conscious direction and control of the learning process… Dewey's philosophy of education is to direct schools to devise curricula that orient

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[20] D. F. Labaree. (1997). Public Goods, Private Goods: The American Struggle over Educational Goals. *American Educational Research Journal , 34* (1), p 41-43

[21] S. Aronowitz & H. A. Giroux. (1986). Education under Siege. The Conservative, Liberal and Radical Debate over Schooling. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, p 8

around critical thinking. Self-knowledge is seen as the key to one's knowledge of the world.[22]

Many of Dewey's theories and recommendations for public education were disregarded and misinterpreted. Humanist and progressive educational ideals have been ignored and lost to America's public schools in the last forty-five years. They are considered undesirable or fantastical utopias for learning. Student-centered education has been under attack and along with it the democratic equality it brings to classroom learning and representative participation in American society.

The Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci was another advocate of the humanist educational philosophy. Stanley Aronowitz and Henry Giroux present Gramsci's theories as a way "*to contest the moral and intellectual leadership of society by entering the public sphere of both institutional and political life where people debated 'truths' about education, morality and law as well as struggled over their immediate and antagonistic interests… the necessity of making the political more pedagogical*".[23] From this viewpoint, education is about being able to normalize a conversation of dissent within the classroom. The goal of education is to ensure future citizens are able to actively and knowledgeably engage in democratic debates challenging the existing social order and envision potential variations for improvement.

Like Gramsci, the Brazilian Paolo Freire believed in a dialogic pedagogy where educators would enable children from "subaltern" classes to engage in a critical reflection of their own histories, experiences, and culture rather than an education designed around teacher centered instruction and built upon a "banking concept" of education. In this model, students are seen as simply a receptacle for knowledge rather than active participants in the construction of their own learning.[24]

The educational theories of Gramsci and Freire, present methods for active engagement that go beyond Dewey's defense of education being used as a way to secure a citizen's place within the democratic society. Their methods search for ways in which students and educators can challenge accepted institutions and transform them to better meet the collective needs of the public good. These questions are a part of the exploration of democratic equality itself.

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22 S. Aronowitz & H. A. Giroux. (1986). Education under Siege. The Conservative, Liberal and Radical Debate over Schooling. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul., p 8-9

23 Ibid., p 10-11

24 P. Freire. (1970). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed.* New York: Herder & Herder.

This goal should be the primary objective of public education from a citizen's perspective. It expresses the politics of what it means to be a citizen of the United States through equal treatment and access to learning. This goal is in contradiction to the objectives of Corporate America. This political position of education is under attack and at risk today. Education is seen not only as a public good but also as the political force since it is an essential tool to support each individual's voice and choice. The goal of democratic equality for public education promotes each American's representative role in government through the power of an informed vote. Pedagogies related to democratic equality create radical economic, political, and cultural changes to challenge current power structures.

I.4 Training for a Productive Workforce

For those in power over the means of production, economic health takes precedence, and the goal of democratic equality is dismissed as being too idealistic or naive. Their goal for the development and expansion of public education is dependent on increasing the need for specialized education and training, so the workforce is more productive and profitable and must adapt to the dominating hierarchy. They tie their educational reforms to creating greater social efficiency for the American economy.

According to Labaree, from the perspective of social efficiency, the whole of society must decide to invest together in the productivity of the workforce through the funding of public education. This perspective is typically the adopted view of the taxpayer and the employer. No one must be allowed a free ride and we must all invest in schools for the public good, since they are "*designed to prepare workers to fill structurally necessary market roles*".[25] The function of public schools is not to challenge or transform contemporary society but to perpetuate the status quo.

Employers are extremely attracted to the benefits public education provides them through training their potential employees. Obedience to authority is central. In today's modern economy, an educated workforce drives productivity and brings profits. As the division of labor has become more acute in recent decades with the decline of manufacturing and factory jobs, an educated workforce has become a val-

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[25] D. F. Labaree. (1997). Public Goods, Private Goods: The American Struggle over Educational Goals. *American Educational Research Journal , 34* (1), p 42

uable asset for building capital in a digital age; therefore, Corporate America is increasingly interested in public schools and how they can be shaped to take advantage of the assets they bring to business. This is not a new phenomenon. The private sector's involvement in public education should be evaluated to ensure wider societal interests are placed above the desire of corporate gains. Corporate America frames the objective of maximizing profits for business interests as being beneficial for all, and they purport to do this while maintaining social responsibility; however, Corporate America has demonstrated in the past decades that these are conflicting goals.[26]

I.5 Promotion of Social Mobility and "Success"

If education is viewed as a commodity to be commercialized and marketed, then the goal of public education is rooted in social mobility and financial success. From this perspective, the purpose of public school is to provide individual students the chance to compete for social advantages. They engage in learning merely to struggle for social positions within a stratified hierarchy. A superior education is thus inequitably distributed amongst citizens and highly sought after, so learning quickly becomes commoditized.

David Labaree has defined this perspective as the outlook of the individual educational consumer, where education is seen as a private good, only for personal consumption.[27] Public schools are specifically designed to prepare individuals for successful social competition and division rather than collective action. Free market economic principals of individualism and competition are thus reinforced through the academic structures of stratified learning. Students are encouraged to compete and win at all levels not only through academic tracking but also when participating in extracurricular activities.

If employment is unstable, education is seen as a solution for capturing stable work. When jobs are scarce, modern society turns to education not for the sake of learning, but to get a job. Educational policies have increasingly been driven by goals equating educational success with social mobility. The economic policies put

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[26] R. Nichols. (2010, December). *Management & Labor. The Pros and Cons of Privatizing Government Functions* . Retrieved March 2, 2016, from governing.com: http://www.governing.com/topics/mgmt/pros-cons-privatizing-government-functions.html

[27] D. F. Labaree. (1997). Public Goods, Private Goods: The American Struggle over Educational Goals. *American Educational Research Journal , 34* (1), p 42

in place since the 1970s have failed to evenly distribute the wealth of the United States. A 2014 Pew Research Center study found that American purchasing power has never surpassed its height of 1973 when real median earnings peaked for the average full time white, male worker.[28]

> In fact, in real terms the average wage peaked more than 40 years ago: The $4.03-an-hour rate recorded in January 1973 [had] the same purchasing power as $22.41 would today.[29]

As the rich have gotten richer, the poor have gotten poorer, and the income gap has grown. As Americans have searched for solutions for their declining earnings in the past few decades, education has emerged as an answer. It has come to serve more of an individual need rather than a collective need. As Labaree describes, "*the result is on individual status attainment rather than the production of human capital*".[30] The scarcity of employment and stagnation of earnings for working class America has equated the goal of school and learning with the accumulation of knowledge to be used in the competitive search for employment. Thus the dominating mechanisms of capitalism subordinate learning, and as Horace Mann has said, the balance wheel of the social machinery ceases to function in the interests of the public good.

The dominating class benefits from the outlook that public schools are places where objects are pursued in the spirit of social promotion. Credits are added up, credentials bought, and knowledge economically guaranteed through what Labaree describes as the "use" and "exchange" values of education. "*Another major impact of the social mobility goal on education derives from the way it treats education as a form of exchange value, in contrast with the other two goals, for which education is a form of use value*".[31] These values are inextricably connected in the social mobility goal of education. In the social mobility model, public schools function simply to provide citizens with the opportunity to compete for limited resources while maintaining the hopes to one day gain access to the privileged class, thereby, transcending

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[28] J. Sachs. (2011, November 16). *Jeffrey Sachs: "The Price of Civilization" | Talks at Google*. Retrieved January 21, 2016, from youtube.com: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_G6SYmQ0swg&nohtml5=False

[29] D. Desilver. (2014, October 9). *For most workers, real wages have barely budged for decades*. Retrieved April 4, 2016, from pewresearch.org: http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/10/09/for-most-workers-real-wages-have-barely-budged-for-decades/

[30] D. F. Labaree. (1997). Public Goods, Private Goods: The American Struggle over Educational Goals. *American Educational Research Journal , 34* (1), p 50

[31] Ibid., p 54

the confines of class and climbing the social ladder. This goal is rooted in the myth of the "American Dream" and the idealization of a meritocratic United States.

If the goal of learning is simply for social mobility, then we are only schooling children for the conformity of the modern global factory, where efforts to create an intellectual citizenship are overruled by the desire to create a productive workforce that conforms to the demands of a free market economy. This model creates a uniform culture of obedient and hardworking laborers with enough knowledge to be useful but not defiant.

I.6 Conclusion: Politicizing the Problems of Public Education

The recent reforms in American education are driven by a number of causes. The consequences of the underlying problems produce confusion and hopelessness as particular educational goals begin to take precedence and dominate others. The influence of the goal associated with increased social mobility has become the preference for neoliberal reformers shaping educational policy in the United States. This objective pits citizens against one another. Each student's learning becomes preoccupied with vying for an edge over the other. This model promotes competition over collaboration and rampant individualism over collective solidarity to divide public and deny the existence of collective interests.

Analyses defining the source of these issues have been varied. David Labaree outlines five areas of concern for educational reform: pedagogical problems, organizational issues, social failings, cultural deficiencies, and political delay.[32] The central difficulty for educational institutions in the United States, he argues, is political.

Labaree states that rather than quarrelling with one another, Americans need to determine the goals public schools should pursue. Collective choices, beyond the process of scientific investigation, must be made to arrive at a mutual consensus.

> The answer lies in values (what kind of schools we want) and interests (who supports which educational values) rather than apolitical logic. Before we launch yet another research center…or propose another organiza-

[32] D. F. Labaree. (1997). Public Goods, Private Goods: The American Struggle over Educational Goals. *American Educational Research Journal , 34* (1),.p 40

> tional change… we need to engage in a public debate about the desirability of alternative social outcomes of schooling.[33]

The American public must engage in a political debate and investigation about the goals of public education. The public must take an active role in examining the ways in which the goals of our current system either support school as a public or private good, whether students are being prepared for political or market roles in society, and if those functions of school currently align with our expectations and hopes for public education. Only then can the debate include a close scrutiny of the interconnected complications of ways in which the political economy is failing America's public schools.

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[33] D. F. Labaree. (1997). Public Goods, Private Goods: The American Struggle over Educational Goals. *American Educational Research Journal , 34* (1), p 40-41

Chapter II:
Education: Evolution of the American School System

II.1 Introduction

Examining the contributions of history provides insight into ways in which to create new approaches for America's public schools. By questioning privatization efforts in public education, the façade begins to slip away and strategies for alternative solutions have the chance to be uncovered. Legislation and funding dictate how and much of what our children learn. In reflecting on the past, money can frequently be found at the epicenter of access and equality, and as always funding plays a significant role in decisions at all levels. Funding demonstrates ways in which public schools are supported beyond mere words. Spending proves the price Americans will pay to uphold social democratic principals. Knowledge about the history of public schools in the United States and the ways the funding of those institutions helps us better understand the current state of public schools in the United States and how neoliberal reform efforts have relentlessly tap into public funding, to fill their own pockets, at the expense of American taxpayers.

A critical component of an informed, democratic society can be found in the strength of its public education system. In looking back at the history and progression of the American education system and evaluating the outcomes of its successes and failures, it is essential to look at ways in which teachers and students are invited to engage as active participants in these processes. Evaluating historical changes and how they are linked to current reforms, provides a foundation for a better understanding of the current situation today and what choices can be made to make the changes needed for tomorrow.

II.2 Education in Early America

II.2.1 17th & 18th Centuries: Learning in the Colonial Era

Largely English colonial societies initially settled in the United States. In the west, in Florida, and in the southwest, Spanish settlements grew. The Native Americans who had been living on the continent were deemed inferior and uncivilized. With the Native tribes eventual defeat, European Americans domination and superiority were firmly established. American Indian society was marginalized and forced aside for the benefit of European-Americans. This would become a common story in

the United States. The conquest and suppression of the "other" has made it easier to subdue the masses through division. In creating a climate where differentiation and discordance dominate, more remained leftover for the few to take.

Educational practices and institutions have varied since colonial populations differed. Each region had different patterns of economic development. They also had distinct cultural and political foundations with unique traditions. British colonial America was divided into three regions: the South, the Middle, and the New England colonies.

The first of these colonial regions was in the South. Virginia, Maryland, the Carolinas, and Georgia were the colonies of the South, and commercial agriculture served the dominant interests of the southern population. The Church of England was the dominant religion of the wealthy. In the South, education meant hiring private tutors to teach affluent children on plantations. The second region included New Jersey, Delaware, Quaker Pennsylvania, and Dutch New Amsterdam, which later became New York. These settlements were in the region of the Middle colonies. Finally, there was the region of New England. Dissenting religious groups, like the Quakers and Catholics, settled in the Middle and New England colonies. The Puritans and other steadfast Protestants settled in New England. The connection between education and religion in the United States begins here. This region would become the most well known and influential during the formative years of education in America.

Protestant religious groups came to the New World to escape the immoral, decadent, and corrupt culture of England and the Anglican Church. They hoped to create a new society based on moral authority and religion. The Puritans were one of these groups. A core belief of their religion was based on having a close personal relationship with the word of God. This meant everyone should be able to read the scriptures. In order to understand and interpret these writings required literacy skills, thus educational pursuits in colonial America were closely linked to religious pursuits, as it was a significant part of the Puritanical faith that children should learn to read in order to strengthen their own personal morals and virtues.

Schools were most common in the New England colonies. Local authorities and taxpayers would decide whether or not to establish a formal school in a village or town. These local schools were small and usually headed by a single teacher. The teaching profession was not a high status occupation. Because of the unbelievable abundance of resources and possible wealth found in the New World, most settlers

felt as though hard work would bring tangible rewards and benefits. Religious ethics, like these, would soon become unquestioningly enmeshed with American public education. These values would also infiltrate and contaminate the American psyche.

The family and the church were seen as colonial agents for the education of early settlers. The number of schools increased in the 18th century, but only a minority of the population was educated. Less than one out of ten children would be going to school at any one time.[34] If there was formal instruction for colonial children, it was through local schools. These local institutions were small. If students did attend, they only went four or five months out of the year for a total of seven or eight years. Religious texts dictated the curriculum, and the most well known textbook of the 19th century was the New England Primer. It combined the study of the alphabet with spelling and grammar through selected Bible readings.[35] Education became rooted in the home and in the church. Those were the primary influences on colonial schooling. School was not seen as a force for social mobility or economic advancement, but rather as a way to strengthen one's moral character.

Universities were established quite quickly in New England colonies. Harvard was founded in 1636, Yale in 1701, and Princeton in 1746. Enrollment in these institutions was restricted to the wealthy and powerful classes. These early universities prepared a small fraction of educated leaders to cultivate certain skill sets for the new colonial culture, otherwise, apprenticeships were established to learn a trade or skill. Overall literacy rates rose over the 18th century and were comparable, if not better, to literacy levels in England.[36]

In the 18th century, the Enlightenment diffused ideas about reason and science. People questioned the "divine right" of the monarchy and aristocracy. These revolutionary ideas would influence the new colonies. These principles of equality and liberty would spread through the distribution of pamphlets and other reading materials. As local schools worked to raise literacy levels, they contributed to eventually laying the advantageous and necessary groundwork for the American Revolution by implanting new ideas, ways of thinking, and challenging of traditions.

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[34] J. L. Rury. (2016). Education and Social Change. Contours in the History of American Schooling (Fifth ed.). New York: Routledge, p 29

[35] New York Times. (1897, November 14). A Famous Book - The "New England Primer". Retrieved April 7, 2016, from New York Times: http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive-free/pdf?res=9D02E1D81330E333A25757C1A9679D94669ED7CF

[36] J. L. Rury. (2016). Education and Social Change. Contours in the History of American Schooling (Fifth ed.). New York: Routledge, p 34

As the 18th century came to a close, Americans were constructing the foundations of the United States. A new nation had been established on a representative government. This led to a number of changes in the ways in which education was perceived by the colonial society. Education would be essential, if the new, democratic nation was going to succeed. America would have to create adequate educational institutions to stabilize and support the democracy, however, no statewide or national systems of education would be put in place during this period. Federal acts laid out the supports for public education, but it was largely left up to the states to put them in place. Schooling remained mainly a local concern, and they were "*intended to be conservative institutions, bulwarks against change"* so they could reinforce *"traditional beliefs and moral virtues*".[37]

Others found themselves outside of the movement to educate. Most women in America during the colonial era were illiterate, however, the Revolution had brought with it questions of equality for women. They were greatly outnumbered by men in the colonies. Wives and mothers had a special role within these early American societies. Many believed it was their duty and responsibility to raise and train children in becoming citizens. This would instill them with the necessary virtues for full-fledged participation in a new republican government. This was seen as an important aspect for building the new nation.

The exact numbers slaves brought to the United States will never be known, but it is estimated that between 500,000 to 650,000 Africans were brought to the continent and sold as slaves between the 17th and 19th centuries. As of 1680, there were approximately 7,000 African slaves in the American colonies, and by 1790 the number had expanded to about 700,000.[38] The African population in colonial America grew as the slave trade increased after 1700. New laws were put in place to secure their status as slaves, and by the end of the 17th century Blacks were a fifth of the colonial population.[39] Slaves were denied an education. Eventually charity schools, used during the colonial area, would be set up for freed slaves in the future. Charity

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[37] J. L. Rury. (2016). Education and Social Change. Contours in the History of American Schooling (Fifth ed.). New York: Routledge, p 31

[38] History. (n.d.). *U.S. Immigration Before 1965*. Retrieved February 28, 2016, from history.com: http://www.history.com/topics/u-s-immigration-before-1965

[39] J. L. Rury. (2016). Education and Social Change. Contours in the History of American Schooling (Fifth ed.). New York: Routledge, p 41

schools served as a model on how to serve groups that could not afford schooling otherwise.

These two centuries brought about many transformations for settlers in the New World. With the defeat of the British, the colonies established a new nation. An American public education system would become one of the pillars for forming a properly functioning democratic government. The solution to this challenge would be centuries in the making, as American schools would continue in the struggle to meet modern social and economic demands instead.

II.2.2 19th Century: Modernizing Learning

The 1800s brought the creation of state-supervised systems of public education. These started with common schools and eventually spread to secondary education levels. Territorial, industrial, and economic expansion led to major social changes. The importance of education grew with the population. More children began going to school for longer periods of time.[40] Schooling was meant to provide children with lessons on citizenship, literacy, numbers, and responsibility. The school was meant to prepare workers for factory life, and those factory models were marveled at for their industriousness and efficiency. With the increase of industry, demand for labor increased, and working conditions declined. Public education was sought as a way to promote social order and control. The goal of education was to prepare citizens for a new industrial order.

Rapid urbanization and immigration dominated this time period. As cities grew, social problems emerged. Charity schools were some of the earliest public supported schools for the lowest classes. They were usually at the primary level, but secondary schooling also began to emerge during this century.

Joseph Lancaster, a schoolmaster from England, developed a factory model educational method. The Lancastrian system he developed focused on strict discipline and order. It was a system more concerned with teaching punctuality and obedience, beneficial traits for a factory workforce. These goals were similar to the Protestant values held by many others seeking to establish public schools. During this time other public institutions, like police departments, asylums, and jails, were in

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[40] J. L. Rury. (2016). Education and Social Change. Contours in the History of American Schooling (Fifth ed.). New York: Routledge, p 49

development. These social structures tried to deal with the problems that came with the displacement of a rural workforce to urban centers.[41] They were set up to maintain control and regulate the masses populating the growing working class.

The first settlers to the North American continent primarily descended from the White, Anglo-Saxon, and Protestant background. Those initial settlers had already started to establish themselves as the dominant culture of the new country. Another wave of immigration took place from 1815 to 1865. The newcomers were from Northern and Western Europe. About one-third of them were Irish Catholics escaping massive famine in Ireland in the 19th century. German immigrants settled in the Midwest, and a great number of Asian immigrants arrived in the early 1850s to seek work associated with western expansion and the California gold rush. In response, immigrants were met with Nativist resentment. The first settlers saw the new arrivals as competition for available jobs. In the mid-1850s the "Native American" party found membership because of these fears. Violence, particularly against Irish Catholic immigrants, had grown. Early settlers began to seek ways in which to secure positions of power against a deluge of change and diversity. As the existing American culture changed, original inhabitants tried to protect their supremacy.

Social reformers of public education were a part of a budding American middle class who sought to spread school reform within and beyond American cities. A growing public interest in political advocacy brought about many changes, including common school reform, as a way to enhance America's institutional infrastructures. Many of the small rural communities wished to keep taxes low and conserve local traditions. Life before had not required credentials or formalized training for work, so common schools were met with resistance in some areas. The most debated problem was the collection of local property taxes to support public schools.[42]

Trying to convince the rural population about the importance of improving local institutions, like schools, took considerable effort. The lowest enrollments in school and overall literacy rates were in the South. Most of the wealthy plantation owners had paid for private tutors or sent their children to private schools. They did not see the priority of providing education for other children in the community.

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41 J. L. Rury. (2016). Education and Social Change. Contours in the History of American Schooling (Fifth ed.). New York: Routledge., p 58-59

42 Ibid., p 61

Those who had the means to access an education in the South received better schooling than their peers in the North.[43]

In other regions, school was becoming increasingly popular, especially in the Northeast. During this era, curricula differed dramatically in each school, along with the length of terms for attendance, and access resources and materials. Teaching methodology was rooted in memorization and recitation. The teaching profession was transient. Teachers did not stay for very long in their assigned districts. With little to no formalized training for educators, they had limited knowledge beyond the most basic subjects taught. Reformers of this era wanted to build schools with better levels of instruction and consistency. They wanted schools to impart the understood moral principals and behaviors of a growing middle class.

The great period of school reform during this century was between 1830 and 1860.[44] This period kick started the effort to invest in a uniform model of public education that would be governed largely at the state level across the nation. Leading up to the Civil War, reformers focused efforts on advancing their own personal Protestant commitment to public schools, where education was the solution for the threat of social fragmentation and moral decay in a rapidly changing society. Seeking to build unity through common values and a shared identity, reformers established the "age of the common school" in America.

The battle over implementation of common schools at the political level pitted the Democrats against the Whigs. Democrats saw the common school movement as an obvious effort to centralize the school system. Since Democrats strongly supported states' rights, this was a direct affront. The Whigs had put issues of morality like temperance and slavery at the forefront of their agenda, so common schools were seen as another way of forcing their political ideology at a national level through the establishment of educational institutions.[45]

Horace Mann, a lawyer and state legislature, began his post as the Secretary of the State Board of Education in Massachusetts in 1837. A primary part of his campaign was to modernize the American school system. An explicit part of Horace Mann's work was to support the construction of democratic equality through public

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43 J. L. Rury. (2016). Education and Social Change. Contours in the History of American Schooling (Fifth ed.). New York: Routledge., p 62

44 Ibid., p 65

45 W. H. Jeynes. (2007). American Educational History: School, Society, and the Common Good, Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

schools. Not wanting social differences to give rise to greater class conflict from the unprecedented growth and control of the capitalistic markets and immigration, he argued common school institutions could provide Americans with a common culture and united connection in a community. Mann used the metaphor of "balance wheels" to describe how schools would prevent inequality from spiraling into conflict.[46]

As a part of pursuing that goal, Mann travelled around the region to review the state of public schools and report what he learned. These reports would become influential in the shaping of American public schools. Mann argued public education should be free for all and open to everyone. Likewise, the cost of maintaining educational institutions should be the responsibility of the public. Their success was dependent on the support of all members of the community. He decided women should play a central role in schools as educators, since they were more naturally suited for the role of teaching children.

In addition, Mann supported the creation of longer school terms and formalized teacher training. He also advocated for the separation of public schools from religious institutions. A central part of Mann's argument for investing in public schools was education would create a more productive workforce, therefore, schooling would add value to industrial goods.[47] Schools would be the bridge between the wealthy and laboring classes. Schools would provide a workforce for the owners of production.

After seeing the success of the Prussian educational system, Mann generated interest in reviewing other foreign models of education to remain competitive. Horace Mann came to serve as an example for others trying to establish stronger educational institutions in their communities. His ideas for school reform are still engrained in the guiding principals of American public education today. Much of Mann's ideas came from a set of values and assumptions common to the Protestant upbringing.[48] Through the one's own will, force, and hard work, success could be earned. These were key virtues for the moral development of one's individual character. Only through instilling these virtues would social progress be made. Personal industry, self-discipline, hard work paired well with a capitalistic order. The primary

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46 J. L. Rury. (2016). Education and Social Change. Contours in the History of American Schooling (Fifth ed.). New York: Routledge, p 68

47 Ibid., p 67

48 Ibid., p 69

goal for common schools was to provide unification for a certain sector of the American population but by no means was everyone included in the plan for universal public education. Schooling and training would be made available to those deemed inferior, while an education would only remain appropriate for wealthy citizens.

Congress had outlawed the importation of slaves in 1808, but the institution of slavery continued to play an important economic role in the South. After the Civil War, approximately 4 million slaves were emancipated, yet even with the Union victory very few changes came for newly freed African Americans. The publication of Charles Darwin's evolutionary theory in 1859 influenced the American outlook. His theories of "natural selection" and "survival of the fittest" would challenge traditional religious dogma, but it would also be used as justification for imbalance.[49] According to the theory of Social Darwinism, trying to alleviate poverty was in contradiction to these laws nature. Those who had advantages in American society were simply representation of the "survival of the fittest." Through "natural selection," white, wealthy Americans found the rationalization they needed to validate inequality. This way of thinking would become a part of a powerful ideological force in American culture. These theories still permeate many of the populist stances in regards to social evolution and change.

II.2.3 Early 20th Century: An Era for Progressive Changes

As a new global and technical economy emerged at the end of the 20th century, during the peak of the Industrial Revolution, the demand for public education only increased. Inequality grew as wealth slowly became concentrated in a small group of industrialists and bankers hands. Those who had already amassed their fortunes during the Industrial Revolution wanted to continue to grow their wealth, so they used exploitative practices that stamped out growth and competition from others and created monopolies. [50] As insatiable greed grew, imbalanced power became a menace to a stable society and the authority of government. Labor battles gained momentum and the threatening prospect of class warfare seemed possible if the wealthy command of the few was allowed to continue to grow.

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[49] J. L. Rury. (2016). Education and Social Change. Contours in the History of American Schooling (Fifth ed.). New York: Routledge, p 124

[50] Ibid., p 123

Emerging as a world leader, the United States determined it was important to put representations of a fair and just public education system forward. American public schools rode the wave of development needed to meet standards for economic growth. As cities welcomed millions of newly arrived immigrants, diversity became an increasingly prominent feature of America. With more arrivals, new fears arose in reaction once again, and eventually became a driving factor for school reform between 1890-1920 during the Progressive Era of American education.[51] It was a time of uncertainty with severe price swings, high volatility, and speculation. School reform efforts were now seen as a way to try to control for some of the instability.

The battle for greater access to resources, like public education, continued to be at the forefront of the political and economic debates. As immigrants continued arriving, the changing demographics brought with it feelings of being left behind for many Protestants. The new arrivals came from Southern and Eastern European countries, like Italy, Poland, and Russia. Roman Catholic and Jewish immigrants were greeted with reservation and difficulties.

As industry continued to grow with new technological and scientific advancements, a professional workforce was needed to keep pace, which led to a widening division of labor and a greater need for a specialized workforce. This gave rise to differentiation not only within the economy but also within schools. As the social institution of schooling grew, it sought to meet the demands of the economy.

Progressive educators, like John Dewey and his University of Chicago Laboratory School emerged to find out more about the ways public education could assist students through the process of personal growth. They aimed to try to meet students' needs and interests for better development and understanding through public education. Dewey saw school as a place where Americans could learn the essential values of democracy rather than just an attachment to the industrial machine. The impacts of educational progressives in the classroom, however, would be much less compared to their administrative counterparts who would begin the bureaucratic work of consolidating schools, increasing efficiencies, and differentiating learning through vocational programs.[52]

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[51] J. L. Rury. (2016). Education and Social Change. Contours in the History of American Schooling (Fifth ed.). New York: Routledge, p 116

[52] Ibid., p 128

Just as educators were trying to find better methods and approaches to learning for students, administrative progressives sought to streamline the organization of schools, curricula, and measures of efficiency. Unlike the classroom progressives, they received support from influential political and financial interests. The administrative progressives were far removed from what educational progressivism was trying to do in the classroom. Their primary goal was to find ways in which schools could be adapted to urban living and the emerging social stratification of the labor market. The modern American public school system still retains much of the work the administrative progressives accomplishing during this time. With the growth of secondary schooling, there was a need to find ways in which to meet the demand and maintain efficacy.[53]

Education could be used as more than a driver for growth and progression. It could also be used as one of many tools to establish predominance over others deemed socially inferior. The asset of public schools would continue to be protected by controlling how education would be funded for years.

> In the early part of the twentieth century most school spending in the United States was financed by local property taxes. Modest levels of state aid were distributed in some states based on the number of students or teachers in individual school districts.[54]

This system took root, and it continues to this day. Using this funding structure ensures those with more wealth and property have the power to finance their children's learning, while other districts serving poorer populations struggle to find the resources in deprived communities to adequately accommodate the needs of the students. This stratified structure has served to protect the wealthy districts from equitably redistributing school funding.

> In the early 20th century, reformers sought to mitigate this process of stratification and restore equal treatment through a variety of leveling mechanisms, including pressure for social promotion of students from grade to grade, the easing of academic standards, the sharp increase in nonacadem-

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[53] J. L. Rury. (2016). Education and Social Change. Contours in the History of American Schooling (Fifth ed.). New York: Routledge, p 136

[54] D. Card & A. A. Payne. (2000, November 19). *School finance reform, the distribution of school spending, and the distribution of student test scores*. (o. o. Economics, Editor) Retrieved April 11, 2016, from berkley.edu: http://davidcard.berkeley.edu/papers/school-finance-reform.pdf

> ic curriculum options, grade inflation, and the institutionalization of the comprehensive high school.[55]

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, a heterogeneous alliance of leaders from business, labor, and education launched an effort to make the school curriculum more responsive to the needs of occupational structures, and as John Rury points out in his book, *Education and Social Change*:

> The impulse toward greater differentiation and "social efficiency" in American education does appear to have had a significant impact on social change… the desire to make the schools respond more effectively to the "needs" of various social groups helped to perpetuate and widen existing patterns of social inequity.[56]

While these groups disagreed about the desired effect of this effort on social mobility, they united in the conviction that schools were in danger of becoming socially irrelevant and economically counterproductive unless they succeeded in better articulating educational content with future job requirements. In its narrow form, the vocational movement shifted the curriculum away from courses traditional academic subjects and broadly defined liberal learning and toward programs that provided training in the skills and knowledge required to carry out particular job roles".[57] The Progressive Era of public education brought many changes with it. For the most part, many of the best ideas and suggestions for learning from Dewey and other progressive educators went disregarded, whereas those working on growing an educational bureaucracy focused on testing and efficiency developed a school system that would align with the growth of a political economy that inextricably linked privileges and human capital with opportunities provided by school. The aspiration of an optimistic creation of a system, concentrated on giving power to learning and individual development for well-informed and happy citizens, was usurped by a revolution focused on simply providing a workforce for capitalists to profit. Many educational progressives, looking for better ways to teach children and create a system to support learning and citizenship, continue in their search today.

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55 D. F. Labaree. (1997). Public Goods, Private Goods: The American Struggle over Educational Goals. *American Educational Research Journal , 34* (1), 39-81, p 45

56 J. L. Rury. (2016). Education and Social Change. Contours in the History of American Schooling (Fifth ed.). New York: Routledge, p 153

57 D. F. Labaree. (1997). Public Goods, Private Goods: The American Struggle over Educational Goals. *American Educational Research Journal , 34* (1), 39-81, p 47

II.2.4 The Great Depression & World War II

During the Post War era, total enrollment in public elementary and secondary schools grew rapidly. The 'Baby Boom' brought significant growth in the population following World War II. This propelled a significant increase in student enrollment along with government-backed incentives to make education more accessible for everyone.

In 1944, congress passed the GI Bill to give money to veterans returning from the war and going to college. Institutions of higher education grew dramatically. By 1956, roughly 2.2 million veterans had used the G.I. Bill education benefits. Another 5.6 million used the aid for some kind of training program.[58] In the years since, over 10 million veterans have taken advantage of the GI Bill. These and other government initiatives in turn have increased the number of Americans going to college and pursuing university degrees.[59] Government initiatives, like this, have led to many changes in public education. Economic changes and issues with spending and funding also have had consequences on how public schools were able to enhance their operations and goals.

> During the 1930s a wave of school finance reform led many states to modify their aid formulas to take account of the property tax bases in different districts. Many states also increased the total funds available for elementary and secondary schools. As a consequence of these reforms the average share of state funding rose to 30 percent by 1940, and gradually increased to 40 percent by 1970.[60]

Changes made to the educational funding structures were in response to economic challenges of the Great Depression. As millions of people lost their jobs and instability ran rampant, Americans sought security for the middle-class life through reforms that reflected greater solidarity or socialist and communist notions. Trade and labor unions gained strength, and traditional, conservative concepts were challenged as average Americans began to question and defy longstanding assumptions

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[58] BOSS News Network. (2016, April 1). *Higher Education at the Crossroads*. Retrieved April 27, 2016, from BOSS Magazine: http://thebossmagazine.com/higher-education-at-the-crossroads/

[59] Oregon State University. (n.d.). *Section II - American Education Part 8*. Retrieved March 15, 2016, from oregonstate.edu: http://oregonstate.edu/instruct/ed416/ae8.html

[60] D. Card & A. A. Payne. (2000, November 19). *School finance reform, the distribution of school spending, and the distribution of student test scores*. (o. o. Economics, Editor) Retrieved April 11, 2016, from berkley.edu: http://davidcard.berkeley.edu/papers/school-finance-reform.pdf

about ways in which society was functioning. With the arrival of World War II, the world witnessed the struggle of democracy against totalitarian and fascist regimes. After seeing the horrors of Nazism, leading theories of racial dominance were re-examined. A shift in thinking transpired.

II.3 Postwar America

II.3.1 1950s: Fear, Uncertainty, and Integration

During the 1950s the United States faced many different threats to traditional political and societal structures. Nationalism and consumerism grew. Buying things came to be seen as a loyal form of patriotism. Public schooling became more and more integrated with national concerns these and the economic growth of the consumer culture. Public institutions and emerging media channels encouraged greater conformity and uniformity. The nuclear family was a central. The "American Dream" drove the consumer machine at this time. Education was starting to become a highly marketable commodity.

Many governmental initiatives were closely enmeshed with missions related to the Cold War during the 1950s. America's main mission was to prevent the spread of any sort of thing that could possibly be connected to communism or socialist thinking. These were counterintuitive to the capitalist consumer culture taking firm hold. Some of these ideas spread into the pubic school system through a variety of educational reforms. External pressures influenced curricula to determine what students were going to learn at school. At this time, the function of school was to combat this new menace.

The *Red Scare* generated public fear. This fear was rooted in competition. For example, the "Space Race" was used as a tool for propaganda to influence and change what was being taught in public schools. In pitting the United States and the Soviet Union against one another intellectually, politicians, and businesses were able to modify what children would learn in America's public schools. If the United States was going to beat the Soviet Union, one of the obvious weapons within the arsenal was the creation of a demanding and authoritative education system to serve as an extension of American military power and might. These fears and others were exploited and used as a tool to promote an agenda that advocated for the creation of a

more "rigorous" curriculum. Learning at public schools would start to concentrate on a mathematics and science education at the expense of other subjects.

The U.S. Congress concluded American schools and colleges were not producing the quantity and quality of scientific and technical specialists necessary to keep pace with the Soviet Union, so a number of emergency measures were passed in 1958, including the National Aeronautics and Space Act (NASA) and the National Defense of Education Act.[61] The National Defense of Education Act of 1958 approved federal grants focused on language, mathematics, and science for American public schools. In addition, $295 million was allotted for college tuition assistance.[62]

The Cold War was an intellectual combat of posturing. The United States focused on finding ways in which to defeat the threat of communism not only through warfare abroad but at home in the classroom by becoming a global leader in technology, defense, and security. By the late 1950s state spending on public education increased and stabilized at about 0.4 percent of GDP.[63] The public schooling machine was more thoroughly integrated and ready to advance forward with a new American political economy. Military dominance and might dictated the economy, and this violence would begin to take greater precedence over public goods and services for Americans.

Another surge of change in American public school enrollment came in 1954 with the case of Brown vs. the Board of Education of Topeka ruling. This Supreme Court case mandated integration of public schools. The separation of students based on race in public schools had been made illegal in this landmark court case, but segregation was far from over. Strong opposition and adversity persisted in school districts around the country. Racism's roots run deep, and many during the 1950s refused to integrate. The Brown vs. the Board of Education decision recognized racial segregation was in violation of the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th amendment

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61 Association for Educational Communications and Technology . (n.d.). *National Defense Education Act (NDEA) of 1958* . Retrieved February 21, 2016, from AECT: http://aect.site-ym.com/?page=national_defense_edu

62 The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History. (n.d.). *National Defense Education Act*. Retrieved February 16, 2016, from gilderlehrman.org: https://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-by-era/postwar-politics-and-origins-cold-war/timeline-terms/national-defense-education-act

63 C. Chantrill. (n.d.). *US Education Spending History from 1900*. Retrieved March 28, 2016, from usgovernmentspending.com: http://www.usgovernmentspending.com/education_spending

and prepared the American pubic education for more centralized decision-making at the Federal level.[64]

The Brown vs. the Board of Education ruling permanently changed the landscape of American public schools. Once schools were integrated, changing demographic trends became magnified.

> In little more than four decades, enrollment trends in the nation's schools (between 1968 and 2011) show a 28% decline in white enrollment, a 19% increase in the black enrollment, and an almost unbelievable 495% increase in the number of Latino students.[65]

As students were integrated, the percentage of white students concerned in public school enrollment declined. Other races began to gain access, and therefore, opportunity to economic gains.

> During this time, Latinos became, by far, the dominant minority enrolled in the West, and their representation surged in all regions of the nation. Latinos, less than a third the number of black students in 1968, had an enrollment more than half again as large as African Americans by 2011.[66]

The greatest gains made by the Brown vs. the Board of Education ruling were for Latino and Hispanic Americans. In some regions of the United States, opening up access for Africa Americans meant creating a space of opportunity for their children.

> White enrollment was almost four times the combined black and Latino enrollment in 1968, but only about a fifth bigger in 2011… The country underwent an incredible transformation.[67]

The changes Brown vs. the Board of Education brought to public education still resound today. This ruling was a giant leap towards taking action for equity. As a result there was and continues to be much opposition to the results it has wrought. Once access and opportunity were granted, the population began to see how the sys-

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64 D. Schugurensky. (n.d.). *History of Education - Selected Moments of the 20th Century - Brown v. Board of Education*. Retrieved March 21, 2016, from The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto (OISE/UT): http://fcis.oise.utoronto.ca/~daniel_schugurensky/assignment1/1954brown.html"

65 G. Orfield, E. Ee. Frankenberg & J. Kuscera. (2014, May 15). *Brown at 60 - Great Progress, a Long Retreat and an Uncertain Future*. Retrieved March 22, 2016, from civilrightsproject.ucla.edu: http://civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/research/k-12-education/integration-and-diversity/brown-at-60-great-progress-a-long-retreat-and-an-uncertain-future/Brown-at-60-051814.pdf

66 Ibid.

67 Ibid.

tem was and continues to be rigged against a vast majority of American citizens. Greater knowledge empowers the people to start demanding for more.

As education came to be a greater part of American culture after WWII, extended childhood and growing adolescent culture would growth with it in the decades to come. Education was a critical tool for democratic socialization, but youth culture was also starting to change the dominant culture of America. The influence of access to education would have a significant influence on this new generation that would spark political conflict and student demonstrations to enable activism and mounting dissent in the next two decades to come.

II.3.2 1960s: Counter-Culture & Critical Consciousness

The 1960s brought changing political emphases. As education had become increasingly accessible in the 1940s and 1950s, a new generation was created. The newly educated youth found ways in which to confront institutions of authority and control with the knowledge they had gained. They challenged persistent imperialist ideologies found at home and abroad. These changes impacted ways in which the individuals saw the order of the world and their place within it. Many in American society were demanding changes. A growing counter-culture shifted the American public's focus from external affairs to addressing internal, domestic issues and demands. Activists were active. There were organizers bringing forth Civil Rights issues, protests condemning the war in Vietnam, and a growing feminist movement. Issues of equality, access, and opportunity were at the forefront of political discussions.

During John F. Kennedy's presidential campaign in 1960, he spoke of the most ambitious domestic agenda since the New Deal: the New Frontier, a package of laws and reforms that sought to eliminate injustice and inequality in the United States. He asked citizens of the United States to become more critically conscious and ask, *"...not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country"*.[68] These sentiments were echoed in the culture of the time. Countries across the world were dealing with citizens rising up and becoming aware of the political and economical implications of social institutions perpetuating societal inequities.

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[68] Oregon State University. (n.d.). *Section II - American Education Part 8*. Retrieved March 15, 2016, from oregonstate.edu: http://oregonstate.edu/instruct/ed416/ae8.html

Providing access and an opportunity to learn to the preceding generation brought about an awakening of the masses. This generation experienced a time where there was a concerted effort to open up the dialogue to new voices in order to raise critical consciousness collectively. Americans were ready for change.

Between 1961 and 1963, neither Democrats nor Republicans in Congress supported President Kennedy in expanding an ambitious domestic agenda. After President Kennedy's assassination, President Johnson brought forth his visions of a Great Society during his 1964 State of the Union Address. This Great Society would eliminate poverty and racial injustice. A new American society would be based on equity.[69] His discourse focused on promoting unity and cooperation.

Through a variety of social support mechanisms, he urged Americans to work together to eradicate poverty. These ideas were based on collective action and solidarity rather than division and responsibility residing at the level of the individual. Directly addressing issues of racism and classism, President Johnson speaks to a generation ready for action. The War on Poverty could be declared by the federal government but needed the full participation of each state and local community to succeed in these efforts. President Johnson's speech seeks to eliminate an automatic belief whereby poverty is simply linked to the lack of work or money, and instead attempts to tie it to a deeper failure of the country failing to support its most vulnerable citizens with basic needs like sufficient education, medical care, housing, and decent communities.[70]

President Johnson's administration presented Americans with direct interventions and "not a hand out."[71] Four pieces of legislation were central to his War on Poverty: Social Security Amendments of 1965, The Food Stamp Act of 1964, The Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965. Some of his key program include Medicare and Medicaid, to help elderly and low-income people pay for health care; Head Start, to prepare young people for school; and the Job Corps program to train unskilled workers for jobs in

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[69] History. (n.d.). *The 1960s*. Retrieved February 28, 2016, from history.com: http://www.history.com/topics/1960s

[70] L. B. Johnson. (1964, January 8). *Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union*. Retrieved January 11, 2016, from The American Presidency Project: http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=26787

[71] History. (n.d.). *The 1960s*. Retrieved February 28, 2016, from history.com: http://www.history.com/topics/1960s

the deindustrializing economy.[72] Subsidized lunches and Title One, which established funding for school districts with a large share of impoverished students, were included in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965.

Together these critical components of legislation focused on alleviating the social and economic conditions of poverty in the United States. These changes happened because the American public made the decision, with their votes, to support leaders who placed the pubic good of the larger society ahead of individual interests.

The ESEA of 1965 included an amendment that covered disabled students, and eventually brought about the creation of the Bureau of Education for Handicapped children. Parents, professionals and governmental leaders collaborated to help children with special needs gain access to an equitable education. Their efforts eventually brought forth a special education mandate called Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA) of 1975, and in 2004 became the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA). This new federal legislation recognized the right to a Free and Appropriate Education (FAPE) for all American students. Unfortunately adequate funding remains a predominant concern. These programs were integral in starting to change existing structures, so they could equally accommodate all types of American learners, but they would require committed and continuous funding if they were going to properly function and accomplish their ultimate goal of greater access and opportunity. To achieve optimal implementation, more money for public education would now be essential in the delivery of these programs in each classroom for school districts across the country. The mandates had come from the federal level, but the burden for finding sufficient funding was primarily the responsibility of local and state agencies.

With the momentum of the War on Poverty and the Civil Rights Act of 1964, a decade after ending school segregation, federal mandates put new pressures on long established institutions, like the institution of racism and discrimination, to find ways to balance access and opportunity for all Americans. As a result of dramatic gains, other disenfranchised groups, experiencing the difficulties of marginalization, began to bring forth their demands too.

The ESEA of 1965 at the center of President Johnson's administration had been influenced by the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which had been influenced by the

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[72] History. (n.d.). *The 1960s*. Retrieved February 28, 2016, from history.com: http://www.history.com/topics/1960s

Brown vs. the Board of Education of Topeka ruling in 1954. These events created a cascade effect and their repercussions continue to be of primary concern today. These decades brought forth a range of government reforms, at the federal level, that created a more equitable society for everyone. "*Since the 1960s the federal government has also played an increasing role in the financing of public education.*"[73]

Through collective support, the government demonstrated its capacity for generating social change through federal interventions. With greater investment and by designing key policies, the United States began to create opportunity by supporting equal access to public institutions. Each new act also required a greater share of public funding in order to succeed with the outlined objectives. Having adequate staff and resources necessary to sufficiently deliver the federal mandates becomes a crucial and apparent concern in subsequent years. The federal government does not necessarily need to get bogged down in pedagogical matters, which should remain under local authority and control to sufficiently meet the needs of the community.

II.3.3 1970s: Redefining Educational Equity

1971 was the beginning of the end for the Bretton Woods system that had been collectively put in place in 1944 between the United States, Canada, Western Europe, Australia, and Japan. The Bretton Woods system was meant to stabilize monetary relations between independent nation-states and rebuild the international economic system after the end of World War II. It linked all currencies to the dollar, and the dollar was linked to gold to prevent speculation against currency pegs, so capital flows could be restricted and controlled.[74] In addition, the Bretton Woods monetary management system created two global institutions, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. Both of these organizations continue to play an important role in global economics today.

"*The establishment of a rules-based system of international finance helped restore confidence in the world economy and led to an extraordinary boom in the post-*

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[73] D. Card & A. A. Payne. (2000, November 19). *School finance reform, the distribution of school spending, and the distribution of student test scores*. (o. o. Economics, Editor) Retrieved April 11, 2016, from berkley.edu: http://davidcard.berkeley.edu/papers/school-finance-reform.pdf, p 51

[74] The Economist. (2014, June). *What was decided at the Bretton Woods summit*. Retrieved January 13, 2016, from The Economist: http://www.economist.com/blogs/economist-explains/2014/06/economist-explains-20

war years".[75] After the Bretton Woods system was put in place, there was rapid growth and economic expansion with regulation of international financial markets, but by the 1960s, the surplus of U.S. dollars through foreign aid, military spending, and foreign investment had threatened the system. During President Nixon's administration, the United States decided to unilaterally terminate the convertibility of the U.S. dollar to the gold standard and disintegrated the exchange rate that had been established by the Bretton Woods system. In March of 1973, major world currencies began to float against one another. This facilitates global capital flows and rendered the Bretton Woods system inoperative.[76] The end of this system ushered in a new worldwide economic order.

The following decades unleashed an era of finance. With the rise of financial industries, the definition of growth began to change. Growth began to mean deregulation, of not just currency markets, but also in the rules of banking and investment. These changes have led to increased flows of private money to rich and poor countries to boost growth and development, but also created greater global financial instability.[77] Free-floating national currencies have advantages, but they also have grave risks since they create greater uncertainties for international traders and investors. The cost of their volatilities is harder to measure. More freedom and responsibility is then given to those managing loose money. Ending the Bretton Woods system launched the start of a risky global economic environment filled with uncertainty, fewer regulations, and less oversight. These sentiments would extend to private investment interventions in public schools in the future.

The turbulent economic times at the start of this decade did not impact student enrollment in public schools. The numbers steadily increased during the 1970s as more disenfranchised groups fought for equal rights and access to enrollment. The public voice demanded their piece of the pie and a role in reimagining the "American Dream". This meant full inclusion for everyone in public education regardless of race, ethnicity, sex or disability.

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[75] S. Schifferes. (2008, November 14). *How Bretton Woods reshaped the world* . Retrieved March 22, 2016, from B.B.C.: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/business/7725157.stm

[76] International Monetary Fund. (n.d.). *History - The end of the Bretton Woods System (1972–81)*. Retrieved March 24, 2016, from International Monetary Fund: https://www.imf.org/external/about/histend.htm

[77] S. Schifferes. (2008, November 14). *How Bretton Woods reshaped the world* . Retrieved March 22, 2016, from B.B.C.: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/business/7725157.stm

The Special Education Mandate of 1975 was a critical federal reform for providing all students, including those with disabilities, the right to their Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) and an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) to support their learning differences. The zero-rejection policy, included in the mandate, meant no child could be turned away from educational services. It stipulated public schools provide all students the opportunity to be a part of and participate in general classrooms. Ultimately this was simply the right to access public services and be included. With greater inclusion through access and opportunity, increased funding would be fundamental for the mandate's success.

States would now be required to submit plans about the distribution of funding to local agencies for direct instructional programming. The federal government promised significant funding, but in order to qualify for that money, states and local educational agencies had to follow the outlined federal guidelines for identification procedures and the placement of disabled children. When applying for the federal grants, states needed to include a plan of distribution for the monies received from the federal government. The funding could only then be given to Local Education Agencies (LEAs) providing special education services. Any deficit in funding was to be addressed by LEAs. This mandate issued guidelines and regulations that must be followed by government agencies providing services, however, in the coming decades these cumbersome areas of oversight and regulation will be rejected and ignored by reformers who use public school funding to advance a neoliberal agenda. The subversion of rules like these for charter schools has worked to destabilize educational funding in states across the country.

Funding continues to be a challenge. Full federal funding of forty percent has never come to fruition.[78] The yearly amount is instable and has fluctuated with proposed budgetary spending. As states are not able to meet budgetary constraints, they have had to submit a Maintenance of Effort (MOE) waiver to allow spending to be held to the previous year's budget since they are not able to meet the state spending requirements of the federal government. Many states and local governments will began to feel the effects of this federal mandate without the funding provided to implement it.

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[78] D. Card & A. A. Payne. (2000, November 19). *School finance reform, the distribution of school spending, and the distribution of student test scores*. (o. o. Economics, Editor) Retrieved April 11, 2016, from berkley.edu: http://davidcard.berkeley.edu/papers/school-finance-reform.pdf, p 51

During this decade a new wave of school finance reform began, and it still continues. The underlying factors contributing to this interest is based on property tax. *"Taxpayers in many states have became disgruntled with the level of property taxes, leading to pressure to find other sources of revenue for school spending".*[79] As people began to examine inequities, the American school funding system began to become a concern since there were apparent issues of inequity visible.

Marginalized groups in the 1970s emerged to demand their rights. The most prominent case was first brought by a father son, Demetrio Rodriguez and other parents, who saw the future their children were being condemned to because of a lack of public investment in their children's public education. Compared to a wealthy district next door, they knew their expected place within American society. The 1973 case of the San Antonio Independent School District v. Rodriguez was lost 5-4, but the battle continues in a majority of states currently.[80] Since 1975, there have been 48 mainland Supreme Court decisions regarding school district funding inequities. These cases have continued in the ensuing decades to today.

> Twenty-seven states had a Supreme Court ruling to regarding the constitutionality of the school financing system. In 12 states (Arkansas, California, Connecticut, Kansas, Kentucky, Montana, New Jersey, Texas, Washington, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and Wyoming) the court found the system unconstitutional and directed the state to revise it. In the 15 other states (Arizona, Colorado, Georgia, Idaho, Louisiana, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, and South Carolina), the court ruled that the funding system outlined by the state satisfied the constitution.[81]

Advocacies groups began working together during this decade, and in the decades to come, to argue for the equalization of school funding across school districts regardless of local funding, which is the greatest source of revenue for public

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[79] D. Card & A. A. Payne. (2000, November 19). *School finance reform, the distribution of school spending, and the distribution of student test scores*. (o. o. Economics, Editor) Retrieved April 11, 2016, from berkley.edu: http://davidcard.berkeley.edu/papers/school-finance-reform.pdf, p 51

[80] C. Turner. (2016, April 18). *Why America's Schools Have a Money Problem*. Retrieved April 19, 2016 , from NPR: School Money: The Cost of Opportunity: http://www.npr.org/2016/04/18/474256366/why-americas-schools-have-a-money-problem

[81] D. Card & A. A. Payne. (2000, November 19). *School finance reform, the distribution of school spending, and the distribution of student test scores*. (o. o. Economics, Editor) Retrieved April 11, 2016, from berkley.edu: http://davidcard.berkeley.edu/papers/school-finance-reform.pdf, p 55

schools.[82] Getting state constitutions to include guaranteed equalized funding would demonstrate true investment in public education. Through the redistribution of local taxes, advocates argue all schools could adequately educate all children in all states across the United States. This confirms that the current funding structure for public schools in the United States shows a country with two classes of citizens: minimal opportunity citizens and a limited number of first class citizens since unequal funding does not provide the "American Dream" or support popular notions of liberty and justice for all.[83] With the establishment of the Department of Education (DOE) as a separate office from the Department of Health and Human Services in October of 1979, America demonstrated the importance of the federal government's commitment to learning.[84]

II.4 Neoliberal Reforms

II.4.1 1980s: Decreasing School Funding

After the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980, neoliberal efforts had the chance to gain traction in their efforts to abolish American public education. The Reagan administration campaigned against big government, anti-poverty programs, and taxation. In an effort to reduce the size of government, Reagan proposed the elimination of the U.S. DOE, and appointed a special commission to investigate educational issues. With the release of the report, *A Nation at Risk*, new reform efforts had the backing needed to get underway, but the DOE survived with meager funding.[85]

With the rise of Reaganomics, an old ideology purported by economists like Friedrich von Hayek and Milton Friedman came to the forefront. The political force of the Reagan administration achieved the development of an ideology that has sustained to this day. Three central components from Reagan's tenure endure. First, deep and persistent tax cuts, especially for those on the upper end of the spectrum,

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82 C. Turner. (2016, April 18). *Why America's Schools Have a Money Problem*. Retrieved April 19, 2016 , from NPR: School Money: The Cost of Opportunity: http://www.npr.org/2016/04/18/474256366/why-americas-schools-have-a-money-problem

83 Ibid.

84 U.S. Department of Education. (2010, September 1). *An Overview of the U.S. Department of Education*. Retrieved April 4, 2016, from U.S. Department of Education: http://www2.ed.gov/about/overview/focus/what_pg4.html

85 J. L. Rury. (2016). Education and Social Change. Contours in the History of American Schooling (Fifth ed.). New York: Routledge, p 181

were introduced. Second, significant policies and legislation were passed to support massive deregulation in a variety of sectors like finance and environment. Third, there were sharp cuts made in the nondiscretionary budget, which included financial support for America's public schools. These components aims subdued educational achievement.

In 1976, public education, which included spending for schools, encompassed 5% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), but as of today that number has been whittled down to less than 2% of GDP along with a collapse of spending in a variety of other discretionary programs, supporting the public good, as well.[86] Issues of equity that had become prominent in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s were no longer a priority. The focus of government policies became isolated on boosting achievement through a focus on testing and raising expectations to meet employers' demands for a skilled workforce. Educating and learning became more and more detached from public schools, and instead became the returned to similar purposes during the 19th century and the age of progressivism. It returned full force to the schooling of a workforce. Philosophies like these took priority, and the work of the schools was to assist Americans in complying and conforming to the intricate capitalistic codes of conformed success.

Along with the reduction of public spending and the deregulation of various industries, there were also attacks and concerted efforts made to dismantle unions during the 1980s. As driving forces for free market capitalism began plowing forward through the decade, corporate supporters would look for any way in which they could bring profits back to Corporate America after the hit of the recession. In dismantling the public sector and destroying any freedoms or rights of workers, free market fundamentalism would come to dominate the political and economic landscape.

As schools felt pressure from decreased funding and increased scrutiny, schools of "choice" were introduced as a way to provide "opportunity" for those who felt their local school did not provide adequate academic support for students. Different ideas for ways in which innovation could continue to be developed in schools through the use of "charters" had been presented in the 1970s, and during this dec-

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[86] J. Sachs. (2011, November 16). Jeffrey Sachs: "The Price of Civilization" | Talks at Google. Retrieved January 21, 2016, from youtube.com: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_G6SYmQ0swg&nohtml5=False

ade, neoliberal educational reformers returned to these same concepts. They found that these ideas could provide a foundation for ways in which a competing system could be developed to undercut improvement of the exiting public school structure in the United States. These charter schools would receive public funding, yet they would have less oversight and regulation in order to purportedly achieve greater innovation. Their original design, meant to benefit educators and their students, would be reinvented. Consequently, this reinvention would in fact come to hinder authentic school reform in the decades to come.

The low tax rates, deregulation, and low spending on social structures have continued through both Republican and Democratic administrations since the years of Ronald Reagan's presidency. The priorities for education changed as schooling became seen as the perfect tool for economic development and individual improvement.[87] As the economy changed with the decline of the manufacturing sector, school was essential for finding a job. As the decade continued, individuals could no longer find work without a diploma. American citizens would now begin to experience more and more ways in which schooling would be used as a trap and justification for inequities. Learning for joy and pleasure decreased, and school became more and more attached to personal economic success instead.

II.4.2 1990s: The Rise of the Era of Finance

Concerns about American's future ability to compete in the global economy culminated in the 1989 National Education Summit, convened by President George H. W. Bush and attended by all 50 of the nation's governors and major corporate CEOs. At the summit, attendees resolved to articulate national educational goals. Their hope was to establish explicit standards for educational achievement in each of the states. The summit launched the standards-based reform movement, which promoted excellence and equity by establishing "high expectations" for all students and ensuring "meaningful" educational opportunities, in particular for poor and minority students.[88] These may have been the expectations outlined by those in attendance;

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[87] J. L. Rury. (2016). Education and Social Change. Contours in the History of American Schooling (Fifth ed.). New York: Routledge, p 191

[88] M. A. Rebell, M. A & J. R. Wolff. (2006). The Campaign for Educational Equity Policy Paper No. 1 - Litigation and Education Reform: The History and the Promise of the Education Adequa-

however, this meeting only continued damaging neoliberal trends started during the Reagan administration. The use of Orwellian language regarding inclusion and success for all children only produced greater exclusion and further marginalization. The use of such language in educational reforms continues today.

Total elementary and secondary school enrollment declined every year up until 1985, but by the mid-1990s, total student enrollment began to reach record levels and continued growing through 2006.[89] When President Bill Clinton took office in 1992, next to nothing changed under the Democratic administration. The Clinton administration continued distorting economic policies, such as with the repeal of the Glass Steagall Act. With that repeal commercial and investment banks were no longer separated, thus allowing even greater volatility and instability to ensue in the aftermath of the free markets driven by profit and greed. In repealing this act, Clinton removed essential and necessary protections. This allowed uncertainty to infiltrate and dominate financial markets. This would lay the groundwork for difficult years ahead when the country would experience another significant crisis in the next decade. Continuing to allow greater freedom and less regulation, the Democratic Party demonstrated ways in which it was aligned with the same neoliberal policies Republicans had been touting in the previous decade.

In addition, President Clinton reworked a new kind of tax credit at the end of his second term called the New Markets tax credit, which would give enormous federal tax credits to banks and equity funds investing in community projects for underserved communities. Charter schools were designated as meeting the needs of the public. This tax credit has been used heavily now for many years in the charter school industry. Those investors who provide money to construct new charter schools are able to double their money in seven years by collecting interest on the loans and taking advantage of the thirty-nine percent tax credit from the federal government.[90] The oldest charter and voucher school programs, put in place in Milwaukee, Wisconsin in 1990, would soon expand its power and reach to include new pri-

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cy Movement. Retrieved January 27, 2016, from schoolfunding.info: http://www.schoolfunding.info/resource_center/adequacy-history.pdf, p 4

89 U.S. Department of Education - Institute of Education Sciences - National Center for Education Statistics. (2015). *Fast Facts - Enrollment trends*. Retrieved March 3, 2016, from National Center for Education Statistics: https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=65

90 D. Dayen. (2010, May 10). *Wall Street Hearts Charter Schools, Gets Rich Off Them*. Retrieved April 7, 2016, from Shadow Proof: https://shadowproof.com/2010/05/10/wall-street-hearts-charter-schools-gets-rich-off-them/

vate schools with religious affiliations.[91] The neoliberal policies only continued to gain greater strength and force with time, and for public education, the decade of the 1990s did not bring any changes.

Schooling was still considered an important issue for the economy as America prepared for the turn of the century, so leaders were compelled to address its deficiencies. Systemic reform efforts continued to focus on assessments and finding ways to align curricula to testing to determine if schools were achieving academic success for students, which in turn really meant economic success for America.

II.4.3 21st Century: Normalizing Privatization

Since 2000 with the passage of No Child Left Behind by George W. Bush, a new definition of school reform has been "*applauded by Democrats and Republics alike*", and these new educational transformations are predominantly characterized through the growth of "*accountability, high-stakes testing, data-driven decision making, choice, charter schools, privatization, deregulation, merit pay, and competition among schools*".[92] These reforms are drawn from the corporate sector. The passage of key educational bills has had punishing consequences for the most vulnerable and impoverished communities across the country. "*In 2000, thirteen million of the nation's children lived in poverty, a higher rate than twenty years before*".[93] Just when American children most needed inequities to be addressed, greater punitive measures were taken against their neighborhood schools.

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) bill, which had passed the senate with overwhelming bipartisan support in January 2002, dramatically intensified efforts for educational reform at the start of the 21st century. This bill put mounting pressure on schools, students, and teachers. The goal of NCLB was to have all students perform at grade level on state tests by 2014; however, adequate funding for the provisions of the educational reform was never delivered. This made it impossible for schools to effectively implement many of the bill's mandates. Without the necessary funding to

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91 J. Cowen. (2014, June 14). *Markets alone don't raise standards in private schools*. Retrieved February 16, 2016, from The Conversation - L'expertise universitaire, l'exigence journalistique: https://theconversation.com/markets-alone-dont-raise-standards-in-private-schools-27892

92 D. Ravitch. (2010). The Death And Life Of The Great American School System. How Testing and Choice Are Undermining Education. New York: Basic Books, p 21

93 M. Parenti. (2002). *Democracy for the Few* (seventh ed.). Boston: Bedford / St. Martin, p 23

help students succeed in reaching adequate levels of proficiency, many schools were left to struggle, and if they failed in their efforts to deliver required results, they were punished. Rather than provide greater support to those schools needing the most help, sanctions were delivered instead. Even though NCLB was an educational failure, it was an ideological success.

The passage of NCLB satisfied the goals and objectives of both political parties. Democrats saw an expansion of the federal government's role in education and Republicans could increase their efforts to promote schools of choice through the expansion of charter schools. NCLB provided the means to introduce free markets and privatization to public schools.[94] Since the bill sanctioned the privatization of tutoring, the potential transferal of students from failing to successful schools, and the conversion of failing schools to publicly funded, privately administered charter schools, NCLB provided more incentives for private interest in public education.[95] From 2000 to 2006, the education privatization movement made great gains. Through the policies of NCLB charter school models increased. President George W. Bush invested more than $1.4 billion on the Charter Schools Program and more than $262 million dollars on charter school facilities. In President Bush's last year in office in 2008, he provided budget $214.8 million to continue the Charter School Program, $200 million towards the creation of new charter schools and another $14.8 million in matching funds to States that offer per-pupil assistance to charter schools to obtain facilities.[96]

Both of the parties liked the law's emphasis on accountability. Democrats and republicans agreed that accountability would be the lever to raise achievement.[97] It quickly became evident that the incentives and sanctions of NCLB caused American public schools to suffer. The unrealistic expectation of 100% proficiency was coupled with punitive methods for those schools that did not meet their Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) requirements. The repercussions of this bill had troubling conse-

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94 M. W. Apple. (2007). Ideological Success, Educational Failure? On the Politics of No Child Left Behind. *Journal of Teacher Education , 58* (2), p 110

95 D. W. Hursh. (2004). Undermining Democratic Education in the U.S.A: the consequences of global capitalism and neoliberal policies for educational policies at the local, state, and federal levels. *Policy Futures in Education , 2* (3-4), 607-620.

96 U.S. Department of Education . (2007, May). *No Child Left Behind and Charter Schools: Giving Parents Information and Options*. Retrieved April 02, 2016, from U.S. Department of Education : http://www2.ed.gov/nclb/choice/charter/nclb-charter.html

97 D. Ravitch. (2010). The Death And Life Of The Great American School System. How Testing and Choice Are Undermining Education. New York: Basic Books, p 94

quences and long-term effects for public schools, since many of its main components continue to influence American's perception of and vision for public schools. The passage of NCLB ushered in an era for American education, where emphasis is placed on accountability, measurement, and choice. These notions are important in education policy; however, the weight they have been given has drastically changed. Accountability, measurement, and choice have now become essential elements for controlling the public discourse about education. These ideas are meant to distract Americans from questioning what could be done to improve public schools otherwise. Concentrating efforts for educational improvement within these limited areas ultimately prevents Americans from asking essential questions that would lead to genuine change and transformation for public education.

President Obama came into office in January of 2009. There were high hopes for many across America that with his presidency there would be change. Educators were optimistic. There was hope once again for the transformation of America and its public schools. Unfortunately, President Obama's administration has not disrupted the course of education in the past 8 years. Across the board, Americans have not seen much of a change. Instead the perpetuation of punitive and damaging neoliberal policies has only been allowed to continue and gain momentum.

The recent educational reforms, associated with accountability, measurement, and choice, have continued to grow and have only gained traction during the Obama Administration. During, Obama's presidential campaign in 2008, he received the endorsement of many teachers' unions and other educational advocacy groups.[98] There was reason to believe his agenda was different and that his presidency would bring a change in educational policies.

During the transition between President Obama's 2008 election and his 2009 inauguration, the union favorite, Stanford University Education Professor, Linda Darling Hammond was asked to be the chief advisor for drafting the Obama administration's educational plan. The research she has led at the Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education and the School Redesign Network is focused more on

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[98] National Education Association. (2008, July 4). *Educators Vote to Endorse Obama - Nearly 10,000 NEA delegates approve presidential endorsement*. Retrieved January 20, 2016, from National Education Association: http://www.nea.org/home/11058.htm

educational equity than advancing corporate agenda interests.[99] However, in December of 2008, to the surprise and disappointment of many supporters of public education, President Obama selected Arne Duncan as the Secretary of Education. This felt like betrayal for many educators who had ardently supported his ascent to the presidency on what was felt like a foolish belief. They had hoped a new administration, focused on change, would deliver needed changes for American schools. This appointment was a compromise for the Obama administration and a sign that it would business as usual in terms of neoliberal education reform movement. Nothing would be changing.

Chicago Public Schools became known for its zero-tolerance policies when Arne Duncan was CEO from 2001-2008. His aggressive reform agenda won him praise on both sides of the aisle. His leadership was friendly to business stakeholders who sought to build public-private partnerships around a variety of education initiatives.[100] In making this selection, President Obama signaled his administration's educational agenda of giving the business elite and their foundations support as they continued to increase their influence over educational policy in the United States another eight years. Duncan's goal in Chicago was to blur the line between public and private institutions. In creating his new educational markets in Chicago, Duncan arbitrarily closed down public schools, fired entire school staffs, advocated for a growing police presence in schools, and expanded privatized charter schools.[101] These were the type of changes that were now on the way to Washington. These neoliberal policies would only be strengthened and continue to gain momentum at the national, state, and local levels.

In selecting an U.S. Secretary of Education who was not a teacher and who had limited educational expertise, the Obama administration showed a marked lack of consideration for the teaching profession. "*Mr. Duncan's background includes playing professional basketball in Australia and intermittently tutoring urban youth,*

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[99] The Office of the President-Elect. (n.d.). *Policy Working Groups*. Retrieved March 5, 2016, from change.gov: http://change.gov/learn/policy_working_groups

[100] U.S. Department of Education . (n.d.). *Arne Duncan, U.S. Secretary of Education—Biography*. Retrieved February 27, 2016, from U.S. Department of Education : http://www2.ed.gov/news/staff/bios/duncan.html

[101] H. A. Giroux & K. Saltman. (2008, December 17). *Obama's Betrayal of Public Education? Arne Duncan and the Corporate Model of Schooling*. Retrieved January 25, 2016, from truthout: http://truth-out.org/archive/component/k2/item/81572:obamas-betrayal-of-public-education-arne-duncan-and-the-corporate-model-of-schooling

but no formal teaching experience".[102] In not selecting an experienced educator, the new administration continued to undermine the already damaged teaching profession. Arne Duncan had limited experience and did not have a substantial pedagogical background. Without critical knowledge and experience on the subject of teaching and learning, Arne Duncan was chosen as a representative of the profession as the Secretary of Education for the United States. He was given command over the profession and allowed to lead and manage the nation's schools with policies that supported privatization and accountability.

Educator and Executive Director of the Albert Shanker Institute, Leo Casey has described the priorities of the Obama's Department of Education as seeming to be little changed from the failures of the Bush administration.[103] In appointing Arne Duncan to lead, many of the administration's policies just continued to align with the continued efforts of neoliberal expansion in public schools. The national corporate reform agenda model continued to be pushed by President Obama in the signing of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) in February.

The ARRA legislation was designed to stimulate the economy, support job creation, and invest in critical sectors, including education, in the aftermath of the Great Recession. Roughly $100 billion of the ARRA was allocated for education and $4.35 billion of that was set aside for the establishment of Race to the Top (RTTT). This money would be used to support a competitive grant program to encourage states to support education innovation.

Secretary Arne Duncan was given command over the conditions set for schools with the competing states for the RTTT money available. To be eligible for the competition for RTTT funding, states were obligated to implement new common standards, like the Common Core State Standards, and tests. States were also compelled to increase the number of charter schools. Those wanting to receive the funding were required to evaluate teacher effectiveness, primarily through their students' test scores. States accepting RTTT funding were pressed to "turn around" their low-

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[102] S. Dillon. (2008, December 15). *Schools Chief From Chicago Is Cabinet Pick*. Retrieved March 7, 2016, from New York Times: http://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/16/us/politics/16educ.html

[103] A. B. Dean. (2014, June 1). *Why Does the Obama Administration Keep Getting It Wrong on Education Policy?* Retrieved March 25, 2016, from Truthout: http://www.truthout.org/news/item/24031-why-does-the-obama-administration-keep-getting-it-wrong-on-education-policy

est-performing schools through punishing actions, like firing staff and closing down".[104]

The transformations needed for public education, however, did not come with RTTT either. It was simply a continuation of many of the failed NCLB policies. The main components still only served to standardize, centralize, and capitalize off of test-based accountability. Central features of the program were embroiled in controversy. They included the required implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) developed by networks, like The National Governor's Association (NGA) and Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), who are tied to corporate interest, a continuation of annual high-stakes national testing with extensive media reporting and sharing of the results, and connection of teachers' salaries to students' test results.[105] These reforms disrupt teaching and learning, so educators and students continued to suffer under neoliberal measures of reform.

Corporate trespassing and usurping of public institutions have resulted in forced competition. For-profit interest groups have crafted legislation to access public funding that has already been reduced to a minimum. The excessive testing is linked to corporations like Pearson or Microsoft. These companies, and other business partners, are now designing curriculum, creating tests, and scoring them for many school districts. Many schools are forced to use the CCSS and Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) exams produced in coordinated effort.

After having personally been employed by Pearson as a scorer for one of their exams in 2013 in Michigan, I had the misfortune to participate in the system that denigrates learning. During my six weeks of work during spring testing season, I understood ways in which profit benefits from miseducation. These companies pay unemployed educators piece-meal. Each test graded is counted in cash. These are the effects of linking learning directly to an instable political economy, where money and profit interfere with learning.

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[104] D. Ravitch. (2014). Reign Of Error. The Hoax Of The Privatization Mouvement And The Danger To America's Public Schools. New York: First Vintage Books Edition, p 14

[105] J. Onosko. (n.d.). Race to the Top Leaves Children and Future Citizens Behind - The Devastating Effects of Centralization, Standardization, and High Stakes Accountability. Retrieved February 23, 2016, from democracy & education: http://democracyeducationjournal.org/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1017&context=home

The data results from these types of outsourced tests are used to intimidate teachers through stringent "performance" and student "growth" measurements. Teachers' unions are losing the battle for workplace rights. Teaching contracts have been weakened. Class sizes are increasing and teacher salary and tenure are steadily becoming more dependent on student test scores. The data from the results of these tests, which are inauthentic assessments, biased, and faulty at best, have been tied to concrete consequences for teachers and their students. The media access to test scores is advantageous. The results can be manipulated and published to propagandize the failure of public schools. The importance of these scores has led to data manipulation, lying, and cheating. These reforms, based on testing, are rooted in the spirit of competition, and they do not make better schools. Efforts to improve American public schools through the RTTT funding have not worked. They have only increased the corporatization and privatization of public education. The startling conclusion of RTTT in some states' cases is they had to spend more money than they were rewarded in order to put in place the required mandates.[106]

In December of 2015, President Obama signed another bipartisan bill into law. This law included significant changes to federal educational policies. The new Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) loosened federal power and gave greater control back to state departments of education.[107] Students are still required to take federally mandated statewide exams but schools are now being encouraged to limit the focus on testing. The ESSA once again easily passed the senate and the house even during a period when the Republican-controlled congress has not typically found common ground. The neoliberal agenda for public education, however, continues to have political support from both the right and the left.

Currently, the general consensus seems to be that there is an educational crisis; therefore, it is critical to comprehend the educational policies and legislation that brought about the predicaments. This is a result of the pervasive neoliberal propaganda of the past 35 years. Citizens have slowly, almost imperceptibly, lost local

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[106] D. Ravitch. (2012, November 3). The Very Expensive Mandates of Race to the Top - The Record of Privatization: Look the Other Way - Did NYC Close the Achievement Gap in a Decade of Mayoral Control? Retrieved January 29, 2016, from Diane Ravitch's blog: http://dianeravitch.net/2012/11/03/the-very-expensive-mandates-of-race-to-the-top

[107] D. B. Peterson. (2015, December 10). *Obama Signs Bipartisan Education Bill into Law: Act replaces No Child Left Behind and returns power to the states*. Retrieved February 15, 2016, from The Wall Street Journal: http://www.wsj.com/articles/obama-signs-bipartisan-education-bill-into-law-1449767196

control and power over their communities. Corporate interests have been taking precedence over our citizens. Lower prices and greater efficiency have taken America's public schools hostage. This has become the dominant cultural capital of the United States. American's have been misled by these policies for the past four decades.

There has been a gradual establishment of private enterprise within the domain of public control. As different private interest groups have risen to power through systematic political planning, greater energy has been devoted to designing profitmaking strategies from public services and social institutions. Forming vast networks of intricately linked organizations, private interest groups have gradually taken decision-making powers from local communities, state agencies, and federal offices to profit off of society's basic needs. The takeover of American public schools is a part of the plan.

Corporate America has gained greater control and input in democratic institutions through lobby groups. Since the 1970s, these private interest groups have increased their influence to shape public policy and legislation. They have transposed their modes of operation and production on social structures of the American government. In acquiring public assets, private enterprise has found a never-ending source of revenue that can turn a profit. "*Within the United States, an impressive array of cities and local governments has made effective use of privatization to improve efficiency, increase competition, and reduce expenditures*".[108] Private interest groups intervening in public education and expressing interest in the use of free market fundamentalism to improve outcomes have used similar justifications to promote the use of corporate models in public education. This is the same way in which learning is approached in the business model classroom too.

In those types of classrooms, the sole focus is on building skills for capacity and efficacy through testing and measurement. These proficiencies are valued over creativity and innovation. These corporate models divide. Competition is valued over collaboration and is used to quantify, compare, and allocate. These models create division and perpetuate larger societal inequities. These are reductionist models. They do not meet students' needs and are contrary to the development of basic hu-

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[108] J. B. Goodman & G. W. Loveman. (1991, November December). *Does Privatization Serve the Public Interest?* Retrieved March 24, 2016, from Harvard Business Review: https://hbr.org/1991/11/does-privatization-serve-the-public-interest

man rights. These corporate reform models reduce students to human capital and equate the goal of education with these very same principals. Reducing it to an object and the learners with it. Investing in these types of models has produced little success for constructing institutions of learning in coordination with the needs of citizens.

Since the early 1970s, the rich have grown richer and the poor have grown poorer. The era of finance has brought with it policies that benefit corporate America. The neoliberal legislation permeating American politics is supported by corporate entities. Americans are now starting to pay the price for misguided choices. In "shopping for the cheapest products," Americans have shortchanged future generations. As local public schools close, Americans lose job security and Wall Street has unprecedented growth. These results are lopsided and contradictory to the results neoliberal supporters claimed free market fundamentalism would bring to public education and American society.

Chapter III:
Educational Benefits:
Is It Really All About the Children?

III.1 Introduction

American public education has evolved in conjunction with the progression of the political economy. Prominent figures and events have advanced the establishment of a public education system that works, however, only too often for the privileged few. The political economy, serving the needs of the dominant class, has directed the development, management, and incentives for learning in public institutions of education, and this direction has been misguided. A closer examination of historical events provides insight on different perspectives to build a better collective understanding about how to improve the current system of American public education. Realigning public education to meet the needs of children and the communities they live in extracts learning from the whims of the unstable political economy.

The purpose of public education must be reassessed along with the reforms being put in place to achieve those ends. As Aronowitz and Giroux argue, we must reexamine the *"social and ideological roles of educators… We must move to the terrain of hope and agency, to the sphere of struggle and action, one steeped in a vision which chooses life and offers constructive alternatives".*[109] Educational reformers are not searching for ways in which to engage students in creating a society different than what they live in today; their goal is to perpetuate the status quo and infiltrate public markets. According to post-Keynesian economist Marc Lavoie, the objective of free market fundamentalism is quite simple: *"to make markets as flexible as possible, which, the proponents argue, will benefit society in the end".*[110] As American citizens have seen, free markets do not benefit children in public schools, nor have they bettered local communities. Consistently, however, they have delivered profits for those who benefit from investing in them.

When assessing viewpoints, the student perspective is fundamental. If these changes are supposed to benefit the students, then the student voice and perspective can provide clearer evidence about what works, what has not worked, what is still not working, and what are ways in which to start making improvements. Examining the student perspective and experience in public schools can provide insight for a better way forward. Frequently, the argument made to justify neoliberal reforms is to

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[109] S. Aronowitz & H. A. Giroux. (1986). Education under Siege. The Conservative, Liberal and Radical Debate over Schooling. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, p 19

[110] M. Lavoie. (2009). Introduction To Post-Keynesian Economics. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, p xi

dismiss any critique by appealing to America's emotions through the claim that they are doing it for the children; however, more students are stepping up and challenging this argument since their futures are at stake. Efforts to activate forces against testing through opting out, imposing difficult conversations on politicians, and demanding transparency.[111]

The exponential growth of a data-driven culture in America's public schools has produced an environment focused on testing, the expansion of charter schools, and continued reduction in spending as a punishment for those schools unable to "efficiently" produce expected results. These policies actively contribute to what Henry Giroux calls The War on Youth.[112] Defending the possibility and existence of alternatives to the current system for future generations is of the utmost importance since current policies actively threaten and destabilize communities. Imagining other possibilities is not the goal of these neoliberal reforms.

Severe austerity measures, high-stakes assessments, and charter schools are corrupting learning and devaluing education. These devices normalize competition and demonstrate the destructive forces of free-market capitalism. In confronting ways in which these reforms narrow knowledge and pervert democracy, the American public can begin to engage in a counter-discourse and normalize dissent.

III.2 Impacts of Reduced Funding and Investment

Due to the decreased spending since the rise of neoliberal thinking in the 1980s, there has been less money spent, especially at the state level, on public education in the United States. Reaganomics, free market principals, and rampant capitalism has limited and dictated the direction of learning. This has been a palpable way to put constraints on movements that had gained so much speed and momentum in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s.

Some dissention had started to become normalized. Just as federal mandates had begun making gains in imposing integration and greater inclusion for all Americans, neoliberal thinking conveniently took control. Limiting crucial funding needed to expand opportunities and access has only brought order and control over any ink-

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[111] D. W. Hursh. (2016). The End of Public Schools. The Corporate Reform Agenda to Privatize Education. New York: Routledge. p 108-109

[112] H. A. Giroux. (2012, November 19). *War on Youth*. (H. o. Violence, Producer) Retrieved January 15, 2016, from vimeo: https://vimeo.com/53863154

ling of rebellion. As more Americans had gained access to a better education, they became more knowledgeable, and with that knowledge came the power to make more demands. These demands propelled protests against injustice, and gave the American people the confidence to become vocal in calling for change and more chances to participate and influence the redistribution of power structures not working for the vast majority. Many of the educational mandates that had been made would have required greater investment at all levels of government, but with the rise of antigovernment sentiments and purposeful publication of reports, like *A Nation at Risk*, the support for government intervention and spending were instead replaced with less.

In addition, beginning in the 1970s, the United States began an economic struggle to adjust to drastic changes brought by globalization and technological advancements, which resulted in less manufacturing work. These challenges continue to plague the United States. With the stagnation of wages for average Americans, there was now less money than ever before for local school funding, yet citizens were now being required more than ever before to get schooled in order to find jobs. This contradiction has left many Americans with no recourse for action. The spending structure, made through the reforms of Horace Mann, meant public education was primarily paid through local property taxes.

> Nationally, the highest poverty school districts receive about 10 percent less per student in state and local funding than the lowest poverty districts… Local dollars are derived mainly from property taxes, which can vary widely from district to district.[113]

As many cities experienced the outcomes of The Great White Flight, this has meant that many schools, especially urban schools, were left with little resources to reinvest in their local schools and their children's learning. Those schools unable to raise the money to support the "dreams" of their children were left with fewer qualified teachers, increased class sizes, choices of consolidation, and a variety of other drastic measures that only obstruct teaching and learning.

These local funding structures have burdened the most vulnerable Americans. There are large funding gaps, and when analyzing different states there is a great deal of variation in the progressiveness, or regressiveness of funding. In seventeen pro-

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[113] N. Ushomirsky & D. Williams. (2015). Funding Gaps 2015: Too Many States Still Spend Less on Educating Students Who Need the Most. Washington D.C.: The Education Trust.

gressive states, high-poverty districts receive much more, at least five percent. In these states, high-poverty districts receive about twenty-two percent more dollars per student. In six of the most regressive states, the highest poverty districts receive extensively less funding than the lowest poverty districts. The largest gap being in the state of Illinois, where students living in high-poverty districts receive almost twenty percent less state and local funding. New York, Pennsylvania, Texas, Maryland, and Michigan follow. In addition, inequities do not seem to just coincide with levels of income, but also along race and ethnicity for state and local funding. Those districts prevalently serving the largest concentration of African American, Latino, and Native American students have received substantially less funding.[114] These areas have also seen some of the greatest difficulties after being saturated in neoliberal reforms. The research demonstrates blatant discrimination in terms of investment, and the most vulnerable children who are in need of the most are instead being given the least. This is not the way to support America's most vulnerable citizens, and it certainly has not benefited children in the United States.

III.3 Data-Driven Testing

When some leaders speak of urgency in public education they only seek to create a state of emergency where uncertainty reigns. The goal is to divide and conquer through the rule of fear and violence. This enables educational reforms to be pushed through with little reflection and analysis at various levels of federal, state, and local governments. By focusing on a fabricated story of educational failure, a climate of frenzy has ensued. Market fundamentalists have used data-driven testing as an influential force to generate even more turmoil. Unquestioning faith in the analysis of numbers has allowed big data to drive manipulation and deceit. Alfie Kohn, a former teacher, and since writer, and speaker on human behavior, proposes his perspective on this data-driven culture of accountability in education. In his book *No Contest: The Case Against* Competition, he warns:

> It is difficult to know how one could ever prove decisively that something is a part of human nature… Data are not simply collected but interpreted,

[114] N. U. Williams. (2015). Funding Gaps 2015: Too Many States Still Spend Less on Educating Students Who Need the Most. Washington D.C.: They Education Trust .

> and how they are interpreted depends on what is counted as evidence as well as one's positions on other theoretical questions.[115]

When working with humans, such as in education, abstract concepts, like the measurement of learning, are oftentimes beyond empirical support. Reforms concentrating on testing and data-driven results produce shame and vulnerability for those already oppressed within a system set on defying their success. Those in control of the data can use their own theoretical positions to push forward their agenda.

As Noam Chomsky and Adrianne Robichaud argue in the article, *Standardized Testing as an Assault on Humanism and Critical Thinking in Education*:

> Standardized educational practices represent an attack on humanistic and critical education, as they are politically made to annihilate students and teachers creativity, individuality and autonomy in order to create more effective measures of uniformity and control. [116]

Assessments are inauthentic since they are limited in what insight they can provide. Testing only gives teachers a snapshot of where each individual student is in their progression of learning and interacting with the subject matter. This is something educators do within their classroom each day. The extraordinary efforts made by outside groups to force a testing environment on our children at school are only hoping to capitalize on the market they create for testing. The forced testing is suspect and is further evidence of ways neoliberal reforms are more focused on schooling rather than educating our children.

> Standardized measures like 'teaching to the test' are more likely to destroy the American educational system than to improve it, as there is an ideology of privatization and power concentration lying under programs like No Child Left Behind and Race to the Top… A lot of the motives underlying the "mass testing" practices and programs…. Are not dedicated to improve the education system, but to destroy it: the main goal is to try to privatize the educational system, and one way to privatize it is to get rid of the public services by, first of all, making it non-functional.[117]

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[115] A. Kohn. (1986). No Contest. The Case Against Competition. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, p 13

[116] N. Chomsky & A. Robichaud. (2014). *Standardized Testing as an Assault on Humanism and Critical Thinking in Education*. Retrieved January 13, 2016, from Radical Pedagogy: http://www.radicalpedagogy.org/radicalpedagogy.org/Standardized_Testing_as_an_Assault_on_Humanism_and_Critical_Thinking_in_Education.html

[117] Ibid.

The emphasis on the state of emergency in public education has created a revolving door of reforms that have negative effects on teachers and students. The defenseless, typically from low-income families and a part of a growing minority population, have predominately been some of the first to already feel the adverse impacts of these reforms. But neoliberal reforms affect everyone negatively. The turmoil created ultimately limits the potential of America's schools and nurtures people's basest instincts. Testing has increased with the passage of new bills and acts, and it has not led to better learning outcomes for American students.

In 1991, education historian Diane Ravitch felt the pull of these influential ideas when she served as assistant secretary and counselor to the secretary in the U.S. Department of Education for eighteen months. Under George H.W. Bush's administration she fell prey to the *"lure of the market… the idea that freedom from government regulation is a solution all by itself. This is very appealing, especially when so many seemingly well-planned school reforms have failed to deliver on their promise"*.[118] After growing disaffected from both the choice and accountability reform efforts, Ravitch soon became one of the strongest voices for the movement of dissent growing within the education profession.

In her book, *Reign of Error: The Hoax of the Privatization Movement and the Danger's to America's Public Schools*, Ravitch shares how her ideas have progressed since the 1990s. She promotes public education as a basic public responsibility and outlines ways in which schools can be strengthened and preserved. A solution she suggests is the elimination of high-stakes standardized testing. Making education reliant on testing is antagonistic for true learning. She claims testing teaches students false lessons and misleads learners since tests are dependent on finding a single right answer. Complex social or political issues of today do not have black and white answers. Testing obscures potential solutions for the challenging questions the next generation will soon be facing. Testing leads students to believe there is a right answer. These reforms offer no compromise under the false presumption that knowledge can be measured. Testing does not support students in accessing nuanced information. Testing ignores the shades of gray that come with answers in real life. *"The tests we now value don't teach what matters most, which is the ability to think*

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[118] D. Ravitch. (2010). The Death And Life Of The Great American School System. How Testing and Choice Are Undermining Education. New York: Basic Books, p 11

for oneself"[119]. By eliminating standardized tests communities can begin to put values into action. By focusing on the cultivation of learner autonomy and critical thinking skills rather than testing, communities can enrich public education, and eventually American democracy.

Ravitch has argued that the movement for accountability should be turned into one for responsibility. Those in charge of state and local systems should be included in administering these responsibilities from the top-down and including ideas from the bottom-up, or they should no longer be in charge of supporting and caring for our public schools. She believes the overemphasis on standardized testing has undermined the quality of education and demoralized professional educators.[120] As a former proponent of accountability and choice, Diane Ravitch has found herself reformed while our public schools remain in chaos, and American politicians continue to pass legislation that is detrimental for schools and authentic learning.

Public schools have been coerced and forced into adopting the neoliberal educational goals. As a part of federal mandates different standards and assessments have been forced upon American students as funding and other social support mechanisms have been eliminated. States are spending millions of dollars on testing, test preparation, and test materials. Some districts are allocating twenty percent of the school year to prepare for tests. It is a purposeful misallocation of already insufficient resources. Arguments for testing are often rooted in miseducation about learning. The limited funding schools receive could be put to better use. Testing has gone beyond being used as a measure, and has instead been used as an end itself. Standardized testing is not only used to label "failing" students but "failing" schools as well[121]. If a public school labeled at risk does not improve its assessment scores, it risks being closed and replaced with a charter school.

Higher test scores do not equate to a better education. People do not get better jobs or make more money through higher test scores. Tests skew the goals of learning. Assessments are framed as benefiting children and the public, a way to ensure efficiency, yet:

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[119] Ibid., p 266

[120] D. Ravitch. (2010). The Death And Life Of The Great American School System. How Testing and Choice Are Undermining Education. New York: Basic Books, p 260

[121] Ibid., p 12

> Test scores don't change the shape of the economy. No matter how high test scores go, they will not restore the good middle-class jobs that disappeared in the recession of 2008. Schools don't control the economy. They prepare people with the skills and knowledge to qualify for jobs, but schools don't create jobs… Public policy and events [do]. [122]

Misinterpreting the goals for assessing students has damaging effects for learning. Testing has hijacked public education and is being used to push forward a neoliberal agenda to destroy America's public schools.

Rampant testing has played a role in normalizing the perspective that education is a private good and its greatest use is the exchange value it brings to individuals rather than to American society as a whole. This reinforces an automatic conceptualization of the workforce and the job market as being defined through structures supporting competition rather than collaboration. Testing trains students to become competing laborers in a market defined by self-interest. Testing elevates this value, which is detrimental in cultivating communities built on solidarity and unification.

Testing encourages antipathy. Exposing students to increased testing during childhood and adolescence contributes to creating future antagonistic rivalries between laborers and only serves to benefit potential employers. Testing incites insecurity and stimulates individualistic mindsets. These feelings spur competition for resources and cultivate an American culture that is hostile towards cohesion and compromise. Testing trains students to accept a vision of scarcity and competition. As productivity has increased, selfishness, bullying and greed have won. Values like sharing, cooperation, and justice are absent. As larger shares of profits are appropriated from the public to benefit a few, once abundant resources, like a dependable public education, become scarce. Schools must be extracted from the testing trap to begin to develop ways in which school can support other goals and purposes for educating America's children.

As schools have become more dependent on data, their true purpose has been undermined. The unnatural focus on standardized testing has resulted in a narrowing of the curriculum for students.

> Districts have scaled back and students are no longer exposed to an array of lessons on the arts, history, civics, physical education, science, or for-

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[122] D. Ravitch. (2014). Reign Of Error. The Hoax Of The Privatization Mouvement And The Danger To America's Public Schools. New York: First Vintage Books Edition, p 13

eign language. If the subject was not tested, less time, effort, and money were given to support it.[123]

Focusing on performance limits students. In punishing our failing schools, we are punishing our children, and meanwhile removing choice and variety from their learning and little control over their personal education.

A culture of testing nurtures boredom, obedience, fear, and stress. In the past decade, the testing industry is thriving as the number of required standardized tests in American public schools has increased. A two year study released in October 2015 by the Council of the Great City Schools has found that the average American student in large city public schools will take about 112 mandatory standardized tests between pre-kindergarten and the end of high school. On average, there are approximately eight standardized tests each school year, and the tested material is found to be redundant. As the most comprehensive study on the impacts of testing, the Council's research found on average 4.21 days or 2.34 percent of school time was devoted to taking mandated tests during the 2014/2015 school year, but those estimates do not include the time taken to prepare students for the examinations.

Much of my development and training as a new teacher, starting in 2006, was influenced by the command of standardized tests. As a 10th grade English Language Arts educator in Baltimore City Public School System my students were required to take the Maryland High School Assessments (HSA). Students in the class of 2009 were the first sophomores to feel the substantial consequences of No Child Left Behind. The Maryland HSA exam would now determine if students would receive a high school diploma or not. At the end of my first year of teaching, a single test would determine my students' academic success.

At the end of their sophomore year, my students were expected to pass a standardized exam to measure knowledge accumulated over the years in a one-size-fits-all package. If they did not pass the test at the end of their academic year with me as their instructor, they would be labeled as needing intervention. They would no longer have time in their junior year class schedule for taking art, technology, foreign language, or other elective classes related to their personal interests. These "failing" students would now be taking intense intervention classes focused on test preparation

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[123] D. Ravitch. (2014). Reign Of Error. The Hoax Of The Privatization Mouvement And The Danger To America's Public Schools. New York: First Vintage Books Edition, p 13

for passing the next exam, project, or hurdle for securing a high school diploma. Their time in school would now be turned into concentrated test training rather than an education.

Not passing the Maryland HSA in English, Math, Science, and Government would be detrimental for some of my students already teetering on the edge of dropping out of school. Students already convinced that the powers that be were not working in their favor to provide a learning environment, where they could secure a real education, were now given less of chance to succeed. Many chose to drop out of school and leave behind the institution failing them.

In their sophomore year of high school, tests, like the Maryland HSA, are given to students, typically when they are sixteen years old; coincidently this is also the legal age when students can choose to leave school. Even though we know that standardized test results correlate more with family income and education than measuring a student's academic performance, we continue to invest the time and money in an industry more focused on labeling, punishing, and excluding our children than improving public schools.[124] Those who do not measure up to standards can then be more easily discarded. Schooling based on testing provides the distraction and justification for their disposal.

Overall, the data from the Council of the Great City Schools study reveals how time, energy, and money are being squandered on standardized testing. Frequently, students are taking these tests in conjunction with the summative assessments for their coursework; so much of the testing is redundant, and many schools do not receive the results from the exams in adequate time to use them to inform teaching and learning, so the original intent of assessments is obsolete. No correlation was found in the data between mandated testing time and reading and math scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), so there is no evidence to demonstrate that increased testing increases student performance.[125]

The assessments are not strategic nor do they provide actionable data in support of continued testing reforms. As the Council's executive director, Michael Casserly, shared:

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[124] D. Ravitch. (2014). Reign Of Error. The Hoax Of The Privatization Mouvement And The Danger To America's Public Schools. New York: First Vintage Books Edition, p 267

[125] Council Of The Great City Schools, Washington D.C. (2015, October 24). *Student Assessments in Public Schools Not Strategic, Often Redundant*. Retrieved March 3, 2016, from cgcs.org: http://www.cgcs.org/cms/lib/DC00001581/Centricity/Domain/4/Testing%20Report.pdf

> Everyone has some culpability in how much testing there is and how redundant and uncoordinated it is – Congress, the U.S. Department of Education, states, local school systems and even individual schools and teachers… Everyone must play a role in improving this situation[126]

American students are over-tested and devalued. Scarce funding is channeled away from learning through the delivery of standardized assessments across schools in the United States. These tests are outsourced to multinational, for-profit testing companies, yet their results have produced the intended consequences for those seeking privatization and profits. The tests are inefficient, yet they are held up as a model for efficiency. They fail children and subdue public knowledge and power. Manufacturing a need for testing pulls already limited funding away from children.

Teachers are trained professionals, who work to refine the art, craft, and science of their pedagogy. They are entirely capable of providing adequate assessments of the students they guide in their classrooms every day. Working in professional learning communities, public educators are more competent in determining learning outcomes, instilling curiosity, and assisting students in developing learning autonomy for a lifetime of learning, rather than a few days of bubble sheets and formulaic writing. In building stronger communities, teachers, parents, students, and administrators are given responsibility and authority in assuring the success of our children. Through collective efforts the standardized testing machine can be dismantled and discarded as communities disinvest in models of efficiency and numbers and reinvest in relationships, communication, and community, the crucial elements children need most.

III.4 Framing "Choice" and "Opportunity" through Charter Schools

The charter school movement theoretically stems from an entrepreneurial model for public institutions of education. The aim was to find a system to efficiently and effectively run public schools. Its development was intended to drive the creation of greater "choice" and more "opportunity" for students who would rather not

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[126] Council Of The Great City Schools, Washington D.C. (2015, October 24). *Student Assessments in Public Schools Not Strategic, Often Redundant*. Retrieved March 3, 2016, from cgcs.org: http://www.cgcs.org/cms/lib/DC00001581/Centricity/Domain/4/Testing%20Report.pdf

go to the neighborhood public school. In the 1970s, a New England educator, Ray Budde, brought forth the "charter concept". He had a strong interest in organizational theory and suggested teachers could be given "charters" from local school boards to encourage innovation and explore new pedagogical approaches.[127]

In 1974, Ray Budde published his ideas in a paper called, *Education by Charter*. At that time there was no interest. Public schools were not broke enough yet to require fixing, so they were not given priority. After the publication of *A Nation at Risk Report* from the Reagan administration, many returned to the ideas of restructuring that Budde had presented in his work from 1974.[128]

In the 1980s, Albert Shanker, a former president of the American Federation for Teachers, expanded "charter" ideas. He proposed a new kind of public school, a "charter school". These schools would be publicly funded but would be privately managed. They would only be allowed to continue by demonstrating academic success. Shanker believed "charter schools" could be freed from bureaucratic constraints to design reforms through teacher-led laboratories. In "charter schools" educators could experiment with innovative approaches. The schools would not be designed to compete with public schools but to engage in a cooperative, reciprocal relationship of improvement.[129] This imaginative model's original intent was for the benefit of educators. Allowing a space for professionals to refine their craft would benefit children. The original intention for the production of an alternative model was to drive intellectual innovation in education. The push for reorganization was not intended as a plan for the destruction of a public pillar. Yet the "charter" idea created a crevice in the public institution of education for private interests to pry open.

In 1991, Minnesota was the first state to narrowly pass the first charter school law, and a year later the first charter school, City Academy Charter School, was opened in St. Paul, as the state of California began passing its own charter school laws in 1992. Within four years, the Illinois Charter School law was passed to add a total of 45 charters across the state and in the city of Chicago. In 1998, the state of

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[127] Illinois Network Of Charter Schools. (2014). *History of Charter Schools*. Retrieved April 11, 2016, from incschools.org: https://www.incschools.org/about-charters/history-of-charter-schools/

[128] T. Kolderie. (2005, June). *Ray Budde and the origins of the 'Charter Concept'*. Retrieved April 8, 2016, from education evolving: http://www.educationevolving.org/pdf/Ray-Budde-Origins-Of-Chartering.pdf

[129] R. D. Kahlenberg & H. Potter. (2014). *Restoring Shanker's Vision for Charter Schools*. Retrieved February 26, 2016, from American Federation of Teachers: http://www.aft.org/ae/winter2014-2015/kahlenberg_potter

New York followed suit.[130] The charter school educational reform trend took hold. Once states began passing laws permitting the operation of charter schools, free market interests gained a foothold in the market of schools. With public funds, private interests could infiltrate and reorganize not only physical institutions of public education, but also the public perception of educational institutions by tying notions of free market fundamentalism to teaching and learning.

Another educational fad, more profitable than most others, had taken hold. Educational reforms, like charter schools, would be framed as beneficial for students. Before Albert Shanker died in 1997, he saw the "charter school" movement transformed. He witnessed some of the first mutations of his ideas. By the end of his life, free market fundamentalism was already starting to drive "charter school" innovations, rather than learning. As for-profit companies gained access to the charter school business, Shanker warned shareholders interest would be put ahead of educating children. Public school "choices" and "opportunities", in the form of vouchers and charters, expanded as they became increasingly tied to for-profit management companies. These premonitions have come to pass.

These companies have succeeded in further destabilizing public schools. Teachers working for these companies are not ensured the same rights as other education professionals working in public schools, therefore, the charter school business has eroded teacher rights, and they have sought to profit off of what Albert Shanker called "*quick fixes that won't fix anything*".[131] Under the pretense of offering more options to benefit children, profiteers have begun to leverage the necessary economic and political might to topple over already struggling public schools systems in the United States.

The National Alliance for Public Charter Schools has created a success story for the growth of options that have been opened by allowing the operation of charters the past few decades:

> Charter schools have grown by leaps and bounds, from a single school in Minnesota in 1992 to more than 6,400 charter schools today, serving more than 2.5 million students in 42 states. Between the 2012–2013 and 2013–

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[130] Illinois Network Of Charter Schools. (2014). *History of Charter Schools*. Retrieved April 11, 2016, from incschools.org: https://www.incschools.org/about-charters/history-of-charter-schools/

[131] R. D. Kahlenberg & H. Potter. (2014). *Restoring Shanker's Vision for Charter Schools*. Retrieved February 26, 2016, from American Federation of Teachers: http://www.aft.org/ae/winter2014-2015/kahlenberg_potter

> 2014 school years, enrollment grew by 13 percent, and seven districts now have more than 30 percent of public school students enrolled in charters.[132]

As there has been an increase in charter schools, there has been a decline in public schools:

> The pace of public school closings has been increasing during the past decade, driven largely by dwindling enrollments in urban districts hit hard by budget pressures and competition from public charter schools…In the 2000-01 school year, 717 traditional public schools were closed across the country, according to the National Center for Education Statistics. That figure rose to 1,069 schools a decade later in 2010-11.[133]

Using a generous network of powerful philanthropic connections at local, state, and national levels, public charter school lobbying efforts have found more space and more funding through the creation of influential legislation, public-private partnerships, and substantial donations. Partnering with organizations, like the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), the State Policy Network, Freedom Partners, Americans for Prosperity, and the American Federation of Children, the neoliberal educational reform agenda is assured since wealthy advocates, like the Koch brothers, the Walton's, and the DeVos family, bank roll many of those groups.

Groups like ALEC develop and push forward ready to print bills, especially to state legislatures, like their most popular bill, the Great Schools Tax Credit Act of 2015. This act allows families to receive tuition tax credits for the money they spend to send their children to private schools that could be religiously affiliated. This bill also provides those nonprofits donating money to the charter school to be classified as a "school tuition organization", so they can receive a tax credit of up to 100% tax liability and bypass budgeting processes and procedures. This reroutes tax revenues relied upon by the state and public schools.

Their networks have secured the necessary channels to funnel money into educational reform efforts aimed at supporting their agenda of liberating the free mar-

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[132] R. D. Kahlenberg & H. Potter. (2014). *Restoring Shanker's Vision for Charter Schools*. Retrieved February 26, 2016, from American Federation of Teachers: http://www.aft.org/ae/winter2014-2015/kahlenberg_potter

[133] L. Layton. (2013, January 29). *Activists to U.S. Education Department: Stop school closings now*. Retrieved January 13, 2016, from The Washington Post: https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/activists-to-us-education-department-stop-school-closings-now/2013/01/29/7eb27f40-6a39-11e2-95b3-272d604a10a3_story.htm

ket of education from government regulation. Their work has guaranteed that charter schools have less accountability and oversight and are held to different standards. Their advocacy for the charter movement has forced public schools to compete, and in some cases, ultimately close. Much of the allocated funding for the development of these schools goes unaccounted for and is lost.[134]

Putting proper mechanisms in place for charter schools would align with the goals of this movement for continual improvement; however, the private management companies and educational providers have shirked public oversight and government regulation. How can the public education system improve if these reforms are about the exclusion and participation of local actors? Local communities must be included since their voices and choices are what could possibly drive true systemic reform.

As charter school providers cash in on kids across the country, business model classrooms have expanded. The political and financial support of charter and voucher models expanded dramatically at the turn of the century with the passage of NCLB. In 2006, a research team of five educational researchers began to examine the impact of high-stakes testing and reporting requirements on students using publicly funded vouchers to attend private schools.

The multi-year state-authorized evaluation program allowed researchers to examine the longitudinal success of the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program (MPCP). This school choice program began as a small pilot in 1990 and grew to serve 20,996 students, nearly one fifth of the city's K-12 students, in 107 of the city's private schools by 2010. The MPCP is administered by the state's central education agency, the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI), which is funded by state and local taxpayers. Evidence from the research could report differences between public and private school performance overall, but was prohibited from reporting the results for individual private schools. [135]

In 2009, a new law, similar to the federal NCLB bill governing public schools since 2002, took effect requiring all private schools receiving vouchers to report the

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[134] Democracy Now. (2015, May 8). *As Obama Admin Seeks More Funding for Charter Schools, Questions Raised over Billions Already Spent*. Retrieved February 16, 2016, from http://www.democracynow.org/2015/5/8/as_obama_admin_seeks_more_funding

[135] J. F. Witte, P. J. Wolf, J. M. Cowen, D. E. Carlson & D.J. Fleming. (2014). High-Stakes Choice: Achievement and Accountability in the Nation's Oldest Urban Voucher Program. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis , 36* (4), 437-456.

average test scores of their voucher students. Starting in 2010, researchers had data available the last year of their study to make comparative analysis between the learning outcomes of students. They tracked voucher and comparable public school students up until the 2010-2011 academic year. Since the research team had been collecting the test scores of students since 2006, they were able to examine scores both before and after private schools in Milwaukee had to follow the same testing and reporting requirements as their public counterparts.

The research found that once private schools were required to report their results to the public, the test scores of students at the private schools improved dramatically. Overall it has already been found that *"on the whole, these privatized institutions do not produce higher test scores than regular public schools, except for those that cherry-pick their students and exclude the neediest and lowest performing students"*.[136] This study shows that only once these privatized schools were required to report results and make performance public, would the test scores of private school students improved. Professor Cowen, a lead researcher of the study, says the data gathered from this study in Milwaukee demonstrates market principals alone do not hold private schools accountable.

Had competition between private schools been maximizing the quality of education each provided to its voucher students, we would not have observed such a large gain in test scores once schools knew their results would be made public. If the market alone were enough, the schools' performance would have been optimal beforehand.[137] The research from this highlights the importance of the need for accountability laws to increase charter school performance if they are going to be allowed to continue to operate. The researchers acknowledge what supporters argue, that there is a role for the market, but conclude that it seems as though the same expectations and accountability expected of government agencies should also be demanded by those providing the same services in the private sector too. This would

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[136] D. Ravitch. (2016, April 3). *Diane Ravitch: The Crisis in Education Is That the Super Wealthy Corporate Education System Wants to Destroy Public Schools*. Retrieved April 21, 2016, from alternet: http://www.alternet.org/education/crisis-education-super-wealthy-corporate-education-system-wants-destroy-public-schools?akid=14134.18906.xRxLKH&rd=1&src=newsletter1053862&t=8"

[137] The Conversation. (2014, June 20). *Markets alone don't raise standards in private schools* . Retrieved March 4, 2016, from The Conversation - L'expertise universitaire, l'exigence journalistique : https://theconversation.com/markets-alone-dont-raise-standards-in-private-schools-27892

run contrary to neoliberal ideals, inhibiting innovation within the free market model of competition for schools.

This study demonstrates the risk of having schools operate without transparency and oversight. It is another example that shows how free market fundamentalism does not encompass an intrinsic desire for social responsibility without intervention and some form of monitoring. If charter schools are allowed to continue to operate and to receive public funding, then the American public must demand oversight and regulation so others cannot profit at the expense of American youth.

III.5 Conclusion: Free Market Economics: A War on Youth

Education has been and continues to be a talking point for political leaders at all levels, who are partnering with private interest groups or other lobbies trying to access available funding from taxpayers. These outside groups operate with different regulations and oversights and respond to special measures of accountability compared to public schools. The basic difficulty lies in the economic disparities running rampant in the American capitalistic culture. As Henry Giroux states in an interview with Truthout:

> The crisis of schooling cannot be disconnected from the economic crisis - fueled by endless wars, a bloated military-industrial complex, and vast disparities in wealth and income.[138]

The predicament facing American education is more complex than it may simply appear on the surface. Blame for the state of emergency has been misplaced on the defenseless. As a result of these reforms, many of the most vulnerable children are being treated as objects that come with a price tag. Private markets are trying to sell learning and knowledge. The state has funding available for each student, and this has become the true focus for many enterprises entering the educational market. Each child is a guaranteed moneymaker. They and their education have become a part of the consumer culture.

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[138] L. Thatcher. (2013, June 18). *The Educational Deficit and the War on Youth: An Interview with Henry A. Giroux*. Retrieved January 28, 2016, from truthout: http://www.truthout.org/news/item/17047-laboratories-of-democracy-an-interview-with-henry-giroux

What American youth need now more than ever are educators who use critical and humanist pedagogical approaches. These methods capture a need for an examination of the unjust social structures that must be uprooted. Within these pedagogies, there is an automatic examination of capitalistic codes, which have been internalized by too many. When approaching learning through these pedagogies the prevailing issues of class conflict can finally be addressed. In offering guidance, educators can begin to assist students in questioning, decoding, challenging, and eventually upending the submerged systemic structures keeping the vast majority of Americans from accomplishing their own personal pursuits.

> It would be irresponsibly naïve to expect humanist and democratic virtues to develop naturally. On the one hand, the motivation is to assist everyone in realizing their potential and leading a sovereign life of meaning and quality… we are well aware that both as individuals and as collectives, human beings tend to perceive themselves as better, more just or deserving [of] privileged access to resources denied to other groups. Since such selfish, ethnocentric, or even racist attitudes usually mean offending the humanity or denying the human rights of other groups, humanism seeks the universal application of basic norms of human dignity and equality.[139]

Finding space within the curriculum to discuss these ideas with students helps them to better understand themselves, others, and the world around them to begin to think of different modes of operation. By finding ways in which to help children explore, develop curiosity, and cherish discovery for the sake of knowledge rather than a way to find work, we are putting education before schooling. In ignoring the results of assessments and numbers from a data-driven culture, children become more than a workforce for the future.

A world where students can decide what they want to study based on what they enjoy, rather than finding work and earning money, is a truly advanced society and what children deserve for their future. Finding ways in which we can support education rather than a schooled workforce ready to fall into line for profiteering capitalists is entirely possible. Through greater focus on critical and humanist peda-

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[139] N. Aloni. (2011). Humanist Education: From Theory to Practice. In W. V. (Ed.), *Moral Development and Citizenship Education: Education and Humanism: Linking Autonomy and Humanity* (pp. 35-47). University of Fribourg, Switzerland: Sense Publishers, p 40

gogies that challenge the ways in which economic and political structures currently exist for the creation of a future different than the past. That is progress.

Chapter IV:
Limitations for the Public Good: The Need for Balance

IV.1 Introduction

Individuals, families, local communities, politicians at the state and federal levels, have worked together to change America's public schools. Systems can be improved, and at times, their critiques worked to improve the American public school system. Positive changes have happened in the history of American public education only when citizens have vocalized their concerns and at times fought for their rights. That is how many of the positive aspects of American society have been formed and shaped.

Knowing the critical role education plays in shaping the society we make is the first step. The American education system impacts the lives of each citizen. As a society we have to determine the ways in which public schools can and will develop each student's potential. This then works to shape the society we will live in one day.

IV.2 Limiting the Sale of Public Goods

In relentlessly demanding more, students are set up for failure, and with them the public education system. Once Americans are convinced that schools cannot and should not be run by public institutions, private enterprise will have won an endlessly valuable product to market, sell, and leverage in the favor of profit over stability. The commercialization of public education is already underway and growing unless the American public puts on the brakes.

The current environment of American public education is closely connected to market fundamentalist's religious faith in the free market as opposed to government trust.

> Free market advocates propose a long list of policies including an independent central bank that is free to set high interest rates… weak unions, greater labour market flexibility, wage restrictions, and reductions in both public services and tax rates. They propose balanced budget amendments, or the quasi-elimination of fiscal deficits…[140]

The political corporate reformers eschew any form of the transparency, monitoring, or oversight that they expect and demand of government agencies such as

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[140] M. Lavoie. (2009). *Introduction To Post-Keynesian Economics.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, p ix

public schools. The parasitic reform efforts have advanced private markets aim to compete with government services. Their primary function is to siphon off public funds from American taxpayers, thereby crippling already underfunded services in order to close down public institutions.

As government shifts more control of public goods and services to the free-market, the more the ruling class profits with the compliance of the majority through passive inaction. Without restrictions, the advancement of private interests will be assured through public funds.

IV.3 America's Succeeding Schools

When educational historian Diane Ravitch is asked about the crisis in American education, she points to the real threat, which has come at the expense of a public school system attempting to make strides towards fully educating all children in our communities. As Ravitch shares,

> Yes, there is a crisis, but it is not the one you have read about. The crisis in education today is an existential threat to the survival of public education. The threat comes from those who unfairly blame the school for social conditions, and then create a false narrative of failure. The real threat is privatization and the loss of a fundamental democratic institution.[141]

When speaking with educators, analyzing their experiences within the system, and reviewing the effectiveness of educational policies that have been put in place in the recent decade, researchers have not found sufficient evidence to support the belief that education solely cannot help vulnerable populations achieve the "American Dream" by simply climbing the social ladder through schooling. Education, undoubtedly, is an important dynamic in generating a belief in social mobility; however, believing education is the sole solution for societal deficiencies is detrimental and counterproductive for the progression of a more equitable society. Education cannot and should not be the primary force for assisting society in making fair social and economic changes.

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[141] D. Ravitch. (2016, April 3). *Diane Ravitch: The Crisis in Education Is That the Super Wealthy Corporate Education System Wants to Destroy Public Schools*. Retrieved April 21, 2016, from alternet: http://www.alternet.org/education/crisis-education-super-wealthy-corporate-education-system-wants-destroy-public-schools?akid=14134.18906.xRxLKH&rd=1&src=newsletter1053862&t=8"

False narratives about American public education have hindered the progress of genuine public education reform. There has been a refrain about America's failing school for years now. There are ways in which schools could always be improved, but the rising crescendo of voices slamming the public education system in the United States has grown dramatically with neoliberal reforms. This is not a mere coincidence. States have been forced to deal with reduced budgets through the cutting in social spending that took hold in the 1980s and have only continued. This has put a strain on public services like schools. Some school districts are experiencing significant deficiencies and are having problems operating because of the defunding.

In addition, families are feeling the economic difficulties of the past decade since the recession of 2008. In the United States, 21% of children live below the federal poverty level, and 45% come from low-income families.[142] These numbers are more important than student test scores. America's political economy is not working in many students favor. Societal distress and suffering are brought into the classroom every day. Many educational triumphs for America's students cannot be easily captured in a standardized test score, yet the system has been slow in uncovering different ways in which to measure genuine progress and achievement for pubic schools. Today's students are struggling through the social and economic traumas of our time. Many of the existing educational structures are modeled on outdated ways of thinking and planning, as well as inadequate funding for the majority.

Negative views about the state of the American public education system are spread through propaganda.

> In fact there's a large-scale attack on public education that's based on the same principle, if you can privatize . . . and the same techniques are being used. Defund it so it doesn't work, complain about how it doesn't work, privatize it, it gets worse. But then you've undermined social solidarity and it's fine for the wealthy anyway. They'll get what they want. All of this is part of a quite impressive campaign of class war, which has many aspects.[143]

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[142] C. DeNavas-Walt & B.D. Proctor. (2015, September). *Income and Poverty in the UnitedStates: 2014 - Current Population Reports*. Retrieved January 22, 2016, from U.S. Department of Commerce Economics and Statistics Administration: https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2015/demo/p60-252.pdf

[143] N. Chomsky. (2011, April 7). *The State-Corporate Complex: A Threat to Freedom and Survival*. Retrieved January 22, 2016, from chomsky.info: https://chomsky.info/20110407-2/

Public schools are targeted by propaganda and negative media hype to inflate its failures, undermine its legitimacy, and evade calls for justice.

The most severe privatization efforts are located in the poorest and most vulnerable communities in Detroit, Chicago, Baltimore, or Washington D.C. These cities have felt the loss of a massive amount of jobs in the post-industrialized economy. The increase in unemployment coupled with the Great White Flight has left these school districts with less funding and fewer resources. Now charter schools are delivering another blow, as local neighborhood schools are being closed and replaced with support for for-profit charter schools. Specific case studies are available each day in newspapers across the country as specific schools and districts suffer the consequences of neoliberal reform efforts. By and large, they have been detrimental for public schools and American citizens.

Faced with the shuttering of public schools, parents and local community organizations are organizing grassroots efforts in response. Their efforts are gaining traction. Coordinating with other organizations and efforts, communities are utilizing the power of solidarity to gradually supplant imbalances. Part of the problem with many of these reform efforts is misguided leadership. Those political and outside philanthropic decision makers are heavily involved in the shaping and evolution of educational policy and legislation. Unfortunately, they are usually too far removed from the classroom to have an authentic understanding of the needs of today's American students. Those in the classroom should be empowered to search for solutions.

IV.4 Conclusion: Stronger Public Control

In the United States, there is a commonly held belief that educational achievement brings success. School has increasingly become an integral part of realizing the "American Dream". This powerful construct remains stubbornly stuck even in the face of overwhelming evidence demonstrating otherwise. The public education system in the United States has largely been constructed and served to uphold this desirable myth. Americans' feelings about our public education system are firmly rooted in a pervasive belief of meritocracy. The "American Dream" is about determination and hard work. School takes determination and is hard work; therefore,

many believe achieving in school brings prosperity and the "American Dream" to life.

The new world had split with old ways of thinking, declaring a revolution and liberty for all in the 18th century. With this schism, the creation of a new system of education was designed and progressively put into place. It served to spread and uphold necessary and fundamental American values based on the belief that one should succeed on merit rather than heritage or class. Strengthening and reinforcement of this misperception have only been reinforced through the development of a supposed "meritocratic" American public school system. If you go to school, work hard, and persevere through your own determination, you will be successful. This is the way the "American Dream" works and public education has played a big role in the perpetuation of this myth.

Belief and support in public education has been a primary measure of support to uphold the belief that Americans can and should be able to "pull themselves up by their bootstraps." Debates over public education and social change are linked in many ways. With each development, to further expansion and inclusion, Americans have come to see school as a means for achieving upward social mobility. The popular notion that education is the primary solution for eliminating poverty is a gross assumption. The logic rooted in this assumption can be used as a tool to push for greater control and adoption of the private market model for the American education system. Affected populations are fighting many of these impending changes to their school systems, and they are aligning demands related to public access for schooling to other basic human rights needed for a new political economy.

The idea that education is the most critical, individual key to social mobility and satisfaction places an enormous amount of pressure on local school leaders, teachers, and students. The burden of this pressure takes the form of using only data-driven instruction as a means of achieving acceptable test scores for sustainable school funding and operation. When struggling communities burdened by societal ills have students who are not able to perform to the levels demanded by a subjective set of standards, this permits an opening for private interest groups to decry the state of education, thereby permitting for-profit enterprises to craft ways in which they can benefit from the inevitable failure of chronically underfunded public systems.

These reforms only continue to perpetuate and worsen the status of struggling public school systems, thereby opening up a free market to further the cyclical ineq-

uity that neoliberalism brings. Misunderstanding the objectives of this wave of reforms has powerful ramifications for the shaping of educational policy in the United States. Focusing on public education as the solution makes it possible to ignore other important aspects that should be more fully investigated to truly create a more equitable society.

This logic is only used to put forth risky educational reforms that often undermine the authority of local governmental forces and the role of the teacher in the classroom. Education can be an equalizing force, but it cannot act as the primary driving force for a fairer and more just society. There are other mechanisms that can promote greater social mobility and equity in America.

Conclusion:
Re-Educating American Society

How does an examination of the past connect to a better future?

Sources of difficulty to improve education are rooted in political and economical contexts. Current reforms, in the end, only serve as a tool to perpetuate the vast social inequities of contemporary American society. Local power and control of public education systems are steadily threatened through new free market policies and legislation that feign to provide more choice, efficiency, and rigor for students and government in order to create a new and improved society when, in fact, they only serve to conserve the old world order.

In the past few decades, a growing faith in the free market economy has allowed outside interests the freedom to interfere to a much greater extent in shared public interests at all levels of government. In finding a niche in public education, through a data-driven culture of testing, accountability, and charter school expansion, private enterprises have been able to create wide networks of intricately connected organizations. These outside business networks have increasingly begun to insert themselves into many areas of public operation, and their past and current efforts to reform American education should be of vital public concern.

Increasing expectations, raising standards, and demanding more rigorous curricula have become the new mantras for improving American public education. We continually expect students to know more and do more. This has placed an enormous amount of pressure on educators and children in schools across the country. Maybe we are expecting too much. Maybe that is the point, the creation of a workforce that is always willing and ready to do more with less.[144]. These impractical, individualistic, antisocial pressures reduce students' and America's potential through unrealistic expectations. They spur Social Darwinist thinking and normalize competition.

In addition, there continues to be issues surrounding equitable funding and the growing use of technology. Without the needed money or tools, many schools are struggling to meet requirements that are being put forth by federal mandates. American public schools are trying to close achievement gaps within an age of massive inequity; however, these obstacles and others are proving to be too difficult to overcome. That is the point of neoliberal education reforms.

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[144] A. Clover. (2016, January 24). *I can't find the "Less" in the Middle of so much "More"*. Retrieved January 28, 2016, from Filling My Map - The life of a constant explorer: https://fillingmymap.com/2016/01/24/i-cant-find-the-less-in-the-middle-of-so-much-more/

The history and development of public schools gives insight into current circumstances for education in America. There are many lessons to be learned from past reform efforts. History provides us with direction. It should teach us what ideas to avoid and possible positions to seize upon and develop for positive social advancements. Structural changes must be made in order to re-approach public education in the United States through a new perspective. From these lessons, we can better understand ways in which to design a society where everyone can profit from collective productivity.

Part of the solution lies in finding ways in which to balance power and extract learning from the impulses of the free market. In order for American schools to live up to an impossible myth a meritocratic America through pubic education, then all schools must receive funding equal to their needs. There is no need for philanthropic contributions. Education should not be seen as a charitable cause; it is a basic and fundamental right for every American. Through the empowerment of educators in states around the nation, the demoralization of teachers and their profession is disputed. Teachers are contesting the neoliberal policies preying on their work, the children they teach, and the communities they are a part of. Their activism motivates change on a broader scale beyond the classroom.

There are many questions that must be asked to work towards improving public education in the United States. Finding ways to put actions into words makes it about the children rather than private interests. Working to recreate a system where authority and norms can be challenged brings forward new questions for exploration. As the country prepares for overwhelming transitions, new ways of examining accepted traditions must be normalized for positive societal progression. This is one of the first steps in re-educating America as the country undergoes another demographic shift, already underway. Americans must rethink the ways in which societal structures should reflect a diverse, multicultural country represented by collective inclusion.

The greatest gains for a more inclusive public education system were made during the postwar period leading up to the early 1970s, when neoliberal policies began to take root in response to societal transformations. Public fear of these transformations was created as a way to manipulate the political economy to the advantage of free market economy supporters. The changes that happened in the 1970s related primarily to increasing international trade of goods, labor, and capital. There

were other ways in which politicians and corporations could have responded for the good of the public and global environment, but instead specific preparations and planning were selected for a few instead.

The organizing forces of wealthy individuals and corporations established networks to challenge social policies and shape government to their advantage. The strength and power of free market fundamentalism has grown over the decades through the establishment of new legislation. Steps that had been made towards the unification and normalization of a counter discourse have since been battered. The political ideology developed for the benefit of the market and the individual won precedence over the community and political democracy; however, these ideologies are being challenged much more frequently since the economic recession of 2008. As the discourse grows louder and Americans hear, see, and feel the repetitions of the facts, greater collective efforts are gaining speed in response. Social media and other outlets are being used by individuals to connect with others to communicate, collaborate, and cooperate in making changes, little by little through time.

There have been challenges to the dominant cultural hegemony in the past. Common assumptions and ways of doing things have been displaced bit by bit before and they can be moved again. Through critical reflection and engagement, public awareness and agency have challenged the ways in which social structures are designed and operate. The history of these experiences is engrained in us. The raising of class-consciousness is a process, and as a global public, increasingly connected, we have arrived at a time when the lessons of the past cannot and will not be ignored.

What are the ways in which a humanist education, rather than schooling connected to economic and class interest, can be recognized as a basic right?

Over the last few decades, the American public education system has been shaped by the demands of the market. Where there was demand for a product, there were jobs, and education was expected to follow in turn. The global economy has changed politics and new policies have changed public education. The forces of the political economy are now, more than ever, controlling the development of education. As an integral part of American culture, public schools play an important role.

They have the potential to act as a catalyst to produce a revolutionary transformation for a better society. That is the power of a strong public education system.

Public education has been one of the principal social structures for upholding a belief in the "American Dream" and the conviction that we live in a meritocratic society in the United States. Because of this, education has come to be seen as a force for social mobility. These aspirations have not yet had the chance to be fully realized. The possibility is to imagine what a society would like where those dreams could happen, and then look at what must be done in the United States to create that. To believe that there is a way, and we are on the way, progressing towards making a better world for the next generation collectively, is one way to defeat the pervasive powers of neoliberal thinking.

Next the myths must be defeated and exposed. In many respects, the privileged have benefited the most from our public schools. By producing an educated workforce and society in which private interests have had the possibility to flourish, public schools have ensured the growth and investment in human capital; however, that should not and cannot be the sole purpose of public education. American schools must anticipate potential changes and help shape a collective future. Through a planned evolution, modern schools can be designed to meet the new, unfamiliar, or unknown demands coming with continued globalization and technological developments. Innovative policies and reforms will be instrumental for genuine systematic growth or progress in education and in strengthening other societal structures. Finding ways to enhance and maintain power and control within local communities is a part of broader effort for generating greater participation and inclusion in American culture and society.

Through small deliberate, actions and long-term planning, local movements continue in the search for sustainable models to deliver essential services, democratically. Public education must provide a place where future citizens can question, think, and explore unknown solutions for timeless struggles. Undermining knowledge and gaining greater power through the privatization of learning only halts the eventual progression of the future political economy. Unfortunately, a vast majority of Americans work against many of their own interests. They have been duped into believing in the power of an unfettered free market.

Those at the top are benefiting from America's existing social structures. The ruling classes are using their wealth for power to ensure the American education sys-

tem is systematically structured for a few to have a firm grasp on the largest piece of the pie. Interfering in public education disrupts democratized learning and is a central strategy to maintain and expand dominance over the working class. Neoliberal education reforms are being used to guarantee the subordination of the majority.

> The ability of wealthy individuals, foundations, and corporations to intervene throughout society shifts control away from individuals' operation in the marketplace to the wealthy. What has developed in the United States is not free markets but a plutocracy, or rule by the rich.[145]

Heterarchical networks have contaminated public belief systems about the current role, performance, and outcomes of public education in the United States. Different philanthropic powers from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to the Walton family have bullied their way into shaping educational policy and legislation. They have made it difficult to determine ways in which they are participating in the destruction of the public system in order for their empires to continue to profit:

> It is difficult to keep track of the funding that the Gates Foundation and other philanthropic organizations give to nongovernment organizations, universities, and other educational organizations. Instead of hierarchical systems, we now face heterarchical systems in which decisions are made at different places as a part of a web of decision making.[146]

In changing the social imagining of American culture, American belief systems have changed. These networks have designed public policy that nurtures an anti-political mood thus reinforcing anti-government sentiment to suit private interests and profit motives. Their goal is to create distrust and disillusionment with government led initiatives and the possibility of believing in other options. Ultimately, this has led to an atmosphere of cynicism and diverts energies from the palpable solutions. Neoliberal policies are on the rise in many public spheres including American education. In order to challenge this wave of thinking, private interests must be removed from participation in the public sphere of providing essential services.

The workforce is an important human voice. Balance and moderation benefit everyone. It is the right of Corporate America to seek a profit and it is the right of the American public to demand fair wages and working conditions. This ultimately pro-

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[145] D. W. Hursh. (2016). The End of Public Schools. The Corporate Reform Agenda to Privatize Education. New York: Routledge, p 7

[146] Ibid., p 34

vides a better balance for everyone in the end, however, since the 1970s there has been less leftover to share after those on the top have taken their portion. The balance of power has been broken. Any sort of moderation has subsided in favor of the wealthiest. In order to regain a secure structure, the working class must be given a fair share of influence and authority.

Labor unions are part of a healthy, balanced economy. They give the American working class a voice. They are a part of the economic system of checks and balances. The working class deserves the right to have some sway and control in the direction of the economy. As a collective organization, labor unions have power, therefore, so do individual working class Americans. Unified as a group, individuals are more powerful. This is why the destruction of unions has been a primary goal of the neoliberal agenda.

Legislation like the Right to Work law passed in so many states only reward those who own the means of the production, and only serve to undermine the worker. Using the labor unions as a wedge, neoliberals have unleashed a relentless attack against groups advocating for basic human rights related to compensation, health, and education laws. Policies like these must be challenged and overturned. Allowing this ideology to permeate American culture has led to a worldview where the individual is supreme, where the other is lower than me, where society is based on competition and division rather than one of collective humanity. Exposing the myths of how only a few profit from an individualized, consumer culture, strengthening the force of labor unions to begin suturing divisions, and taking steps to create open communication promotes shared interests are ways Americans can work to together to make the United States work for the majority.

What are the ways in which neoliberal policies are destroying public education in the United States?

Limiting equitable access to education and learning ensures social class structures remain the same. This is a part of maintaining the status quo and perpetuating a capitalistic system that benefits the few and is broken for the vast majority. The population continues to focus on competing and beating the other, rather than finding ways in which to equitably distribute available resources, and reinvest in public institutions. The more public education is shaken up by continual reforms, slammed,

condemned, and then changed again and again, the more existing dysfunctional structures are strengthened. Finding a way to stop and effectively re-evaluate these criticisms would imply a need for an extraordinary discourse about ways in which education could truly be restructured for a better society rather than a system that has been subsumed by the shortsightedness of the neoliberal agenda.

Public education continues to be held up as a significant instrument for producing a more equitable society and as a way to achieve social mobility; however, many problems exist in this approach. Education is being used as a critical component of the capitalistic market to confirm, affirm, uphold, and pass on individualistic, hierarchical structures of a competitive capitalistic system through these ways of thinking. Society can change and reshape the purpose of education. It has been done before, and it can be done again. Transforming the ways in which public schools function produces independent citizens who are ready to participate in and take control of our democratic societies rather than creating individuals ruled by fear and consumerism in an uncertain economy.

How can American educators challenge neoliberal ideology?

When I first entered the teaching profession in 2006, the shiny quick fixes from the recent educational reforms seemed like a way to address many of the problems plaguing public schools. The idea that the complex art and science of teaching human beings could simply be reduced to producing a "data-driven" culture of "accountability" has a certain allure. The tempting assurance that gross injustices could possibly be fixed through the control of education is enticing, but delusional. It is unrealistic at best, and destructive at worst.

The data-driven culture in public education distorts learning and distracts Americans from resolving cultural contradictions related to class conflict and the redistribution of public goods and services. They detract attention from an increasingly stratified American society. Rather than assisting students in addressing concrete issues with real questions, teachers are now chained to multiple-choice questions and formulaic writing that limits answers. Educational reforms like these have only hindered societal progression and will continue to do so unless autonomy and authority over the teaching profession is given to those educators truly occupied with designing a public education system grounded in producing democratic equality.

It seems so easy to focus on the numbers, the solution residing in the elevation of test scores to improve academic achievement, and hopefully with that giving students the opportunity to pursue their own personal goals. Sadly, this perspective does not take into account the larger dysfunctions of the political and economic systems in the United States. The data and numbers only serve as evidence for further disgrace and shaming of those without the means or power to change the way the system functions. The numbers become justifications for continued inequity and work well for blaming individuals for their dilemmas, rather than recognizing ways in which societal structures have been designed to increase those predicaments that more and more Americans are finding themselves in each year.

The development and framing of neoliberal reforms has been a calculated effort. These policies have tapped into two critical areas of pedagogy: assessment and evaluation. They have captured the attention of teachers and the public because they have seized upon a wave of movements centered on data and the ways the powers of new technologies can be harnessed and used to guide the advancement of different theories of learning. Assessment and evaluation are critical and an integral part of teaching and learning, however, they are only a part of a much larger skill set educators need to focus on in order to help students learn. The narrowed focus on these areas has purposefully created an educational imbalance. Limiting learning to achievement and failure furthers the goals of neoliberalism and upholds the codes of capitalism.

In limiting the intricacies of learning to measurements, the teaching profession has been taken captive. It is understandable that educators would be drawn to the idea that perhaps the complexities and difficulties of teaching could be boiled down to the simplicity of those familiar classroom methods of assessment and evaluation, where the goal is to ensure students achieve "academic success", so they can move forward in accomplishing their personal pursuits. Academic achievement is a priority, but learning is more than measurements and success. Reducing humans to results only serves the interest of a consumer culture, consumed by itself.

When extracted from the grips of capitalism, authentic learning is about discovery and understanding. Learning is communicating and participating to learn more about oneself, others, and the world. The neoliberal educational reforms no longer allow room for this, and they ultimately work to exclude the strengthening of humanist and critical pedagogies that educators would like to see and use more of in

their profession. These pedagogical approaches are what students and the world so desperately need. There are a variety of diplomatic, health, and environmental crises looming on the horizon. Many of those solutions require disinvestment from corporations seeking to profit from suffering and destruction. The remedy for public education is the remedy for the American political economy. By dissolving commitment to the free market of education, learning is released from maintaining embedded notions of capitalism in the classroom, thereby liberating knowledge and power, and giving educators a chance to find ways in which to encourage students to take an active part in being the solution, rather than a simple number.

As a part of the "intellectual" American workforce, educators must find ways to safeguard the teaching profession against neoliberal policies aimed at simplifying learning and founded on the naiveté of quick fixes. These fads market education and commercialize learning while ignoring blatant injustices. Inequitable funding plagues American public schools. This problem has only steadily increased as austerity measures have been embraced. Framing the testing and privatization movement as a way to create efficiency is deceptive and misleading, therefore, educators are making greater efforts to educate others on what has happened to learning in America's public schools.

Individual parents, teachers, unions, activist organizations and other groups are uniting to make a concerted effort to confront rising inequities in states across the country. There are battling a number of cases in the courts across the nation. As educators have faced greater challenges in teaching our children, they are becoming leaders in the battle against neoliberalism.

The increased use of standardized testing has warped public perception of education. High-stakes testing, that takes time away from the classroom and diminishes the joy of learning, has become a staple of American public schools. These tests are now seen as a fundamental part of "learning" for those leading the rebranding of knowledge. Stress, pressure, and punishing consequences have become normalized and are now a routine part of the school year for teachers and students. As testing has gained strength and force, it has become harder to imagine an American educational landscape without it. This is the purpose. The result is the replacement of assessments and numbers for relationships. Reducing humans to data detaches learning from learners. Various forms of privatization, through charters and vouchers, only aggravate these problems further. They are taking part in the unraveling of Ameri-

ca's public schools. Educators are working to counteract against this. Administrators and teachers must work together to reverse existing oppressive and demoralizing reforms to ensure that the existing system progresses in a direction that upholds the dignity of learning. Doing this demonstrates commitment to students and communities.

Too many teaching professionals have gotten carried away from educating. Reforms have sought to elevate and reinforce a framework for the public to see education as a private good, tied to economic social mobility. Changing educator outlooks can begin to help change the public perception and stop the myth that schools and teachers should heroically struggle to preserve impossible possibilities through misleading notions of educational achievement.

Americans have been swept up by these inappropriate reforms, thinking that with advanced technology and measurement, results could be produced for students. They have been duped to believe that scientific solutions could reduce learning to systematic processes through the use of numbers to measure. But in the end all we have gotten is garbage in and garbage out as private interest has profited off. Harnessing the component of evaluation seemed like a way to produce empirical evidence to make the teaching profession a science, however, when only taking assessments, standards and objectives, into considerations, this science fails to account for the complexities of human behavior.

In building a critical pedagogy, can American public education begin to address issues of class conflict and looming economic and environmental disasters?

When the federal government has stepped in to create equalizing forces through education, there has been positive, progressive social change. As states were required to integrate in the 1950s, education became more accessible. Through the passage of key pieces of legislation throughout the following decades, great gains were made in civil rights for all Americans. As women and minorities had more access, there were greater opportunities. These changes were advantageous for the United States in the past. They led to positive consequences and results. As we prepare for changes to come, we must look back at ways in which the federal government can set the tone and lead the country on issues of equity. When the federal gov-

ernment steps in and leads in the establishment of agreed upon boundaries and limitations for education, health care, environment, and economic matters, real issues have been addressed. Insisting these questions are addressed is a critical part of a humanist pedagogy and the lessons that today's children need.

There will be a continual fight to defeat and hold at bay the basest desires and human instincts, in the belief that better qualities of humanity and humility can win out for the greater good, to change the larger American and global societies. One of the first revisions should be to the federal constitution including an amendment for equalized funding for schools in all states across the country. Putting money where American values should be will help the country arrive in becoming the leader for global political and economical change. Progressive changes like these, play a compelling role in influencing revolutionary change. Changes like these are required for global economic and ecological stability.

Federal leadership that pushes forward legislation to mandate equal school funding for all students, in all districts, across all of the United States will combat the need for creating "choice" or "opportunity" for students through charter schools. Americans must commit to investing in all children. If money makes so little difference, as has been claimed by others, than why is it that the money cannot be more evenly distributed? If money does not matter in education, then those districts that already have the advantage of greater income and the privileges of cultural and social capital should be willing, ready, and able to share. The distribution of state finances to those who have a greater need for investment is a significant part of the solution.

As public expenditures have been cut on social spending, across government agencies at all levels for the past few decades, America's schools have been struggling to maintain some of the most basic services for students. Due to the reduction of funding, other donors have started to step up to cover needed expenses. Charitable giving and philanthropic efforts are admirable; however, there is a problem when public institutions seem to have become dependent on receiving money from private interest rather than through collective social democratic efforts of taxation and agreed upon spending. The charity, schools are now receiving, especially since the recession of 2008, has increased. Those "charities," which are typically representations of Corporate America, are only "giving" a fraction of the monies they are taking. Neoliberal policies at best minimal learning environments, and the need for

charities to give to public schools should be a source of shame for one the wealthiest countries in the world.

Can new demographics begin to challenge hegemonic powers and normalize dissent through a supportive counter discourse?

Changing population demographics and key governmental public school initiatives have driven a number of educational reforms as well as certain aspects the political economy since the 1970s. Because public school enrollment changes are largely reflective of demographic changes in population, it is important to review the ways in which student enrollment has changed in the United States to arrive at a better understanding of where things now stand in 2016. Studying historical changes in American public education provides insight into ways in which changing demographics, changes schools, and in turn the ways in which schools, and the teachers and students within those communities, can change political and economical structures.

Improving American public education is a topic that interests, unites, and divides. The percentage of citizens who participate in the American schooling demonstrates the vested public interest in finding ways to make it work better for everyone. Currently, the total population of the United States is about 321 million. In the fall of 2015, about 50.1 million students started public elementary and secondary school and approximately 20.2 million students were attending American colleges and universities. This marks an increase of about 4.9 million since fall 2000. American elementary and secondary public school systems employ about 3.1 million full-time-equivalent teachers.[147] American citizens actively participate in the institution of public education in a variety of roles. The United States Department of Labor currently lists 1.3 million jobs associated with American colleges and universities and are predicting job growth of 13% in the next 10 years.[148] As more and more Americans are seeking a degree at institutions of higher education, this sector will continue to see tremendous growth in instructional and administrative staff.

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[147] U.S. Department of Education - Institute of Education Sciences - National Center for Education Statistics. (n.d.). *Fast Facts - Back to school statistics*. Retrieved March 3, 2016, from National Center for Education Statistics: http://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=372

[148] U.S. Department Of Labor. (n.d.). *Postsecondary Teachers*. Retrieved March 3, 2016, from Bureau Of Labor Statistics: http://www.bls.gov/ooh/education-training-and-library/postsecondary-teachers.htm

The educational reforms impact everyone directly and indirectly; therefore, an informed public must begin to address ways in which to extract those educational reforms that inhibit democracy. Continual evaluation of ways in which our public education system is accomplishing goals for the common good versus selected interested parties is of the utmost importance to ensure the development and progression of a society that represents the values of a united America rather than a stratified hierarchy of the past.

In tracking recent trends, the Institute of Education Sciences projects student enrollment and jobs associated with the education sector to increase in the next 10 years. Annual enrollment in American public schools increased slightly from 2014 to 2015 and is predicted to increase to about 7 million students by the fall of 2023. The enrollment is expected to reach 57 million students.[149] With this growth, there will be increased expenditures and a need for funding that has been and continues to be under strain. There are many reforms looking to address this issue by creating greater efficiency, more capacity, and ways of "doing more, with less," yet they reject alternatives for addressing the social, cultural, pedagogical, economic and political challenges of improving the public institutions of education.

Changing demographics in the United States are deeply connected to recent reforms of the past few decades. The consequence has been the restructuring of the expectations for American public schools. Closer examination of major events in the last half-century provide key insights to understanding present-day concerns facing educators and students. Examining different educational reforms that changed the structures of America's public school offers new perspectives and approaches to analyze various economic and political transitions through time.

Investigating American educational reforms in conjunction with changing political and economical structures in the United States opens the door to question what changes are possible for both arenas in the decades to come. Principally, transformations in student enrollment demographics must be taken into consideration when examining the most recent educational reforms of the last ten years. The shifting demographics of school age children reflects the nearing of political and economic changes just on the horizon for America.

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[149] U.S. Department of Education - Institute of Education Sciences - National Center for Education Statistics. (2015). *Fast Facts - Enrollment trends*. Retrieved March 3, 2016, from National Center for Education Statistics: https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=65

Key demographics concerning the next generation of Americans relates to an aging population and a society that is growing more diverse. These coinciding population changes are central in the examination of ways the political economy could potentially change in the future. What are the impacts of a population that is increasingly getting older and more multicultural? How can America make sure there are adequate social structures in place to support the needs of both of all groups? These are questions that are closely linked to the problems of the growing movement to privatize American public schools. When we examine these trends, there are crucial elements, which are central in the examination of changes to come in public education and the American political economy. Existing structures and reforms must be challenged in order to meet the needs of all Americans of the next generation.

In 2010, the median age in the United States was 37.2 years of age. This is an increase of 1.9 years from the 2000 median age of 35.3 years. Americans are growing older and living longer. Education will remain critical even if many Americans do not have school age children. Educating a growing population requires money. All Americans must contribute in funding the education of the next generation whether or not they currently have children of school going age.[150]

There is no single group emerging to claim the racial or ethnic majority through immigration or birth rates. Non-Hispanic whites are the oldest and Hispanics are the youngest. Our youngest populations are the most diverse with 47% of children younger than five belonging to a racial or ethnic minority group.[151] Areas of public education must learn to provide equitable support and address blatant inequities. This means focus should be on funding systems of support for English Language Learners and the expansion of pre-school programs for all children.

Most Americans have participated in or been a part of a public schooling system. The majority of the population was a student or has had a child attending public school at one time or another, and others may have even worked in or with a public school system. Due to these personal experiences, strong feelings are often associated with learning or working within the American public education system. It is easy

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[150] U.S. Department of Education - Institute of Education Sciences - National Center for Education Statistics. (2015). *Fast Facts - Enrollment trends*. Retrieved March 3, 2016, from National Center for Education Statistics: https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=65

[151] U.S. Department of Education - Institute of Education Sciences - National Center for Education Statistics. (n.d.). *Fast Facts - Back to school statistics*. Retrieved March 3, 2016, from National Center for Education Statistics: http://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=372

to feel as though we intimately know and understand something since it has had such a tremendous impact on most of our lives. These collective ideas about public school are powerful, and they have a strong influence over how schools work in America.

A great labor force is needed for undertaking the education of a country, and as a result many are exposed to the American public education system at one point in time or another in our lives.[152] The shifting demographics of America mean white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant values are no longer culturally dominant. In 2014, the National Center for Education Statistics, registered 49.7 percent of students entering public schools as white, compared to 50.3 percent of students identifying as black, Hispanic, Asian or another nonwhite ethnicity. Only 10 years ago, nearly 60 percent of public school students were white. They project that by 2022, the figure will fall to 45 percent. As more Americans identify with other ethnicities, their engagement and participation cannot be ignored.[153]

In March 2016, organizations united their efforts through a letter addressed to the acting Secretary of Education, John B. King Jr. Vocalizing concerns over the Every Student Succeeds Act signed by President Obama in December of 2015, they cite their apprehension due to "*the history of state and local decisions shortchanging vulnerable students*," and their hope is the "*department cannot shirk from its regulatory and enforcement responsibilities to ensure that the ESSA eliminates, not perpetuates, persistent inequities in our nation's public education system*". They argue today's students, *"especially students of color, students with disabilities, English Learners, Native students, low-income students and other vulnerable students"* are facing challenges that are "*different than they were 50 years ago and the stakes are high*".[154] As reform efforts move forward, Americans must step up and challenge whether or not the educational transformations are for the benefit of the public good in the changing neighborhoods and local schools of a multicultural United States.

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[152] U.S. Department of Education - Institute of Education Sciences - National Center for Education Statistics. (n.d.). *Fast Facts - Back to school statistics*. Retrieved March 3, 2016, from National Center for Education Statistics: http://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=372

[153] W. J. Hussar & T. M. Bailey. (2014, February). *Projections for Education. Statistics to 2022 - Forty-First Edition*. Retrieved March 3, 2013, from U.S. Department of Education - National Center for Education Statistics: http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2014/2014051.pdf

[154] T. L. Rights, ACLU, Education, A. f., (AAUW), A. A., (ADC), A.-A. A.-D., AUCD, et al. (2016, March 4). *Civil Rights Statement of Support for Robust and Meaningful Federal Regulation and Oversight in ESSA*. Retrieved April 24, 2016, from civilrightsdocs: http://civilrightsdocs.info/pdf/education/ESSA-letter-March2016.pdf

> Intellectual self-defense should also be a communitarian and solidaritarian practice: as government and media ideological mechanisms are constantly trying to isolate individuals by various means, it is important to come together, share and discuss ideas to rediscover a solidarity constantly threatened by the imposition of an ambient individualism.[155]

These statistics represent change. American society has not been founded on the best "traditions". Many of the "conservative" values that accompany American "traditions" should be challenged, and the best time to vocalize the stubborn existing contradictions is during the beginning of that transition.

American society is undergoing a transformation, there are too many of the once few now for the few at the top to remain ambivalent to the impending changes. As technology has increased, so has global communication. Changing political and social structures ensures a change and progression for American culture. The changes to come must truly values diversity, global diplomacy, and cooperative communication for the benefit of not only Americans but global citizens as well. Education is one of the ways a possible new American culture can emerge.

Through the creation of possibility and a reimagining of public education, can all citizens be given the opportunity to participate fully in the cultural, economical, and political developments of a future American society?

Public education is a universal human right. Education is worth fighting for since it could be used as an equalizing force.

> We are fortunate, nevertheless, in that after millennia of religious wars, ideological violence and brutal racism, the family of nations has finally, on December 10, 1948, determined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that 'without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, religion, political, or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth

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[155] N. Chomsky & A. Robichaud. (2014). *Standardized Testing as an Assault on Humanism and Critical Thinking in Education*. Retrieved January 13, 2016, from Radical Pedagogy: http://www.radicalpedagogy.org/radicalpedagogy.org/Standardized_Testing_as_an_Assault_on_Humanism_and_Critical_Thinking_in_Education.html

of other status… Everyone has the right to life, liberty, and security of person.[156]

When societies determine educational equality is essential for advancement and progression, they tend to have a more informed and engaged citizenship with a wider dispersion of information and greater access to resources. This can contribute to building collective capital. Educators working with critical pedagogy models are starting to gather force. Using cultural, social, and human capital rooted in the exploration of a counter discourse, American educators find ways to connect through unions, social media, and other efforts. Developing spaces where educators can share in building a community of public school teachers who are informed and familiar with neoliberal reforms are manipulating their work and schooling our children.

When a society has strong support mechanisms to secure and support public funding for education systems, this contributes directly and indirectly to not only building knowledge, but also in facilitating the growth of networks between different groups of people for community building and ongoing political debate at all income levels.[157] Countries with equal educational opportunities have a well-informed population and increased political engagement. This leads to greater polarization and increases political debate. When countries have unequal educational opportunities, this then leads to lower levels of political engagement because of the limited access to information.

Torben Iverson & David Soskice research, has demonstrated the influence of educational opportunities. In their recent research investigating the role of information, inequality, and mass polarization, they have found that public education is one of three social-institutional mechanisms, along with strong unions and embedded social networks, which are linked closely with the distribution of wealth, political knowledge, and divergent ideologies in advanced democracies. Societies with fewer opportunities for equitable education tend to have weak mass polarization and voters then place themselves "ideologically" towards the center of the political spectrum rather than aligning their political beliefs with their own economic self-interest;

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[156] N. Aloni. (2011). Humanist Education: From Theory to Practice. In W. V. (Ed.), *Moral Development and Citizenship Education: Education and Humanism: Linking Autonomy and Humanity* (pp. 35-47). University of Fribourg, Switzerland: Sense Publishers, p 40

[157] L. Drutman. (2015, November 4). *America may be in a reinforcing feedback loop of growing inequality and Republican rule*. Retrieved February 23, 2016, from Vox Media: http://www.vox.com/polyarchy/2015/11/4/9665842/republican-inequality-future-loop

therefore, "*polarization is thus strongly mediated by political information*".[158] Their recent work has found that educational opportunity greatly affects the dispersion of political information. With equitable institutions of education, low-income citizens tend to shift their ideology away from the political center, which leads to higher mass polarization and spurs political debate for social progression.[159] Investing in public education then is one of the leading factors for enabling citizens for greater political engagement and in turn strengthens democratic participation.

Education is central for the sociocultural evolution of a society. The strength of a country's public education system is beneficial for all citizens; however, it requires a massive amount of investment. For a public education system to actively contribute to the social progression of a nation, then money, energy, and time must be devoted to its continual improvement. For these reasons, public education can be used as a source of contention or cohesion for communities. How different countries choose to adequately support and improve their public education systems for citizens is revealing. The allocation of funding represents the social, economical, and political balances power.

As one of the leading countries of the modern world, the American public education system serves as an instrumental model for many countries around the world. Many cultural exports, including educational trends, have spread with globalization and the growth of multinational capitalism. American cultural exports are of special significance since many of these ideas are being used to shape a global identity.

Henry Giroux insists we must shape an education system that is focused on notions of Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy approaches. This involves shaping an education system and educators who are focused on truly providing curricula to support student-centered learning where students are encouraged to think critically and engage in democratic discourse and dialogue. American students need an education that is about empowerment and liberation, rather than finding work and getting paid. Educators must actively work to involve students in the destruction of systems of power and hegemonic ideology.[160]

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[158] T. I. Soskice. (2015). Information, Inequality, and Mass Polarization: Ideology in Advanced Democracies. *Comparative Political Studies , 48* (13), p 1783

[159] T. I. Soskice. (2015). Information, Inequality, and Mass Polarization: Ideology in Advanced Democracies. *Comparative Political Studies , 48* (13), p 1783

[160] R. K. Webb. (2006). *Radical Pedagogy*. Retrieved January 28, 2016, from From Romantic Humanist to Postmodern Pedagogy: How the Alien Becomes Normative in Contemporary Educa-

Educating students to question generally held assumptions and presumptions, leads them in the creation of a society where the workforce is ready to actively participate beyond the role of production and competition, and instead move towards a more cooperation, where everyone is striving to meet the needs of the greater good. The growth and support of labor unions locally, nationally, and globally contribute to these progressive changes. Recent movements within the United States and across the globe are bringing many of these issues to light. Through the Occupy Wall Street movement and other student led demonstrations, American youth are expressing their dissatisfaction with the current political economy and consuming neoliberal policies that shut out other options. Education will play a prominent role in perpetuating the drive for change and transformation.

When the government does not listen and respond adequately, the public must advocate and become active in the creation of a new set of rules in the global economy. These rules should work to ensure corporations live up to minimum standards that have been set up by the public, so the interests of the working class are represented in political economy through collective force.

Educators are a part of an intellectual collective force that must help current issues move from the politics of protest to the politics of mobilization and action in order to change the structures and frameworks of existing society, including those protecting the schooling of American education. These changes should be based on the American values of justice, equity, and social democracy. National and global political systems have given those on top too many additional opportunities for too long and we have returned to the past. Deeper embedded problems must be tackled. Finding ways to work together, we can manage to find a better system for more equitable distribution. Education is and always has been in the service of liberation.[161]

Measuring politicians and mass media against humanist values that take into account critical thinking is the best way to annihilate the neoliberal ideology that has taken hold over American culture. Henry Giroux has described the neoliberal agenda

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tion: "http://www.radicalpedagogy.org/radicalpedagogy/From_Romantic_Humanist_to_Postmodern_Pedagogy__How_the_Alien_Becomes_Normative_in_Contemporary_Education.html

[161] C. V. Gorder. (2008, Summer). *Paolo Freire Children of the Oppressors*. Retrieved March 5, 2016, from Lesley University: http://www.lesley.edu/journal-pedagogy-pluralism-practice/chris-van-gorder/pedagogy-children-oppressors/

as a *War on Youth*, and through several mechanisms it seeks to devalue humanist values and extol vitriol and avarice.

> The modernization of propaganda and control mechanisms – Orwellian politics, commercials and religious and ideological brainwashing – has meant increased possibilities and opportunities to depersonalize and transform people into fanatic soldiers, submissive workers and addicted consumers.[162]

Educators must go beyond schooling American children. As intellectuals working within a hegemonic system, teachers have a choice for ways in which to serve the next generation. Giroux goes on to say that if there is a defense against historic trends, then teachers must participate in the disruption. Educators, academics, and intellectuals should organize themselves as an intellectual guides serving society. They must undertake the development of proper "immunizations" to protect the younger citizens from the effects of hegemonic establishments, especially those that consider and treat people as "usable and abusable" tools, only to be used to achieve greater wealth and domination.[163] By deconstructing the dominant modes of interaction and communication – in politics, religion, commercials and the mass media – educators can *"equip his/her students with crap detecting kits"* as a form of *"counter education"*. [164] The goal of education is to empower students with cultural, critical, media, and political dynamic literacies in order to immunize them against the pervasive and deceptive power structures and dominating media messaging. Once questioning and dissention are normalized, then challenges to the system will be sustained. Only then can we begin to reimagine other reasons for learning and de-school American society.

To develop critical thinking and an open mind, education remains a singular force for challenging students to think "outside of the box", to find alternative solutions. Damaging neoliberal policies, which support a political environment of oppression, are undermining the responsibility of educating our children. This creates an environment for public schools where freedom and liberty are under threat. If humanist and critical pedagogies are discouraged and rejected, it is because they reject

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[162] N. Aloni. (2011). Humanist Education: From Theory to Practice. In W. V. (Ed.), *Moral Development and Citizenship Education: Education and Humanism: Linking Autonomy and Humanity* (pp. 35-47). University of Fribourg, Switzerland: Sense Publishers, p 36

[163] Ibid.

[164] Ibid.

pervasive capitalist ideals. Public schools are one of the last public spaces where the strength of opposition can reside. Once students are released from its confines, they are bombarded with a propagandizing media, which they must know how to interpret and navigate. It is our responsibility to stand up and to protect public schools.

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Annex

Résumé français

La Scolarisation aux États-Unis : Comment les Réformes Néolibérales Déstabilisent l'Éducation Humaniste et la Pédagogie Critique dans les Enseignement Publiques

La reconnaissance de l'éducation en tant que droit fondamental, conditionne la possibilité pour tous de participer équitablement dans le développement culturel, économique et politique de la nation. Le privilège de la scolarisation et des études était jadis réservé à une élite, aujourd'hui cela doit être un droit pour tous et un pilier pour la construction d'une société plus égalitaire et démocratique.

Les institutions américaines publiques, et notamment les écoles, furent crées pour assurer le développement de notre capital culturel, social et humain. Les conséquences, pour la société, d'un système scolaire publique sont multiples, et l'importance qu'on y attache, dépend des intérêts qu'on défend. Aujourd'hui, nos écoles publiques se vouent à créer un climat stable pour le modèle capitaliste. Ce que Arronowitz et Giroux nous décrivent comme:

> Hierarchically structured patterns of values, norms, and skills that characterize both the workforce and the dynamics of class interaction under capitalism are mirrored in the social dynamics of the daily classroom encounter. Through its classroom social relations, schooling functions to inculcate students with the attitudes and dispositions necessary to accept the social and economic imperatives of a capitalist economy.[165]

Historiquement, le développement des écoles a aussi contribué à amener des changements sociaux. Prenons l'exemple de la loi G.I. de 1944[166] qui a permise à 2,2

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[165] S. Aronowitz & H.A. Giroux. (1986). Education under Siege. The Conservative, Liberal and Radical Debate over Schooling. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul. p 74
(Les motifs hiérarchiques de valeurs, normes et compétences qui caractérisent et la main-d'œuvre et la dynamique des interactions de classe sous le capitalisme, se reflètent dans la dynamique sociale des rencontres dans les salles de classe. À travers les relations sociales dans les salles de classe, la scolarisation agit pour inculquer aux étudiants les attitudes et dispositions nécessaires pour accepter les impératifs sociaux et économiques de l'économie capitaliste.)

[166] BOSS News Network. (2016, April 1). Higher Education at the Crossroads. Retrieved April 27, 2016, from BOSS Magazine: http://thebossmagazine.com/higher-education-at-the-crossroads/

millions de vétérans de guerre de rentrer en formation. Mais depuis les années 70, le néolibéralisme, aux États Unis, s'est opposé aux acquis sociaux des décennies précédentes.

Sa montée en puissance a changé la perception du rôle du politique dans l'économie et dans la société. Le mouvement néolibéral a œuvré pour diminuer les régulations étatiques et s'est affranchi de sa responsabilité sociale au profit de l'appât du gain. Les législations néolibérales privatisent de fait les infrastructures sociales en se servant de coupes budgétaires, en dérégulant l'économie, et en affaiblissant les syndicats ouvriers, détruisant ainsi l'idée de solidarité nationale. Ils imposent un cadre favorisant la liberté économique au détriment de celle des citoyens. Ainsi David Hursh nous explique dans « *The End of Public Schools* » :

> The motivation for these efforts are profit, political power, and a desire to divert the public's attention from more substantial and intractable issues of poverty, inequality, and inadequate housing and health care… the corporate reformers recognize that there is a lot of money to be made in schools, especially by taking assessments and curriculum out of the hands of teachers in schools and centralizing them at the state level.[167]

La croyance qu'un marché dérèglementé puisse bénéficier à tous est démentie par les énormes profits de quelques uns et par la montée de la pauvreté de la majorité. Ainsi dans ce même ouvrage :

> Economic inequality and poverty have increased. Childhood poverty in the United States has increased to an extent that it has the second highest level of child poverty among 35 industrialized nations… over half (51%) of all students attending public schools are eligible for free or reduced lunch…therefore, more than half of our public school students live in poverty.[168]

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[167] D. W. Hursh. (2016). The End of Public Schools. The Corporate Reform Agenda to Privatize Education. New York: Routledge. p 32
(Les motifs de ces efforts sont pour le profit, la puissance politique et le désir d'éloigner l'attention publique des problèmes plus substantiels et insolubles tel que la pauvreté, l'inégalité, les logements indécents et la sécurité sociale…. Les réformateurs corporatifs se rendent qu'il y a beaucoup d'argent à gagner avec les écoles, particulièrement enlevant les examens et les programmes du giron des enseignants des écoles et en les centralisant au niveau étatique.)

[168] Ibid. p 10
(L'inégalité économique et la pauvreté ont augmentés. La pauvreté infantile aux États-Unis a augmenté à un point où elle est la deuxième la plus élevée des 35 nations les plus industrialisées…plus que la moitié (51%) des élèves fréquentant les écoles publiques sont éligibles au dé-

La deuxième révolution industrielle du 19e siècle, de par le changement économique et politique qui l'a accompagnée, a restructurée le fonctionnement de notre société. Il en va de même pour l'actuelle révolution digitale et la globalisation économique, qui ont un impact significatif sur l'évolution de notre société. La révolution industrielle du 19e siècle a amenée une nouvelle façon de manufacturer, forçant une urbanisation accélérée ce qui a entrainé l'adaptation du système scolaire publique. La croissance industrielle a encouragée l'immigration et a amenée une nouvelle école pour former ces nouveaux Américains. L'école est devenue un vecteur important pour inculquer les valeurs américaines. Les valeurs des anglo-saxons protestants blancs, se sont ainsi vues imposées à toute la société. Ainsi une main-d'œuvre qualifiée a pu être conditionnée au profit de la culture dominante. Les écoles publiques en ont étés l'instrument.

L'histoire nous a montré que l'éducation des citoyens influence le développement de la société. Et c'est aujourd'hui que les lobbies de l'industrie et de la finance ont fait leur entrée sur le marché de l'éducation publique. La doctrine de la croissance économique, et l'appât du profit dominent les idéaux de jadis. Ce sont ses idéaux qui forment la politique d'éducation d'aujourd'hui. Soutenu par de riches fondations, ces « meneurs » s'affranchissent de toute obligation de transparence démocratique. A chaque fois que l'Amérique des Corporations profite de baisses d'imposition, le gouvernement peine à financer les services et infrastructures publiques. La législation fiscale est devenue de plus en plus favorable aux corporations, tant sous les gouvernances républicaines que démocrates. Les vacances laissées dans les services publics, aussitôt occupés par des organismes privées, transforment ces mêmes services publics qui adoptent des modes de fonctionnement calqués sur les modèles pives. Sous le manteau de « réformes » le néolibéralisme domine l'évolution du system éducatif tant aux États-Unis qu'ailleurs. Il gagne du terrain particulièrement aux États-Unis. Si ses reformes continuent elles finiront par abîmer le système d'éducation publique et exacerberont les injustices et inégalités qui sont déjà très importantes dans la société Américaine.

Aux États-Unis, les réformes néolibérales ont transformé l'environnent éducatif pour les étudiants et les enseignants dans la plupart des districts scolaire. En tant que enseignante durant ces dernières dix années, j'ai vécue moi-même les dégrada-

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jeuners gratuits ou à tarif réduit…ainsi, plus de la moitié de nos élèves du publiques vivent sous le seuil de pauvreté.)

tions idéologiques et de financières de l'éducation publique. Cet assaut sur les écoles publiques ne cible ni les étudiants ni les enseignants individuellement, on pourra le concevoir plutôt comme une attaque sur la société Américaine. En classe, j'ai vécue toutes les contradictions de ces dernières réformes et je me suis rendue compte des dégâts que cela cause à l'éducation des étudiants. Les récentes reformes n'améliorent que le profits des investisseurs mais n'aident pas les étudiants à progresser mieux. Ils ciblent les syndicats d'enseignants et empêchent les États-Unis d'évoluer vers une société plus équitable. Prétexter la liberté du marché pour justifier la destruction du système scolaire n'est qu'un prétexte pour démolir les idéaux sociaux et démocratiques qui se sont construits en parallèle avec l'éducation publique.

Les écoles se sont continuellement adaptés aux les conditions sociales. Quand la société moderne est devenue plus complexe, les structures l'école publique et notre point de vue sur l'enseignement a évolué dans le même sens. L'enseignement publique est devenu partie intégrante de notre société. Il enseigne de nouveaux concepts et forme l'esprit des générations futures. La culture dominante a toujours su imposer son point de vu aux institutions publiques, et l'école publique a ainsi contribuée à la construction d'une Amérique blanche et protestante. L'important était de maintenir la tradition et les idéaux conservateurs qui se sont ainsi trouvés en position de continuer à profiter des structures capitaliste qui sont mise en place pour assurer leur domination.

L'éducation publique joue un rôle majeur dans l'éducation des Américains. Les États-Unis sont passes par différentes transformations culturelles. Le rôle que jouait l'éducation s'est toujours adapté au contexte social. Les dernières réformes du système scolaire publique sont le miroir de révoltions culturelles, sociales et politiques qu'a connu la société.

La démographie change et avec elle les institutions publiques afin de répondre à la diversité des cultures. Les écoles publiques doivent maintenant anticiper de quelle façon elles voudront maintenir le status quo social ou encourager la transformation de la société.

Établir un service scolaire public fonctionnel est perçu comme étant de plus en plus important dans un monde où le changement technologique accélère. La scolarisation est perçue d'importance croissante pour maintenir une mobilité sociale et des opportunités égales pour tous. Mais si le seul but de la scolarisation est d'acquérir les outils pour l'avancement social, alors nous reléguons les écoles à des

auxiliaires de l'économie de marché. Néanmoins c'est cet aspect seul de l'éducation, que mettent en avant les réformateurs néolibéraux. Or les conséquences de la poursuite de cet objectif ne cessent de dresser les étudiants les uns contre les autres, ils ne promeuvent que la compétition au dessus de la collaboration, un individualisme exacerbé au dessus de la solidarité et nient tout intérêt collectif de la société. La société américaine doit ouvrir un large débat politique et redéfinir les buts de l'éducation de ces citoyens. Elle doit se poser la question de savoir si les but de la scolarisation visent le bien des intérêts privées au dessus de ceux de la société, de savoir si elle veut préparer ses étudiants pour qu'ils puissent jouer un rôle politique actif ou ne se satisferont de jouer leur partition dans le marche économique mondial. Alors seulement pourra-t-on débattre des interconnections de notre économie politique et de la façon dont elle est en train de faire défaut au système d'éducation publique. En se remémorant l'histoire de l'avènement du system d'éducation publique, nous comprendront mieux l'état dans lequel se trouve ce système aujourd'hui et comment les réformes néolibérales ont permises aux intérêts privés de s'accaparer une importante partie du budget de cette institution.

La force d'une société réellement démocratique se mesure aussi à l'état de son système d'éducation public. Ainsi, on doit s'intéresser à l'implication et des enseignants et des étudiants dans les processus d'évolution du système de scolarisation. Comprendre son évolution lors de bouleversements historiques, évaluer ses succès et ses échecs aideras à juger les réformes actuelles dans leur contexte. Adapter le système d'éducation publique aux besoins des élèves et aux communautés directement concernées, le resitueras dans son juste contexte sociétal et le retireras de l'emprise des forces du marché.

Récemment, les programmes « No Child Left Behind » (2001), « Race to the Top » (2008) et « Every Child Succeeds Act » (2015) ont instigués une culture du contrôle dans les écoles américaines.[169] À cette occasion, les écoles privées du type « Charter School » ont aussi vu leur champ d'action élargi.[170] Cette focalisation sur des résultats chiffrés à travers des tests de plus en plus standardisés, ignorant les particularités des écoles et les potentielles difficultés des élèves, a essentiellement eu pour effet de pénaliser les écoles qui étaient déjà les plus en difficulté. Ces écoles

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[169] D. Ravitch. (2014). Reign Of Error. The Hoax Of The Privatization Mouvement And The Danger To America's Public Schools. New York: First Vintage Books Edition. p 17

[170] Ibid., p 178

publiques qui n'arrivent pas à produire les résultats chiffrés exigées voient alors leur budget diminuer et une part croissante de la manne financière du budget de l'éducation publique se retrouve réallouée aux « Charter Schools », qui elles ne sont pas éligibles aux mêmes exigences.[171] Or, maintenir un system d'éducation public entièrement opérationnel est d'une importance cruciale si on veut donner aux générations à venir au moins les mêmes possibilités que leurs prédécesseurs avaient. Les réformes néolibérales ne se concernent que du profit immédiat et ne peuvent prétendre à une vision à plus long terme. Elles ne font que externaliser des ressources et les budgets y afférents, et normalisent la compétition et le contrôle chiffré. La société américaine doit alors s'engager dans un contre-discours et accepter le désaccord avec ces réformes.

Rendre l'éducation publique dépendante d'un contrôle chiffré incessant est antagoniste à tout vrai apprentissage. Cela implique des programmes scolaires focalisés sur la préparation à des examens, déconnectés de tout véritable processus d'apprentissage. L'auteur de nombreux ouvrages sur l'éducation Alfie Kohn nous montre en effet que l'utilisation excessive de test de connaissance s'oppose à une éducation effective et ne promeut que la compétition entre élèves. Ainsi dans son livre « The Case Against Competition », il dit :

> The social context of most educational measurement is that of a contest in which students are measured primarily in comparison with one another rather than in terms of objective criteria of accomplishment.[172]

Ces contrôles sont inadaptés pour créer un contexte pour la compréhension complexe des processus sociaux et politiques. La seule préparation à des tests qui ne comportent qu'une réponse binaire incite les étudiants à négliger des raisonnements plus importants dans une société véritablement vivante. Elle implique que la qualité de toute connaissance puisse être mesurée absolument et par un simple chiffre. Elle n'encourage pas l'autonomie dans l'apprentissage pourtant nécessaire à toute véritable culture. Alfie Kohn nous montre comment la culture américaine est déjà saturée

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[171] D. Ravitch. (2010). The Death And Life Of The Great American School System. How Testing and Choice Are Undermining Education. New York: Basic Books. p 129

[172] A. Kohn. (1986). *No Contest. The Case Against Competition.* New York: Houghton Mifflin Company. p 26
(Le contexte social de la plupart des tests éducatifs est celui d'un concours dans lequel les étudiants sont primairement comparés entre eux plutôt qu'en terme de critère d'accomplissements objectifs.)

avec cet esprit de compétition individualiste et les conséquences que cela implique pour l'apprentissage :

> In the United States, we are carefully taught, and the result is that, excepting the kind of invisible cooperation that is required for any society to run, Americans appear to be uniquely uncooperative as a people… the message that competition is appropriate, desirable, required, and even unavoidable is drummed into [Americans] from nursery school to graduate school; it is the subtext of every lesson.[173]

Aujourd'hui les étudiants américains sont surtestés et dévalués. Les budgets de l'éducation publique, déjà revus à la baisse après la crise de 2007 sont alloués à des entreprises privées externes aux écoles, seules habilités à fournir les corrections aux tests.[174] Ces tests, inefficaces pour établir le véritable niveau des étudiants, sont pourtant affichés comme un modèle d'efficacité pour la gestion du budget de l'éducation.

Le mouvement des « Charter Schools » dérive d'une modélisation entrepreneuriale pour les écoles publiques. Le but initial était de proposer une alternative aux élèves, mais aussi de créer un espace pour les enseignants où ils pouvaient expérimenter de nouvelles approches éducatives.[175] Un usage détourné se développait afin de contourner la fin de la ségrégation. Ou comme le dit Diane Ravitch :

> During the 1950s and 1960s, the term "school choice" was stigmatized as a dodge invented to permit white students to escape to all-white public schools or to all-white segregation academies… the word « choice » and the term « freedom of choice » became tainted by their use as a conscious strategy to maintain state-sponsored segregation.[176]

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[173] A. Kohn. (1986). *No Contest. The Case Against Competition.* New York: Houghton Mifflin Company. p 25
(Aux États-Unis, on nous instruit prudemment, et le résultat est que, à l'exception près de cette invisible coopération nécessaire à toute société pour fonctionner, les américains semblent singulièrement non coopératifs en tant que peuple…le message que la compétition soit appropriée, désirable, requise et même inévitable est martelée depuis la maternelle jusqu'à l'université ; ceci est le sous-titre de chaque leçon)

[174] D. W. Hursh, D. (2016). *The End of Public Schools. The Corporate Reform Agenda to Privatize Education.* New York: Routledge. p 106

[175] R. D. Kahlenberg & H. Potter. (2014). *Restoring Shanker's Vision for Charter Schools*. Retrieved February 26, 2016, from American Federation of Teachers: http://www.aft.org/ae/winter2014-2015/kahlenberg_potter

[176] D. Ravitch. (2010). The Death And Life Of The Great American School System. How Testing and Choice Are Undermining Education. New York: Basic Books. p 114
(Au cours des années 50 et 60, le terme de« choix d'école » était stigmatisé en tant qu'esquive inventé pour permettre aux élèves blancs d'échapper vers des écoles publiques purement blanches

Le but originel n'était nullement de se substituer à une scolarisation publique, mais de la complémenter. Ce projet innovatif a cependant crée une brèche par laquelle une rampante privatisation a pu s'insinuer. Les enseignants qui travaillent aujourd'hui pour les entreprises spécialisées dans le business des « Charter Schools », ne bénéficient pas des mêmes droits que les enseignants du secteur public. L'agenda caché du néolibéralisme est ici d'affaiblir les syndicats de travailleurs. Stanley Aronowitz et Henry Giroux examinent le pouvoir des syndicats dans leur ouvrage « *Education Under Siege* » ainsi :

> The history of the labor movement in this country and in Europe are replete with examples of workers education efforts that went far beyond the confines of grievances, wage bargaining and other practices of trade unions. Unions have provided literacy for foreign-born members, courses in history, literature, and philosophy, and in recent times, they have assisted members to acquire new skills required by the job market.[177]

En adoptant un modèle en opposition aux syndicats, l'Amérique est divisée et sa force est diminuée. Tel est le but de « l'oppresseur ».[178] Dans ces conditions, on ne peut plus avoir d'assurance quant à la qualité de l'enseignement. On peut y voir un autre exemple qui montre que le dogme du marché libre, laissé sans autre cadre règlementé ne fait pas émerger un désir intrinsèque de responsabilité sociale. Si les écoles « Charter » devraient continuer à fonctionner, et à toucher des fonds publics, la société devrait exiger un droit de regard et une régulation de ce marché. Malheureusement, c'est le contraire qui se produit. Au fur et à mesure que le néolibéralisme prend racine et monte en puissance, les écoles « Charter » s'étendent, et ce malgré des scandales et controverses.[179]

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ou vers des académies ségrégées… le mot « choix » et le terme de « liberté de choix » sont devenus entachés par leur utilisation en tant que stratégie consciente pour maintenir une ségrégation « sponsorisée par l'état ».)

177 S. Aronowitz & H. A. Giroux. (1986). *Education under Siege. The Conservative, Liberal and Radical Debate over Schooling.* London: Routledge & Kegan Paul. p 214-215
(L'histoire du mouvement travailliste dans ce pays et en Europe est remplie d'exemples d'efforts d'éducation des travailleurs, qui vont bien au-delà du giron de simples complaintes, de négociations salariales et d'autres pratiques mercantiles. Les syndicats ont fournis des cours d'alphabétisation pour leurs membres nés à l'étranger, ainsi que des cours d'histoire, de littérature, de philosophie et plus récemment, ils ont assistés leurs membres à acquérir de nouvelles compétences requises par le marché de l'emploi.)

178 P. Freire. (1970). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed.* New York: Herder & Herder., p 122

179 Democracy Now. (2015, May 8). *As Obama Admin Seeks More Funding for Charter Schools, Questions Raised over Billions Already Spent*. Retrieved February 16, 2016, from http://www.democracynow.org/2015/5/8/as_obama_admin_seeks_more_funding

Quand les individus, les familles, les communautés locales, les politiciens au niveau de l'État et de la Fédération, ont collaborés pour faire évoluer le système d'éducation publique et que le « mieux » pour la société en était le but, il a pu être atteint. Comme le résument Stanley Aronowitz et Henry Giroux :

> The notion of active citizenship is not limited to the conservative policy of making a choice between private and public education. On the contrary, it points to developing educational policies outside an elite pattern of politics proposed by government officials. But the notion of active citizenship also simultaneously endorses educational policies designed to strengthen public education by securing financial assistance from the federal government, while qualifying such aid by ensuring that the federal government is not able to control the programs it supports.[180]

Les réformes fédérales qui s'en inspiraient, étaient bénéfiques pour l'éducation et l'apprentissage ; plutôt que d'imposer un contrôle centralisé, elles se souciaient d'apporter des solutions. Mais les récentes réformes d'inspiration néolibérale n'ont fait qu'empirer l'état de l'éducation publique déjà mise à mal par les coupes de budget.

Les États-Unis sont encore aujourd'hui un des pays phares dans le monde et son modèle d'éducation publique est sous observation. La globalisation et la prospérité du capital multinational contribuent à donner une signification toute particulière aux réformes du modèle d'éducation publique aux États-Unis.

Ce seras en encourageant les étudiants à développer leur esprit critique plutôt qu'à accepter leur position sans réflexion, qu'on les aideras à comprendre leur position dans la société au delà de leur simple rôle de force de travail. En acceptant et supportant l'important rôle des syndicats des travailleurs, localement, nationalement et globalement, on contribueras à une évolution vers une société ou l'économie seras au service de la société et non le contraire. Selon Diane Ravitch :

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[180] S. Aronowitz & H. A. Giroux. (1986). *Education under Siege. The Conservative, Liberal and Radical Debate over Schooling.* London: Routledge & Kegan Paul. p 205
(Le concept de citoyenneté active ne se limite pas à une politique conservative consistant à faire le choix entre une éducation privée ou publique. Bien au contraire, il incite à développer des politiques éducatives en dehors schémas élitistes que proposent les fonctionnaires gouvernementaux. Mais en même temps, la notion de citoyenneté active englobe aussi les mesures éducatives qui ont pour but d'assurer un financement fédéral, en qualifiant ces mesures de façon à veiller à ce que le gouvernement fédéral ne puisse contrôler le programme qu'il finance.)

> If we believe in democracy, and if we believe that public schools must act in concert with the principles of democracy, then we must reject authoritarianism from any quarter, be it the mayor, the state education department, or the federal government. No one should exercise untrammeled control over education policy and have the power to ignore public opinion. The children belong to parents, and the schools belong to the public, not to the mayor or the governor or the president. Public officials are elected to serve the public, not to control it.[181]

De récents mouvements sociaux aux États-Unis et un peu partout dans le monde ont mis en évidence un mécontentement croissant avec le modèle de société actuel. La mouvance du « Opt-Out » se compose de parents d'élèves et d'élèves opposées au « testing » perpétuel.[182] Sur une échelle plus large, le « Occupy Wall Street » s'inscrit contre les mêmes idéaux néolibéraux. La jeunesse américaine exprime de plus en plus ouvertement son mécontentement avec l'actuel modèle d'économie politique néolibéral qui dans son dogmatisme exclut toute alternative. L'éducation qu'on donnera aux futures générations jouera un rôle proéminent dans ce désir pour le changement.

Lorsque le gouvernement n'écoute plus, les citoyens doivent prendre parti et s'impliquer dans la politique économique pour en établir les nouvelles règles. Ces règles doivent être à même d'assurer que les multinationales respectent des standards garantissant que les intérêts des classes travaillantes soient prises en compte. Les enseignants font certainement partie de cette force intellectuelle qui doit contribuer à faire évoluer la politique de protestation vers une vraie politique de mobilisation et d'action. Stanley Aronowitz and Henry Giroux préconisent que les enseignants prennent une posture « d'intellectuels transformatifs » afin de rompre avec les pratiques prédatrices du néolibéralisme.[183]

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181 D. Ravitch. (2014). Reign Of Error. The Hoax Of The Privatization Mouvement And The Danger To America's Public Schools. New York: First Vintage Books Edition. p 288
(Si on croit dans la démocratie, et si on croit que les écoles publiques doivent agir de concert avec les principes démocratiques, alors on doit rejeter l'autoritarisme de tout bord, que ce soit du maire, du département éducatif d'état ou du gouvernement fédéral. Personne ne doit exercer un contrôle sans limite sur la politique éducative et avoir le pouvoir d'ignorer l'opinion publique. Les enfants appartiennent aux parents, et les écoles au publique, pas au maire ou au gouverneur ou au président. Les représentants publics sont élus pour servir le public, pas pour le contrôler.)

182 D. W. Hursh. (2016). The End of Public Schools. The Corporate Reform Agenda to Privatize Education. New York: Routledge. p 110

183 S. Aronowitz & H. A. Giroux. (1986). Education under Siege. The Conservative, Liberal and Radical Debate over Schooling. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul. p 36

> It is imperative to understand the contradictory roles that transformative intellectuals occupy within the various levels of schooling…the notion of the transformative intellectual makes visible the paradoxical position that radical educators face in the public schools and universities… under the banner of accountability, teachers at all levels of schooling are subtlety and sometimes not so subtlety pressured to respond to the issues, modes of research, discourse, and social practices deemed legitimate by the dominant culture… rather than surrender to this form of academic and political incorporation, it is essential to define the role of the transformative intellectual in a way that points to forms of counterhegemonic practice that can both avoid and challenge.[184]

Ces changements doivent prendre racine dans les valeurs américaines de justice, d'égalité et de démocratie. Les éducateurs devront aller au delà de la simple scolarisation de la jeunesse américaine. En tant que travailleurs intellectuels au sein d'une nation phare, les éducateurs doivent faire le choix de se mettre au service des générations futures. Une fois qu'on osera poser des questions, mettre en cause le système en place, le mouvement sera lancé. Ce ne sera qu'à ce moment là qu'on pourra considérer de 'déscolariser' et d'éduquer vraiment la jeunesse américaine.

Notre esprit critique, notre vision de la société, quand ils ne sont pas formés quand nous sommes scolarisés, ne peuvent ultérieurement se développer que sous l'influence de medias déjà majoritairement sous l'emprise des intérêts du capitalisme néolibéral. C'est dans les écoles qu'on pourra encore laisser un espace pour développer des idées pour une vision alternative de la société. L'éducation publique est un des rares secteurs qui aujourd'hui encore échappe en partie à l'emprise et au contrôle du capital, et il est primordial qu'elle reste en dehors du giron du néolibéralisme.

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[184] S. Aronowitz & H. A. Giroux. (1986). Education under Siege. The Conservative, Liberal and Radical Debate over Schooling. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul. p 40-41
(Il est impératif de comprendre les rôles contradictoires que les « intellectuels transformatifs » occupent dans les différents niveaux de scolarisation…la notion de « l'intellectuel transformatif » révèle la position paradoxale que les enseignants radicaux occupent dans les écoles et universités…sous la bannière de redevabilité, les enseignants de tout niveau sont subtilement, et parfois moins subtilement tenus de répondre aux problèmes, mode de recherche, discours, et pratiques sociales estimés légitimes par la culture dominante…plutôt que de se soumettre à cette forme d'incorporation académique et politique, il est essentiel de définir le rôle de « l'intellectuel transformatif » d'une façon qui mène vers des pratiques contre-hégémoniques qui peuvent, et éviter et défier.)

Mots clefs

Éducation publique aux Etats-Unis ; Réformes néolibérales ; Éducation critique et humaniste ; Privatisation de l'éducation aux États-Unis