What You Don’t Know, Learn!: Movements for Autonomous Education in the US, Past,

Present and Future

by

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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of Doctor
of Philosophy in the Department of
Literature in the Graduate School
of Duke University

2013
ABSTRACT
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Abstract

This dissertation is an investigation of trends in the current US system of education, as informed by historical movements for autonomous education in the period of Reconstruction and in the 1960s and 70s. The driving questions of the dissertation are 1. How to understand the system of education in the US as having a historical and current role in the preservation of an existing structure of power, 2. How did historical movements that focused on the creation of autonomous forms of education challenge the given order of society?, and 3. What would a renewal of movement for autonomous education look like in the current moment?

I examine historical, theoretical and literary texts in my analysis of the role of education in US society. My theoretical framework for the dissertation comes from the collective work of El Kilombo Intergaláctico, an organization in Durham, North Carolina, and the work of Alvaro Reyes on the crisis of capitalist society and Blackness as a political alternative. In my historical and literary research, I focus particularly on educational policy documents that demonstrate the ways in which movements for autonomous education shaped state education, and literary texts that share a vision of collective autonomous education in the US in a way that both recalls past movements and gestures toward new possibilities for movement.
Ultimately, I argue that the tradition of the creation of autonomous forms of education in the US, and existing forms of autonomous education in social movements in Latin America, have the potential to once again provide insight toward the creation of alternative forms of education in the US now that would be different from earlier and current forms of US education for domination and control.
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1. Introduction

1.1 Autonomous Education in the US

In the US in the 1960s and 70s, many people drew inspiration from political mobilization around the world and committed themselves to changing the given political order. Groups focused on the creation of autonomous schools and the pursuit of community control of existing schools as a central part of the work of changing the organization of power in society. In relationships created in schools between teachers and students, between ‘successful’ students and ‘failures,’ and between students and learning processes, these groups recognized the reproduction of an exploitative and abusive society. They strove to create relationships that would be different from domination, by imagining and working to form sites of learning that could support the goal of the creation of a more egalitarian way of living. For these groups, the possibility of non-dominating relations became the primary motivation for pedagogical invention.

This dissertation is a general history of the institution of education in the US: how it came into being, why people organized against it in the 60s and 70s, the changes that occurred as a backlash against their organization; and an exploration of what education could be: what could be done now in order to continue to pursue the goal of institutions of learning that support the formation of a just society. My central argument is that the tradition of the creation of autonomous forms of education in the US, and existing forms of autonomous education in social movements in Latin America, have the
potential to once again inform the creation of alternative forms of education in the US now that would be different from earlier and current forms of US education for domination and control.

The dissertation is not about the importance of implementing any particular pedagogical method, but rather the historical tradition and current historical need for collective autonomy in the formation of pedagogical forms in the US. That is, the pedagogical choices made by those engaged in the creation of autonomous education will depend on each group’s analysis of context and particular need. My own analysis deals with the institution of education as having a historical role in the preemption and suppression of autonomous decision-making processes, and the possible benefits of continuing to try to create autonomous education.

1.2 Chapter Structure

In Chapter 2, I investigate the origins of public education in the nineteenth century, comparing civic republican and industrial models of education with the autonomous schools created by black people in the US leading up to and following the Civil War. I follow W.E.B. Du Bois in suggesting that the system of public education developed by the US government in the late nineteenth century was a result of the organization of autonomous schools by free black communities in the South (Du Bois 1935a). My argument is that the institution of school that emerged in the US mobilized civic republican ideology and industrial models of schooling to curtail the autonomous
tradition. I use Foucault’s concept of disciplinary society to show how the school as a quintessential disciplinary institution functioned to limit the construction of alternatives to an industrial model of society and supported the centralization of power in the hands of an industrial class.

Chapter 3 is a history of the movements of the 1960s and 70s that objected to the disciplinary organization of power and the school as an institution for the reproduction of relations of domination and exploitation. I give examples of groups that focused on the institution of the school as a crucial site of struggle against the existing power structure, and that asserted the importance of autonomous schooling to a shift in the organization of society, either by struggling to create community control of public schools or by forming their own schools outside of the public school system. In this chapter I argue that by renewing the creation of autonomous schooling in the US, these groups were part of a worldwide political struggle that threw disciplinary society, and disciplinary institutions such as the school, into crisis.

In Chapter 4, I look at the reactions of government and business to the movements for autonomous schooling. Reading political speeches and policy documents, as well as proposals by businesses interested in involving themselves in a new ‘education industry,’ I argue that changes in the US school system have been part of a broader neoliberal strategy for the preservation of a preexisting power structure. Therefore, I argue that the charter school as a recent reinvention of the public school has
three societal functions: 1. As a new site for the (limited) production of profit after the end of industrialism, 2. As a tool for the facilitation of an upward redistribution of existing wealth, 3. As a justification for the militarization and carcelerization of the “traditional public school,” for the containment of a potentially rebellious population in a period of increasing unemployment and the dissolution of the welfare state. I am interested in how this repurposing of the school system contributed to the defeat of the movements of the 60s. In this chapter, I am particularly influenced by Alvaro Reyes’ analysis of contemporary global crisis.

Finally, in Chapter 5 I apply Raúl Zibechi’s concept of “education in movement” to imagine how groups might create education for a more egalitarian society in the contemporary context. Following Zibechi’s analysis of existing movements in Latin America, the Zapatistas in Mexico and the Landless Workers Movement (MST) in Brazil, and Mara Kaufman’s dissertation on Zapatista autonomy, I look to these groups for models of how contemporary organizations focus on education as part of the creation of new social relations. I also draw on examples of pedagogical models in fictional works from the US, Octavia Butler’s Parable of the Sower and Samuel Delany’s Tales of Neveryôn, to suggest that the model of education in movement as articulated by Zibechi is a possible route for the creation of new educational movements in the US.
1.3 Rationale and Audience

I had two primary goals in writing this dissertation: 1. to expand my own understanding of the educational system in the US, and the commitment of contemporary politicians and financial ‘philanthropists’ to the promotion of charter schools, and 2. to contribute to the work of an organization in Durham, North Carolina of which I am a part, El Kilombo Intergaláctico. El Kilombo has the goal of creating a community capable of making its own decisions about how to do politics in the contemporary US city. In pursuing this goal, we have experienced directly the way in which the charter school as an instrument in neoliberal development functions to limit the possibility of community life in the city, and have worked together to understand how to build forms of education that are adequate to our own need to understand and change the world we inhabit. I chose to work on understanding the history of education in the US, the role of the school in the current moment, and the possibility of alternative educational forms in order to participate in addressing these collective questions.

Though my research and work are primarily meant to inform my own intellectual and political development, and to contribute to the project of El Kilombo, I imagine that this work would be of interest to people engaged in debate around charter school reform, who see themselves as in some way committed to the creation of equitable and ‘child-centered’ school systems. That is, this work might be relevant to
intellectuals involved in so-called activist work around education, both in and outside of the university.

Discourse around the contemporary ‘privatization’ of schools and the dismantling of the public school system often either ignores previous struggles for the creation of sites of learning outside of the public school, or glorifies charter schooling as the culmination of those struggles. In my own work I mean to problematize both positions by suggesting that both the public school of the first half of the twentieth century and the privatized public school of the contemporary moment were always already sites for the reproduction of dominating power. I mean to connect, historically, the arguments of movements and theorists of the 1960s against the central role of the disciplinary school in the reproduction of class hierarchy, and the arguments of contemporary protestors against the role of the charter school in the destruction of the collective resources of the most exploited members of the US population. In this way, I hope to show that the tradition of the autonomous creation of schools, developed by free black populations during Reconstruction and again among black and Latino urban populations in the 1960s and 70s, provides a basis for imagining an alternative to either the preservation of the “traditional public school” or the uncritical support of “charter school reform.”

In the contemporary moment, the preservation of the public school as it was is not a possibility; the school as a publicly funded site of learning for all children operated
only in the context of industrial growth, for the reproduction of a disciplined work force. In the postindustrial state, there can be no preservation of the disciplinary school for all.¹

Widespread protest at the overhaul of the public school system of recent years, from the mass closure of schools to the firing of teachers to the transfer of control of schooling to private boards, makes the valid statement that public schools have been better for children and communities than the form of privatized public schooling currently in political favor. However, these protests will be a gateway to the creation of a different new form of education or they will merely postpone in small ways the ongoing process of privatization and closure.²

It is possible to think of the defense of the public school as a tactic for the larger strategy of the creation of an alternative, collectively determined system of education.

That is, it may be necessary to preserve the public school in its decomposing form and to fight the spread of charter schools and the real estate development that accompanies them in order to preserve neighborhood cohesion. As Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri state in Declaration, “When facing the threat of privatization, the struggle for the common often tends to slide toward or even require a defense of public control... The

¹ As Gilles Deleuze wrote in 1990 on the institutions of disciplinary society: prison, hospital, factory, school, family: “Everyone knows that these institutions are finished, whatever the length of their expiration periods” (Deleuze 1992).

² In Philadelphia, Philadelphia residents put forward 38 alternative plans for the school district in response to the plan for the closure of 37 public schools; the school district superintendent announced a reduction of the number of schools to be closed from 37 to 29 (DeNardo and Duncan 2013). Protestors also successfully won a district promise of no further charter expansion in 2014 (Gym 2013). These are substantial, but short-term victories for those opposed to the privatization and closure of public schools.
point is that we do not need to reject all strategies that affirm public control, but neither can we be satisfied with them” (Hardt and Negri 2012). It is my hope that my dissertational work will be a small contribution to a broader analysis of how to go beyond the defense of the public in imagining and creating a new collective education.

1.4 The University

In the scope of this project, I focus on the study of patterns in primary and secondary US education. Of course, the changes occurring in institutions of childhood education parallel changes in higher education. Student, faculty and employee resistance to privatization and worker exploitation at the university level has inspired abundant and valuable work on the political function of higher education in the US, and the connections between transformations in the form of higher education and transformations in global capitalism. Theorists such as Marc Bousquet, Stanley Aronowitz, Bill Readings and the many contributors to the analysis of the international collective EduFactory, have shaped an important conversation on the characteristics and societal effects of work and knowledge production in the neoliberal university, as well as the possibilities of resistance in the creation of alternative sites of learning and research for adult intellectuals. Less work has been done on the broader social and political implications of transformations in childhood and adolescent education, with the important exceptions of the research of scholars Kenneth Saltman, Pauline Lipman, and Henry Giroux. I would like this dissertation to be a means to connect the
conversations occurring around the university to the work of thinking about the societal relevance of changes occurring in earlier education.

**1.5 Theoretical Framework**

As a participant in El Kilombo over the past seven years, I have spent countless hours in seminars that we have collectively designed to be supportive of our work. The concepts developed in these seminars, based in ideas originated by Alvaro Reyes and in our collective practice, form the theoretical framework for my dissertation. It is Reyes’ conceptualization of the current moment as the terminal crisis of capitalism, and his understanding of Blackness as a historical political alternative that particularly frame my understanding of the function of the contemporary institution of education as it is and of what kind of education would be needed to support the creation of a different society (Reyes 2012c).

Within that framework, I draw on writers that I have read in Kilombo and as a graduate student who share an alliance to Marxism as capable of informing a project for radical social change. I follow the movements that I study in the presupposition that US education as a state system exists from its origin as an institution for the reproduction of the relations of capitalist society, and that therefore it is necessary to continuously analyze capitalism in order to create something that differs from existing social forms. As Ken Surin states in *Freedom Not Yet*, “Marxism has so far shown itself to be the only school of thought whose raison d’être is [the] overall critique of capitalism” (Surin 2009).
Because US state education exists in the first place for the reproduction of capital, and presently for the preservation of relations of domination in the face of capitalist crisis, theorists who consider education within the context of the study of capitalist society have the most to contribute to a conversation on why and how education might be different.

Of course, it is possible for groups engaged in activist work around education to themselves form analyses of capitalist society that inform their decisions on what kinds of action to take around education. For the most part, however, the analyses that activists in education have circulated in the US in recent decades cannot support an understanding of the changes in the system of education as they relate to changes in capitalism as a social form. This lack of theory at the level of engagement in social change might be viewed as evidence of the success of neoliberal strategy in disqualifying the knowledge of earlier political work as ‘unreasonable’.  

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3 Badiou writes on the effect of global capital on the circulation of the idea of communism as a viable alternative: “…what today’s world asks of us: to accept the wholesale corruption of minds under the yoke of commodities and money… we have to be bold enough to have an idea. A great idea. The world of global and arrogant capitalism in which we live is taking us back to the 1840s and the birth of capitalism. Its imperative, as formulated by Guizot, was: ‘Get rich!’ We can translate that as ‘Live without an idea!’ We have to say that we cannot live without an idea. We have to say: ‘Have the courage to support the idea, and it can only be the communist idea in its generic sense.’ That is why we must remain the contemporaries of May ’68. In its own way, it tells us that living without an idea is intolerable. And then a long and terrible resignation set in. Too many people now think there is no alternative to living for oneself, for one’s own interests” (Badiou 2010).

4 See the depiction of the Black Panther Party in Lee Daniels’ The Butler.
Alain Badiou asserts that the same rejection of the idea of an alternative to capitalism occurred at the level of philosophy, but that in the current moment the idea of communism has reemerged in circulation. For the purposes of this dissertation, I find it is useful to draw on both the analyses of earlier groups engaged in struggle around education and current Marxist theory.

Within the category of Marxist theory, because I make the argument that a movement for liberatory education in the contemporary US context would necessarily reaffirm the goal of collective autonomy, I draw on recent work of theorists who view the political inventions and questions of earlier movements as crucial to the political possibilities of the current moment: Alain Badiou, Jacques Rancière, Immanuel Wallerstein, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri. I also refer specifically to theorists whose work informed the educational movements of the 60s in the US and elsewhere: Paulo Freire and Ivan Illich.

Foucault influences my analysis throughout, as his work best articulates the relationship between the exercise of power and the establishment of dominating knowledge or the insurrection of other subjugated knowledge(s), especially in the context of the 1960s and 70s. Rather than the content of what is ‘known,’ knowledge in Foucault’s terminology refers to a set of relations that determine the possibility or impossibility of the qualification of certain statements as ‘true’. In a 1980 interview he states unequivocally that his own analysis would not have been possible before the
worldwide movements of 1968, which altered the relations of power such that it was possible for an analysis of power to be ‘known’ from the standpoint of political analysis (Foucault 1980a). That is, the relations of the movements of the 60s, which challenged existing structures of authority, made it possible to say that power and knowledge are not separate.

Foucault suggests that dominating power disqualifies those statements that contradict the project of domination. On the other hand, the insurrection of disqualified knowledge by the organization of new forms of power creates the possibility of something other than domination. The disqualified knowledge asserts the possibility of an exercise of power that is different from the power of abusive control. “It’s not a matter of emancipating truth from every system of power (which would be a chimera, for truth is already power), but of detaching the power of truth from the forms of hegemony, social, economic and cultural, within which it operates at the present time” (Foucault 1980a).

The creation of autonomous schools and the struggle for community control in the US in the 1960s and 70s challenged state control of knowledge, and in doing so detached truth from disciplinary power. Foucault’s framework is useful in considering how a new hegemony was established, the neoliberal framework that functioned to subject the undeniable ‘truth’ of the movements to the ongoing ‘truth’ of the dominating power of state apparatuses and capitalist exploitation.
1.6 Methods

This study straddles traditional disciplinary boundaries, in that I draw on both historical and literary texts. By including a variety of forms of analysis in the dissertation, it is my hope that I will have a greater capacity to both understand and share the ‘truth’ of the disqualified knowledge of the tradition of struggles for collective autonomous education. The study of historical struggle is invaluable because it provides evidence of actually existing historical difference from the order of domination. Literary analysis is equally essential because it provides evidence of a continuance of imagination and possibility that does not disappear with the termination of historical struggle.

In conducting research for the historical sections of the dissertation, I was looking specifically for 1. historical accounts of the autonomous creation of schools by any groups in the US, 2. any public policy documents and any records of private business records that referred to the autonomous creation of schools, during either the Period of Reconstruction or the 1960s and 70s. This broad survey of the practice of autonomous schooling in the US could not be exhaustive, but it was my hope that by searching for any examples of the practice of the creation of schools in the US, I would be able to mark the periods and populations in which the creation of schools was most prominent. The result of my search for accounts of the creation of autonomous schools
in the US determined my historical focus: on the period of Reconstruction, and the decades of the 1960s and 70s.

Having determined the moments of historical focus for my research, I looked for responses to the creation of schools by policy makers and businesses. It was my intention to discover possible relationships between the creation of schools by communities and the educational policy formed by government entities or informed by business interests. For this search, research librarians pointed me to the online internet database, Education Resources Information Center (ERIC) as the most extensive collection of education-related documents in the US. Extensive search within this database for any reference by policy-makers or business sectors to the creation of schools by communities outside of the public school system, or to the struggle for community control, turned up references that were surprising to me in the straightforwardness of their status as reactive to autonomous schooling. I used every document that I could find that referred to the creation of schools, in order to form the clearest possible understanding of the ways in which policy reacted to communities’ struggles for autonomy in education.

Because I searched for examples that responded to these struggles in any location within the US, and was indiscriminate in my use of all available sources, the historical sections of Chapters 1-3 refer to various and dispersed sites of organization of schools. Though it is, as stated above, impossible within the scope of this dissertation to give an
exhaustive historical account of all of the sites of school-creation and community control
that have occurred in the US, it is my hope that the range of historical examples used
will inform a broad analysis of how struggles for autonomy have contributed to shaping
the institution of education in the US.

1.7 Literary Texts

At its best, literature opens conversations concerning how political realities could
be otherwise, in offering the reader a privileged outsider’s view into existing society, or
in providing visions of alternative institutions and social norms. Fictional narrative also
has a unique capacity to work through strategies of resistance to various structures of
power, using characters’ experiences to explore possible actions and their consequences
in various scenarios.

In both Chapter 2 and 4, I make use of literary analysis to provide examples of
the imaginative creation of alternatives to existing school systems in works of fiction. It
is my view that this kind of fictional creation is not irrelevant to the history of groups
creating alternatives in their own lives. I follow Robin D. G. Kelley’s assertion that social
movements in their projects to create new societies necessarily involve a radical
imagination that is itself ‘art-work,’ and have a potent relationship to the literary and
artistic artifacts of their conjunctural moments.

The texts that I have chosen—Ralph Ellison’s Invisible Man, Samuel Delany’s
Tales of Nevèryön, and Octavia Butler’s Parable of the Sower—all fall into a genre that
Sheree Renée Thomas terms “speculative fiction of the African diaspora,” and which others have called “Afrofuturism” (Thomas 2000; Yaszek 2011). Sandra Jackson and Julie Moody-Freeman in their introduction to a collection of essays, *The Black Imagination, Science Fiction and the Speculative*, in their definition of “speculative,” refer to David Wyatt’s assertion that speculative fiction “includes all literature that takes place in a universe slightly different from our own. In all its forms it gives authors the ability to ask relevant questions about our society in a way that would prove provocative in more mainstream forms…” (Wyatt 2007 in S. Jackson and Moody-Freeman 2011). Using this definition of speculative fiction, Jackson and Moody-Freeman “consider works by black writers as science fiction that have not explicitly been self-identified as science fiction by their authors,” to include all fiction that takes as its primary question: “What if?” (S. Jackson and Moody-Freeman 2011).

Speculative fiction, as it imagines and creates other worlds, emerges from a longer tradition of imagining and creating ways of living that are different from the status quo, including the black historical tradition of the creation of autonomous forms of education in the US, in the period of Reconstruction and in the 1960s and 70s. For Jackson and Moody-Freeman, the act of imagining an alternative future has always been present in the black imagination, as groups have repeatedly combatted the exploitative and dominating effects of capitalism (S. Jackson and Moody-Freeman 2011). Likewise, Walter Mosley writes that the genre of speculative/science fiction “speaks clearly” to
communities that have long needed, imagined and created an alternative to the given society (Mosely 1998). Mosely states that the “explosion of science fiction from the black community” will precede

…the beginning of a new world of autonomy created out of the desire to scrap 500 years of intellectual imperialism. This literary movement itself would make a good story. The tale could unfold in a world where power is based upon uses of the imagination…. Maybe, in this make-believe world, a group is being held back by limits placed on their ability to imagine; their dreams have been infiltrated by the dominant group making even the idea of dissent impossible… the hero, a disembodied choir that disrupts the status quo (Mosely 1998).

The works of fiction that I have chosen to inform my dissertational work are specifically valuable for an analysis of the possibility of alternative pedagogical forms in the US. The creation of a “new world of autonomy” in each novel is connected to the history of the creation of autonomous processes, and keep alive the historical tradition of imagining learning processes that combat the pedagogical relation of “intellectual imperialism.” Invisible Man provides insight into the struggle against disciplinary schooling in the 1960s, but also moves beyond resistance to disciplinary schooling to imagine what kind of learning process might be liberating rather than reproductive of domination. Tales of Neveryon and Parable of the Sower also engage the second question in presenting forms of education that are supportive of both collective and individual freedom to invent new forms of living. All three novels invoke the history of black and interracial struggle for autonomous education in the US that would be different from education for domination.
1.8 Glossary

It will be helpful to clarify in advance my use of specific words that have ambiguous or multiple meanings in contemporary culture. For the most part, the movements that I study and concepts developed in El Kilombo guide my meaning. I am also indebted to the definitions that Zibechi articulates in his analysis of concepts within current movements in Latin American.

First, “social movement,” a term that I already use above and will use many more times throughout the dissertation, refers to a process of struggle to create an organization of life that is different from what exists. In Zibechi’s words, “By social movement we mean the human capacity, individually and collectively, to modify the assigned or inherited place in a social organization and to seek to expand spaces of expression…” (Zibechi 2012). Importantly, the movement is not an institution, but is the capacity to change institutions. Movement itself creates movement: the capacity to change the institutions that exist can increase or decrease with the creation of new forms of organization and new institutions.

In the context of the study of education, I use the word “education” in the broadest sense possible, to mean any practice or institution that has the purpose of facilitating learning. In referring to specific forms of education, I use qualifying words to explicate the specific form (e.g. education for industry, education in movement). In my usage, the word “education” is interchangeable with the term “pedagogical form.”
I use the word “school” to refer to the physical location of learning. However, I do not limit the definition of school to the physical location of solely capitalist education. The movements of the 1960s and 70s which struggled to create their own forms of learning and thinking often used the word “school” to describe the places of learning that they created, as do current Latin American movements, the Zapatistas and the MST. In all of these movements, and especially in the case of the current Latin American movements’ emphasis on the pedagogical quality of territory creation, the ‘place’ of learning extends beyond the site of any particular school (Zibechi 2012). However, there is no rejection of the usefulness of a specific site to the movement, or of the word “school” as a descriptor of that site. Therefore, as a student of these movements, I also accept the word “school” as referring to a physical location that might be supportive of capitalist relations or not depending on the form of education practiced there.

I use the word “autonomy” in the sense of the Italian Autonomist Marxist school, and draw on Hardt and Negri and “Bifo” Berardi for this definition, however, my use of the word is more directly influenced by the use of the term in the context of El Kilombo, based on the tradition of autonomous movements in the US,\(^5\) and the Zapatistas’ and other Latin American groups’ use of the word in their own social movements as described by Zibechi and by Mara Kaufman in her dissertation on Zapatista autonomy. On what “autonomy” means in the context of the Zapatista movement, Kaufman writes

\(^5\) See Cleaver 2006
that it allows “...for subjects who do not just respond to or act as subjects of power, but are capable of acting by themselves, in a positive and constructive relationship to (their own) power... the potentializing and construction of that kind of power at the level of social organization” (Kaufman 2010). “Autonomy” in each case means something akin to “collective self-determination,” and is necessarily different from government by the capitalist state. In a keynote address to a conference on autonomy in Mexico City, Cleaver states, “By ‘autonomy’ I understand the quality or state of being self-governing, or self-determining, and by ‘self’ I understand not the self-originating, self-determining rational individual constructed by Enlightenment liberal humanism, but rather a diversity of self-defined collectives made up of social individuals” (Cleaver 2006). Building on the general definition of collective self-determination, Zibechi writes, “[Autonomy] is not an end in and of itself. Instead, it is a way to defend difference—social and cultural, but also political... This includes autonomy from the market and the State, and the autonomy to move toward a new world that is, above all, different than the one in which we live now” (Zibechi 2013b). The creation of collective autonomy in this sense is a strategy for the creation of a different society. Obviously, as Cleaver highlights, this is a very different concept from that of the negative individual liberty to do whatever one wants.6

6 Groups that struggle for this other kind of autonomy assert that there is more individual freedom in collective self-determination than in other forms of society (Caldart 2002; Zibechi 2012).
“Community” is another word that is used in many different ways, to the point of meaning almost nothing in contemporary usage. I use the word community to mean the kind of group that is created in social movement for the creation of collective autonomy. The emphasis is on the word “creation”: “…a political project that is a community” (El Kilombo Intergaláctico 2006). Zibechi writes that the community is the “…true expression of the commons… the human organization most adequate for protecting the common wealth” (Zibechi 2013a). In this sense, “community” is a way of organizing human life for the creation and protection of common resources that is not given, and not merely descriptive of any group of people in any context. Autonomy could be thought of then as the strategy for the creation of community.

A final term that merits definition is “liberation,” used synonymously in the dissertation with “freedom” and “emancipation.” By liberation, I mean something like Zibechi’s use of the word “emancipation,” an always-unfinished process of people becoming “the creative subjects of their own lives” (Zibechi 2012). I am most influenced by Alvaro Reyes’ work on the concept of “freedom” in the Black Radical tradition, which we have discussed at length in Kilombo and which he discusses in his dissertational work, as not subsequent in time to resistance, but as “…the very act of resistance with

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7 Anthropologist Gerald Creed writes on the importance of study of the ways in which the term “community” is deployed in different contexts. An in-depth exploration of the important meanings and uses of the word in globalized culture is beyond the scope of this dissertation. However, the work of Creed, Nikolas Rose and others has informed my own understanding of the specificity of the use of the word “community” in an autonomous context.
which every sedimentation of power is met” (Reyes 2009). I also draw on the “Marxist concept of liberation,” developed by Ken Surin, in which liberation from dispossession entails both liberation from the dispossession of subjectivity and liberation from exploitation, or the dispossession of resources and dignity (Surin 2009). In other words, liberation is freedom from the need to continue to live with relations of domination, as well as the freedom to create other ways of relating. I argue that this kind of liberation is the goal of the autonomous movements that I refer to, in US in the period of Reconstruction, in the 60s and 70s, and in Latin America currently.

In Chapter 1, I note the difference between the form of education for self-government proposed by the founders of the United States, drawing on the tradition of civic republicanism and the form of education for self-government created by autonomous groups of ex-slaves in the period of Reconstruction. The difference lies in the extent to which societal organization has the goal of people becoming creative subjects in their own lives. Autonomous education, particularly the form of education that Zibechi terms “education in movement,” tends toward the creation of an “emancipatory climate,” in which participants become the creators of their own processes of learning and transformation.
2. Origins of the US School System

2.1 Introduction: Education for Self-Government and Education for Industry

In a 1977 speech, political activist James Boggs suggested that the development of the US school system involved a negotiation between two major tendencies: the pursuit of self-government, and the development of industrial capitalism in the US. Boggs saw the American Revolution as the source of “…the greatest leap in the concept of education…” because it “…proclaimed to the world the idea of self-government or citizenship for ordinary people. Education was for the purpose of self government.” However, in “…the late 19th Century in the United States, with the speed-up of the industrial revolution, side-by-side with the tremendous surge in immigration into this country of people from all over the world… the concept of education become[s] strictly tied to economic goals” (Boggs 1977). Research supports Boggs’ characterization of the two forces or inclinations in early American education. For the purposes of this study, it will be useful to interrogate the concept of “self-government” and contradictory movements within the framework of education for self-government: the autonomous creation of schools by members of organized communities, and the pursuit of universal education within the framework of civic republicanism.

This chapter will be an investigation of these two lines of development in the US education system: toward self-government and toward industrialization, in an effort to understand how the institution came to occupy the space that it did in industrial
capitalism in the US. I will focus on the creation of the school system as a state institution, and the factors that contributed to the characteristics of that system over time, arguing that the period of Reconstruction entailed the crucial conflict and turning point between two contradictory tendencies toward education for self-government: civic republicanism and the autonomous creation of schools, and the third tendency toward education for industrial development.

Ultimately, I argue that both the civic republican project and the industrial model of schooling supported a hierarchical organization of society that depended on the perpetuation of slavery or the stabilization of relations of domination and exploitation following slavery. Only the autonomous creation of schools challenged the societal relation of domination. Therefore, “education for self-government” in the form of civic republicanism worked with the industrial model to curtail the success of dominated social groups creating their own alternatives. The emergence of the school as a disciplinary institution served to limit the construction of autonomous schools and to reinforce the dominating power of an industrial system.

2.2 Autonomous Education, Self-Government

Before the creation of universal state education, communities in the early US autonomously created institutions of learning, contributing their own knowledge and resources to the development of sites of learning and growth for people of all ages. On the history of autonomous education among black communities in the US, W. E. B.s Du
Bois, C. G. Woodson, Donald Spivey and others provide ample evidence of the prolific creation of autonomous sites of learning by slaves and free blacks. Movements around education in US during the 60s and 70s also prompted historical research into the origins of the institution of state education in the US, revealing the preceding autonomous organization for education among Native American communities, black communities and rural white communities. Historians Michael Katz and David Tyack each contributed at that time to a thorough exploration of the development of education in the early US in the North, in rural white communities and especially in the transition of the North from agricultural to industrial production, as northern cities expanded and immigrants and black migrants transformed the social fabric of the early northern US.

More recently, historian Nancy Beadie complicates the history of autonomous education among rural white communities by pointing out the way in which rural schools emerged out of a framework of patriarchy and, though less explicit in her account, white theft of Native American land. In this section I will investigate this early history of autonomous education, to provide a sketch of institutions of learning in the US that preceded state education and arguably motivated the institutionalization of education by the state.

2.2.1 Black Autonomous Education
Du Bois and many others have contributed to the record of the struggle among black communities, before and after slavery, to create autonomous sites for learning in the US. On the history of struggles to create these sites before 1861, historian Carter G. Woodson is well known for his descriptions of the efforts of slaves to maintain practices of study in spite of extreme repression. As Woodson stated in 1919, “More schools for slaves existed than white men knew of, for it was difficult to find them.” Free blacks prior to the Civil War also created schools in both southern and northern states, with or without external aid (Woodson 1919).\textsuperscript{1} Du Bois notes that in the District of Columbia, blacks formed self-supported schools beginning in 1807, and attempted to start a free school system in 1856 (Du Bois 1935a).

In the period immediately following the Civil War, black communities established autonomous schools with insistency and resilience unparalleled in other parts of the US. The first general report issued by John W. Alvord, the national superintendent of schools under the Freedmen’s Bureau, includes affirmations of the prevalence of examples of “self-teaching” and “native schools.”\textsuperscript{2} The report includes

\footnotesize
\begin{itemize}
  \item[\textsuperscript{1}] The word “school” in this case, as discussed in the introduction, refers to any site designated for the purpose of learning, whether institutionalized in a specific and relatively permanent space, or created spontaneously in a space temporarily available. Woodson also refers to the practice of people of all ages gathering in secluded spaces for the purpose of study: “The ways in which slaves thereafter acquired knowledge are significant. Many picked it up here and there, some followed occupations which were in themselves enlightening, and other learned from slaves whose attainments were unknown to their masters... Shrewd Negroes sometimes slipped stealthily into back streets, where they studied under a private teacher, or attended a school hidden from the zealous execution of the law (Woodson 1919).
  \item[\textsuperscript{2}] Alvord used the term “native school” to refer to “common schools founded and maintained exclusively by ex-slaves” (J. D. Anderson 1988).
\end{itemize}

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Alvord’s somewhat awed testimony of the proliferation of schools, “…making their appearance through the interior of the entire South…” as well as “…in all the large places…” He insists that an estimate of 500 self-sustaining schools among black communities in 1866 would not be an “overstatement” (Alvord in Anderson 1988). As historian James D. Anderson emphasizes, “…in 1865, slaves and free persons of color had already begun to make plans for the systematic instruction of their illiterates. Early black schools were established and supported largely through the Afro-American’s own efforts” (J. D. Anderson 1988). Anderson lists as examples the school established at Fortress Monroe in 1861 under the leadership of a black teacher, Mary Peake; the Pioneer School of Freedom, created in New Orleans in 1860, “in the midst of danger and darkness,” a school in Savannah that existed from 1833 on, also under the tutelage of a black teacher, and many more, in Virginia, South Carolina and elsewhere (J. D. Anderson 1988).

It is worth restating that these schools were funded and organized by black communities themselves. “Ex-slaves contributed their money and labor to help make these schools possible, and they organized responsible committees to supervise the schools” (J. D. Anderson 1988). Even after the Freedmen’s Bureau contributed funding to the maintenance of schools that would be tuition-free, additional “Sabbath” schools were sponsored by black churches; a later report by Alvord estimates that 1,512 Sabbath schools existed in 1869, shortly before the dissolution of the Freedmen’s Bureau. Where
the Bureau withdrew its support, as in Louisiana, ex-slaves “took control of the educational system and transformed federal schools into local free schools.” Black leaders in Georgia created the Georgia Educational Association to fund and supervise schools, and to establish school policies; in this way, in spite of the involvement of the Freedmen’s Bureau, black communities in Georgia maintained and administered two-thirds of their own schools, and owned approximately half of all school buildings in Georgia (Du Bois 1935a; J. D. Anderson 1988). Anderson notes historian Jacqueline Jones’ observation that “…some blacks preferred to teach in and operate their own schools without the benefit of northern largesse” (Jones in Anderson 1988).

Far from a haphazard or spontaneous development, the creation of schools by black communities was a highly organized endeavor, nor is there necessarily a contradiction between autonomous education and the organization of a system of education on a broader scale. Alvord’s report goes on to say that the endeavors of freed blacks to create schools “are not spasmodic… they are growing into a habit… crystalizing into a system, and each succeeding school-term shows their organization more and more complete and permanent” (Alvord in Anderson 1988). Du Bois and Alvord provide evidence for ways in which funding could be made available on a system-wide basis, while groups retained decision-making power in the creation of their own schools. In Georgia in 1866, for example, freed blacks established the Georgia Educational Association “…whose object was to induce the freedmen to establish and
support schools in their own counties and neighborhoods” (Du Bois 1935a). By 1967, the freedmen financially supported 96 schools and owned 45 school buildings (Du Bois 1935a). Ex-slaves also played a crucial role in inscribing a system of tax-based free schooling into southern constitutional law, leading Du Bois to make his famous statement that “The first great mass movement for public education at the expense of the state, in the South, came from Negroes... Public education for all at public expense was, in the South, a Negro idea” (Du Bois 1935a).

Anderson also examines a second wave of black autonomous schooling after the termination of the Freedmen’s Bureau projects, when the migration of blacks from rural areas to cities between 1910 and 1930 provided a new impetus for the creation of black schools in the South. Anderson writes that contrary to its reputation, in its inception the philanthropic foundation of the Rosenwald School Building Fund received most of its contributions from black donors and matched funds from public taxes on black communities. Additional volunteer labor, donated land and building materials contributed the remainder of necessary funds for the creation of schools. In some cases, black individuals who had succeeded in acquiring real estate property mortgaged the property in order to provide funds for schools (J. D. Anderson 1988).³

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³ Anderson notes, however, that this second phase of black autonomous school building also demonstrates problematically an unjust system of double taxation for blacks, as the school tax collected in the first instance was used primarily to fund white schools. Anderson raises questions concerning the limitations of this system of school creation, including “…the point at which ‘self-help’ becomes unconscious submission to oppression” (J. D. Anderson 1988).
The creation of schools was a crucial aspect of this period of Black Reconstruction examined by Du Bois. That is, the establishment of autonomous schools by black communities in the south is best understood as a process of creating the means and practices of self-government in the sense described by Boggs in his analysis of the two tendencies in education in the early US, and in the sense that Du Bois describes of a “...great human experiment,” in which the black laboring class “…took decisive and encouraging steps toward the widening and strengthening of human democracy…” (Du Bois 1935a). Anderson elaborates that the movement by ex-slaves to establish a system of education “…reflected the ex-slaves intent to restructure and control their lives...”

The foundation of the freedmen’s educational movement was their self-reliance and deep-seated desire to control and sustain schools for themselves and their children... The values of self-help and self-determination underlay the ex-slaves’ educational movement... their own action—class self-activity informed by an ethic of mutuality—was the primary force that brought schools to the children of freed men and women. This underlying force represented the culmination of a process of social class formation that started decades before the civil war... (J. D. Anderson 1988).

### 2.2.2 Rural White Communities

There is also historical evidence of local organization of schools preceding universal state education among rural white communities, at least in the North. Beadie writes that the intensification of agriculture in the northern US between 1780 and 1820 led to the creation of all kinds of social resources held in common by members of
agricultural communities, including community schools. These resources were based in exchange networks among known members of a community. Throughout her history of the conflict between rural community schooling and the emergence of centralized Methodist academy-building, Beadie draws on the example of the town of Lima, New York. She writes, “Beginning with the construction of the first brick school house in 1803 and continuing under the first state laws providing for systematic public support of schools in the period from 1812 to 1815, people in Lima devoted substantial local resources to common school building and operations” (Beadie 2010). With somewhat less historical contextualization, David Tyack likewise marks the prevalence of locally-controlled rural schools in the early American Republic, using the language of the 1960s movement for community control of urban schools to describe the characteristics of the schools that existed previous to state education ‘reform.’ Tyack writes, “Community control of schools became anathema to many of the educational reformers of 1900, like other familiar features of the country school: nongraded primary education, instruction of younger children by older, flexible scheduling, and a lack of bureaucratic buffers between teacher and patrons” (Tyack 1974). As evidence of the ubiquity of rural community control of schools in the early US, Tyack also notes that in 1910, 200,000 one-room schoolhouses existed in the US (Tyack 1974).

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Beadie refers to these resources as “social capital,” but I am not convinced that the term capital applies in this context.
Importantly, though she does not take a critical tone, Beadie’s text includes cautions against potential romanticization of the history of nineteenth century rural schools in the northern US. Though the schools were held and governed in common through legal incorporation, not to seek profit but in order to legally protect a collective institution, corporate charter membership was limited to male property-owners. “In cooperating to organize a society independent of town government and aristocratic proprietorship, these men clearly did not object to the principle of property ownership as a basis for leadership. Rather, they regarded land ownership as conferring certain social responsibilities…” (Beadie 2010). In this way, Methodist organizations comprised of primarily young people and women challenged a patriarchal and property-based hierarchy in the rural North. Furthermore, the schools as a collective resource were founded in large part on the ownership of property stolen from Native American communities. A critique of the patriarchy and colonization inherent in the formation of

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5 “The predominance of young people in general, and women in particular, in the evangelical church meetings and revivals of the second Great Awakening is well established. In this respect, the evangelical movement promoted a social pluralism that went beyond religion and geography. For the young people who organized the society in South Lima, church membership was not about asserting adult identities they had already established or acquired through external means. Without property themselves, and, in the case of the women who constituted the majority, without prospect of property ownership or political power in the future, these young people participated in church society not as heads of household with responsibilities for raising families but as dependent youth who had not yet assumed adult responsibilities. For these youth, participation in a society of peers was a way to forge and test adult identities and to do so with a degree of independence from existing patriarchal authority” (Beadie 2010).

6 For Beadie, this theft is even more clear in the later development of state schooling: “Consider the source of early state funds for education. Where did they come from? In New York, as in virtually all other states, such funds were initially capitalized from the sale of ‘public’ lands appropriated from Native Americans. Proceeds from such sales were then invested in various enterprises, including banks. Interest on such investments then provided states with income that they distributed to schools” (Beadie 2010).
white rural communities in the northern US, and a recognition of the struggles of young women to achieve other forms of social organization, need not detract from any subsequent critique of state schooling. However, in the way that they upheld social inequalities, the creation of schools in rural white communities did not challenge the state model in the way that the creation of schools by slaves and free black individuals and groups did.

**2.3 Civic Republicanism and Democratic Localism**

In discussing contending models of education in the early US, Michael Katz describes democratic localism as a model which “…sought to adapt to the city an organizational model current in rural areas… the operation of the schools by local districts in which the ‘whole control’ of education remained ‘to the free and unrestricted action of the people themselves…’ (Katz 1975). Katz writes that the overwhelming “triumph” of a centralized and bureaucratic form of education has eclipsed the real sway and historical significance of advocates of democratic localism in cities. For these individuals, democratic localism was a system of education as well as a theory of governance, the idea being that each state, as well as the Union, should be comprised of distinct, largely self-governing communities. In the context of education, Orestes Brownson conceptualized a system in which that the district would be “paramount to the state,” with a school that remained “under the control of a community composed
merely of the number of families having children in it” (Brownson in Katz 1975). Katz explains,

Democratic localists fought, actually, on two fronts: against paternalistic voluntarism, as in their opposition to the New York Public School Society, and against bureaucracy or centralization as well, as in their attack on the Massachusetts Board of Education. Emphasis on the virtues of variety, local adaptability, and the symbiotic relation of school and community permeated both conflicts. In their resistance to bureaucracy, however, two other aspects of the democratic-localist attitude emerged most strongly. One was antiprofessionalism. The localists, unlike the sponsors of the New York Public School Society, were not vaguely indifferent to the concept of the professional educator; they were, instead, hostile and suspicious (Katz 1975).

The localists also opposed the idea of a state educational apparatus for fear that a centralized state system would impose social attitudes and changes. “To the democratic localist, legislatures should enact, not lead, the public will” (Katz 1975). Katz goes on to say that democratic localism in early US cities referred to existing practices as well as theories of government and education. One concrete plan for an organized system of democratic localism was put forward by New York Secretary of State John C. Spencer in the 1840s, who argued for the “whole control” of education by each independent school district in New York (Spencer in Katz 1975).

Katz fails to note the influence of the civic republican tradition on the development of localism as an educational model, but it is the overlap between localism and civic republicanism that helps to mark the distinction between this form of “education for self-government” in the history of US education, and the autonomous creation of schools.
Historian J. G. A. Pocock is well-known for his argument that civic republican philosophy, originating with Machiavelli, and adopted via its application in Britain over three centuries, had a greater influence on the drafters of the US constitution, and the US population as a whole, then the philosophical tradition of Lockean liberalism. Pocock’s argument is that the constitution of the US as a political entity was seen by residents of the Republic as a “Machiavellian moment,” “…at which the fragility of the experiment, and the ambiguity of the republic’s position in secular time, was more vividly appreciated than it could have been from a Lockean perspective” (Pocock 1975), as civic republicanism stressed the question of how to sustain a political structure in time, with consciousness of its instability, and the figure of the independent and virtuous citizen, capable of thinking of the good of all. Importantly, the virtuous citizen in civic republicanism, as theorized over time in Britain, necessarily owned property, in order to stave himself against the corruption of subservience to another. Thus, property is owned not for the purpose of profit, but for the grounding in power and virtue that is necessary to liberate the owner to practice the activities of the citizen.

Pocock refers to Thomas Jefferson as one leader in the development and application of republican thought in the creation of the US. For Jefferson, the participation of the virtuous citizen in political decision-making grounds civic republicanism in political localism. He defines a republic in a letter to John Taylor:

…a government, by its citizens in mass, acting directly and personally, according to rules established by the majority; and that every other government is more or less republican,
in proportion as it has in its composition more or less of this ingredient of the direct action of its citizens. Such a government is evidently restrained to very narrow limits of space and population. I doubt if it would be practical beyond the extent of a New England Township (Jefferson 1816).

It is Jefferson’s vision of a republic based in local government, as well as his own proposals for universal education managed at a local level, that leads educational historians to refer to democratic localism as a “Jeffersonian ideal,” in their discussion of Orestes Brownson (Tozer, Senese, and Violas 2009).

For Jefferson and other drafters of the US Constitution, however, independence from British rule, the project of designing a political State and the philosophy of civic republicanism entailed an experiment in “self-government” which by no means precluded political and economic domination of working classes. In fact, as Anderson describes in his history of the period, the project of shaping a stable political entity necessitated the subordination of lower and working people. As he writes in the introduction to *The Education of Blacks in the South*,

The history of American education abounds with themes that represent the inextricable ties between citizenship in a democratic society and popular education. It is crucial for an understanding of American educational history, however, to recognize that within American democracy there have been classes of oppressed people and that there have been essential relationships between popular education and the politics of oppression. Both schooling for democratic citizenship and schooling for second-class citizenship have been basic traditions in American education. These opposing traditions were not, as some would explain, the difference between the mainstream of American education and some aberrations or isolated alternatives. Rather, both were fundamental American conceptions of society and progress, occupied the same time and space, were fostered by the same governments, and usually were embraced by the same leaders (J. D. Anderson 1988).
Self-government was viewed by these leaders as a liberating project, and education for self-government equally so, but the liberation of self-government from the perspective of elite classes did not contradict the simultaneous domination and exploitation of working people. Nor was the domination of working people via the education system arbitrary or antithetical to the project of universal education designed by an elite class, but was as Anderson states “essential” to the design.\(^7\)

Both Thomas Jefferson and Orestes Brownson opposed the federal abolition of slavery, expressing concern for states’ liberty and for the possible destabilizing effect of abolition on the new republic. The apparent paradox of the stability of the Republican ideal of freedom necessitating the perpetuation of slavery supports Anderson’s argument that citizenship and domination were always part of the same design.

According to Brownson’s logic, abolition itself is the destruction of freedom:

> In the measure the abolitionists adopt, there is a deeper question involved than that of negro slavery. All who are accustomed to look below the surface of things may see that it is a question of no less magnitude than that of changing the whole structure of the government of this country, and possibly that of destroying the liberty of the whole American people. When hundreds and thousands of our citizens are banded together to trample on the rights of independent communities in the holy name of freedom herself, we confess we are not a little alarmed for the rights of the individual (Brownson 1838).

Brownson is alarmed for the rights of the individual that would be threatened by the freeing of slaves.

\(^7\)I will say more about the process of State formation in a later section of this chapter.
Perhaps more important than the application of civic republican ideals among elite members of early US society, is the espousal of these ideals by some members of the working class, and the racist logic that became crucial to the white worker’s concept of himself as an independent citizen. Historian David R. Roediger provides an account of the adherence to republican philosophy by poor immigrants and working class people who would come to identify as white. He demonstrates that in order to conceptualize oneself as an independent citizen, in spite of worker status, the white worker before the Civil War leaned on the status of the enslaved black for self-identification as an independent wage-earner. The would-be white worker theorized the status of each (slave and wage-earner) as a quality of character rather than an imposed context, and in doing so began to make whiteness itself a kind of property, capable of confirming Republican citizenship:

Comparisons with Black slaves or even Northern ‘free’ Blacks were tempting precisely because whites had defined these groups as servile. Thus, by considering a range of comparisons with Blacks in weighing his status as a white worker, the white laboring man could articulate a self-image that, depending on his wont, emphasized either his pride in independence or his fears of growing dependency (Roediger 2007).

Roediger goes on to say that the white worker’s concept of blackness as the antithesis to Republican citizenship allowed him (the white worker) to define the category of “free white labor” that he hoped would guarantee his own status as a citizen (Roediger 2007).

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8 “Republicanism had long emphasized that the strength, virtue and resolve of a people guarded them from enslavement, and that weakness and servility made those most dependent a threat to the Republic, apt to be pawns of powerful and designing men. From such a stance it was not difficult to move toward considering the proposition that Black oppression was the result of ‘slavishness’ rather than slavery” (Roediger 2007).
“At exactly the moment that voting requirements reflected the tendency to drop the traditional republican concern about voting by whites who were not economically independent, concern focused on the possibility that ‘servile’ blacks could vote” (Roediger 2007).

Thus, democratic localism, as an educational model based in the civic republican tradition, served to ally some workers with the elite white bourgeoisie that exploited them. Orestes Brownson, the central figure in the theorization of democratic localism wholly took up the Republican racism that categorized the white worker as the free citizen and the black worker as the unfree anticitizen in protesting the oppression of the “laborer at wages,” while apologizing for slavery (Roediger 2007).

2.4 Universal Schooling

It was in this context, of the prevalent creation of autonomous schooling, especially among black communities in the South, and of the attempted adaptation of the rural schoolhouse model to emerging cities, that a movement for state-funded and controlled education took form. In the North, the primary advocates of universal state schooling were among the Whig party, which appealed, in the first half of the nineteenth century, primarily to business and professional classes, and supported centralized schooling as one aspect of a platform of government support for industrial development. After 1865, the project of school centralization in the North was paralleled and overtaken by northern industrialist intervention in schooling for the black working class in the
South, as southern schools became a testing ground for a form of schooling for employment in production processes. The Hampton model, lauded by northern philanthropists, had limited success in becoming a permanent institution in the South, due as Anderson demonstrates to black resistance. However, the effort for centralized, or bureaucratic, schooling on behalf of industry took root in the US and was not dislodged for the next several decades.

2.4.1 Northern Industry

Though potentially more repressive of the capacity of the poor white worker to participate in government, the movement among business elites in the moment of early industrial development toward a form of universal state education for the development of workers parallels the republican tradition in its assertion of racial hierarchy and the privilege of a property-owning class. Though this form of education was more extremely repressive of democratic tendencies in education, it was more a radical extension of some of the less democratic aspects of civic republicanism than it was a radically new and uniquely anti-democratic model. It could be argued that the model of repression was more extreme in the industrial state schooling model due to an attempt to concentrate power and property in fewer hands, in a rapidly changing social context: the end of slavery and the mass immigration of poor Europeans to northern cities. While civic republicanism catered to the cooperation of specific immigrant groups in
upholding the institutions of private property and racial hierarchy, industrial schooling ensured the direct repression of any potential collective alternative.

Business classes regarded a centralized, government-controlled system of education as expedient to the development of industry in cities for a number of reasons. On the one hand, a centralized schooling system would be in part a model of social organization according to a top-down bureaucratic structure that would support industrial efficiency. A friend of Horace Mann, and a fellow education reformer, Samuel Gridley Howe, argued that the city of Boston required an efficient school system with a professional superintendent who would be able to establish “permanence, personal responsibility, continued and systematic labor,” as well as serve as a channel for information and policy between individual school, centralized school board, and city government as a whole (Howe in Tyack 1974). A centralized school system reinforced the authority of government officials and of the legal system in a way that was useful for business classes, and the National Education Association (NEA)9 in 1894 issued a statement affirming as much: “We deem it our highest duty to pronounce enthusiastically, and with unanimous voice, for the supremacy of the law and the

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9The NEA was established in 1870 out of the National Teachers Association, which preceded it by 13 years (National Education Association 2013). As historian Thomas Timar explains, the NEA operated to consolidate industrial interests and bureaucratic centralization of schools: “Instead of developing as a differentiated branch of state government in which the civil society vested authority for educational decision making, state education bureaucracies became dominated by professional interests. An interlocking network of school district administrators and professors of education working through state affiliates of the National Education Association (NEA) used state education departments to promote both legislative and administrative agendas... institutional control over education was subordinated to professional interests” (Timar 1997).
maintenance of social and political order” (NEA in Tyack 1974).\textsuperscript{10} Tyack notes that Boston’s school system became an example for other cities.

Both Tyack and Anderson draw on statements by Mann and others to demonstrate that the centralization of school control was most important to industrial leaders because of its role in shaping working class behaviors and expectations. In other words, with a new form of economic production arose a need to adapt people to new disciplines and modes of life. Two points stand out in Tyack’s account: 1. education reformers’ interest in a school system that would acclimate students to an industrial sense of time, and 2. the gradation of students in systems that made their progress intelligible by categories. On the issue of time, Tyack uses the example of William Harris, who he describes as “…the outstanding intellectual leader in American education in the years between the death of Horace Mann in 1859 and the emergence of John Dewey…” Harris insisted that modern industrial society required an education system in which students learn “…conformity to the time of the train, to the starting of work in the manufactory… The pupil must have his lessons ready at the appointed time, must rise at the tap of the bell, move to the line, return; in short, go through all the evolutions with equal precision” (Harris in Tyack 1974). Tyack adds, “Punctuality was a favorite theme of schoolmen of the time... Well into the twentieth century

\textsuperscript{10} The statement was issued in response to Populist unrest (Tyack 1974).
superintendents continued to report attendance and tardiness statistics down to the second and third decimal point” (Tyack 1974).

The other issue, on how to organize students in order to best assess progress involved both architectural innovation and the implementation of grading systems for schoolwork. In 1838, Whig reformer Henry Barnard gave a lecture on the importance of implementing grading in schools at least fifty times throughout the US. Ten years later reformer John Philbrick introduced his “egg-crate” school model, in which a large auditorium was surrounded by twelve classrooms, each divided according to graded proficiency (Tyack 1974).

For these advocates of centralized education, the question of how to best guide student behavior in a changing social context was the crucial problem. As Henry Barnard explained, at stake in universal school was

…it not so much… intellectual culture, as the regulation of feelings and dispositions, the extirpation of vicious propensities, the preoccupation of the wilderness of the young heart with the seeds and germs of moral beauty, and the formation of a lovely and virtuous character by the habitual process of cleanliness, delicacy, refinement, good temper, gentleness, kindness, justice, and truth” (Barnard in Katz 1975).

The 1877 US Commissioner of Education also theorized the capacity of bureaucratically-structured schools to curtail youth participation in mobs: “Capital, therefore, should weigh the cost of the mob and the tramp against the cost of universal and sufficient education” (Eaton in Tyack 1974).

As another explanation of the connection between top-down societal organization and the creation of a system of universal education, Beadie makes the
argument that part of the purpose, or the effect, of centralization of schools was the harnessing of collective potential, what Beadie refers to as “social capital,” to changing systems of production. Beadie writes that the cultural community resources that emerged in rural, agricultural areas became productive for industry over time as existing social networks became channels for investment and exchange. She uses the example of the creation of Methodist academies in general, and the academy in Lima, New York in particular, to demonstrate the way in which the centralized economy of Methodist academies “…contributed to long term local growth and fostered the integration of local social and financial networks in a transforming political economy” (Beadie 2010).11 Beadie concludes,

…in 1820, the social value of education commanded substantial resources that the state could not…. The question is not when and why the state made schools an object of social spending, but how the considerable social, financial, and political capital already commanded by schools as voluntary associations came to be appropriated by the state…. (Beadie 2010).

Beyond the development of pupil behaviors, however, participants in the business class movement for centralized education articulated what for them was a most crucial motivation: the mere prevention of the development of a democratic localist system of education. It is my argument that the movement for universalist education emerged when it did in response to, and out of fear of difference: the potential

11 For Katz, Methodist academies are an example of corporate (private, elite) voluntarism and not of incipient bureaucracy. It is interesting to note that in Beadie, the Methodist academy transforms the existing social networks into sites of investment, and in this way the Methodist academy could be seen to prefigure the process of real subsumption that I will discuss in the third chapter.
development of a form of self-governance not anticipated by the drafters of the
Declaration of Independence or the early political class in the new Republic. In
introducing the concept of government-controlled universal schooling, the Whig party
responded not just to industrial development but also to the flow of immigration into
US cities, as well as an impending sense of the instability of the system of slavery, and
the likelihood of a challenge to traditional structures of power and authority.

That the Whig party regarded the possibility of a changing social structure with
fear and a sense of a need for preventative action comes across in its supporters’
tendency to regard the system of democratic localism as the greatest obstacle to their
vision of centralized schooling for all. Katz writes,

The promoters of bureaucracy, including the great figures of the ‘educational revival,’
like Horace Mann and Henry Barnard, concentrated on attacking democratic localism,
which was the chief hindrance to their schemes. They struck first at the notion that
democratic localism was in fact democratic by pointing out that it would permit 51
percent of the local parents to dictate the religious, moral, and political ideas taught to
the children of the remainder (Katz 1975).

Whig reformers regarded a centralized school system as a bulwark against disparate
ideas of possible forms of social organization in New England cities that would
otherwise have threatened the developing hegemony of an industrialist class. The
reformer Samuel Gridley Howe affirmed that “many interests would be assailed” by a
powerful school board, and looked forward to the undermining of positions contrary to
the interests of the emerging city government in Boston (Tyack 1974).
The theme of the threat that parents posed to their children’s’ proper development is apparent in speeches and lectures of the leaders in education reform. Henry Barnard expressed the opinion of many reformers in stating the need to replace parent influence with properly organized schools:

No one at all familiar with the deficient household arrangements and deranged machinery of domestic life, of the extreme poor, and ignorant, to say nothing of the intemperate—of the examples of rude manners, impure and profane language, and all the vicious habits of low bred idleness, which abound in certain sections of all populous districts—can doubt, that it is better for children to be removed as early and as long as possible from such scenes and examples (Barnard in Katz 1975).

The very real and tragic practice of removing children from the care and love of their parents and communities was justified in Barnard’s eyes by the idea that school would better provide them with an adequately “moral” upbringing. The children’s parents and communities were threatening to the development of industry and the education reformers’ plans for centralized schooling because of their “bad manners,” as Barnard states openly, but in a context in which morality or immorality is determined in the context of industrial norms. It is “immoral” to be tardy, “idle,” “intemperate,” or poor. For this reason, those who objected to educational reform were depicted as being either committed to “the old aristocratic class,” or “the non-English-speaking classes” (Tyack 1974). Opponents of centralized education were either opponents of industrial development because they were committed to a monarchical organization of society, or because they belonged to a poor immigrant class that had not yet internalized the new societal relationship between industry and morality.
A system of education that did not produce commitment to industrial labor would have greatly undermined the business class vision of a well-organized society. For this reason, parents and communities that offered their own models of education and that continuously created their own schools were a threat to Whig reformers. The subsequent depiction of parents and communities as immoral and treacherous to children entailed a potent industrialist fear: of autonomous communities that would not depend on participation in a labor force for the satisfaction of needs. The educational model of democratic localism, to the extent that it allowed for the imaginary of immigrant or black communities determining their own educational practices, was a target of the harshest criticism by industrial reformers. However, to the extent that it allowed poor immigrant workers to identify with a more elite class in the domination of black people, civic republicanism was not actually the primary target of industrial education’s attacks. Industrialists and republicans alike were interested in the stabilization of the new nation and wary of the potentially destabilizing effects of abolition and immigration. Poor people, and their potential to create lifestyles alternative to wage labor in industrialized cities, were the threat that both republicanism and industrial education attempted to contain.

2.4.2 Industrial Education and Reconstruction

While one sector of an emerging industrial class developed a platform on education in the North, other members of the northern business class watched the
unraveling of the system of slavery with trepidation and with an eye for new industrial potential. Wealthy members of the northern business class such as Samuel Chapman Armstrong, J. L. M. Curry, Robert Ogden and Thomas Jesse Jones took a philanthropic interest in shaping education in the South, in an intervention in what they regarded as the creation of a new social order. Historian Donald Spivey describes the way in which the industrialist project in the South for black education overtook the northern system of universalist schooling in becoming a testing ground for industrial education around the country: “The crusaders for industrial education did not confine their interests to the South. They considered developing schools similar to Hampton and Tuskegee in the North. They believed that the movement had within itself the ‘possibilities of the highest usefulness’ (Spivey 1978). Anderson demonstrates repeatedly and convincingly that the industrialists did not succeed in their endeavor to create racial subordination through an industrialist model of schooling due to the strength of black resistance to that model in the South (J. D. Anderson 1988). Of course, he does not deny that the industrialists' efforts achieved the stabilization of the racial hierarchy in labor distribution that they aimed to implement through the model, and addresses the question of the way in which the model or tactic failed, but the strategy did not. His referral to a second period of black creation of schools, which occurred among people who had relocated from rural to urban areas, is also crucial to my understanding of the particular way in which the

\[12\] To be discussed further in the next chapter section.
industrialists “failed” to achieve a universal application of the Hampton model, and the meaning of their failure for subsequent generations of students.

The industrialists were not the only force involved in the development of a system of education for ex-slaves in the South; rather, they operated from an initially defensive position, with the goal of limiting the potential of free education to the context of industry. Spivey writes, “Through industrial education [Armstrong] hoped to control the blacks... to give his students a limited education, just enough to fit them to their prescribed station in society and no more” (Spivey 1978). As discussed above, black communities created their own schools and drove the movement to establish their own sites for learning and study. On a much smaller scale, northern missionaries also created schools in ways that were not always divergent from industrialist schooling, but which were dominated by different interests and concepts of educational work (J. D. Anderson 1988; Watkins 2001a). Anderson outlines three educational movements that occurred in the South during the period of Reconstruction, followed by a fourth that emerged in black migration to urban areas between 1916 and 1930. The first “educational movement” of Reconstruction, he writes, was the movement of ex-slaves

13 The fact that, as Du Bois writes, “Public education for all at public expense was, in the South, a Negro idea” (Du Bois 1935a), demonstrates that the limit to autonomous social organization does not emerge with the concept of universality of education, but the question of who controls the institutions that are funded by all.

14 “While missionary education prior to the Civil War often aimed at Christianizing and civilizing, corporate philanthropic education had political objectives. The Black population had to be prepared ideologically and practically for their role in a new America” (Watkins 2001a).
themselves, as discussed above, to create sites of learning that would best suit the needs of their children and communities. The second was a movement of poor whites, intrigued and perhaps out of a sense of competition with the schools created by black groups, which occurred in the 1880s and 90s, as poor white farmers took control of state and local governments and used the newly acquired leverage to make gains toward public education. On this movement, Anderson writes that like the educational campaigns of the ex-slaves, the efforts of the white small farmers’ educational movement also implied political and economic changes that threatened both the southern planters and the northern industrial class, but that poor whites did not struggle for schooling previous to the emancipation of slaves, and were driven in part by a fear of black superiority (J. D. Anderson 1988).

It is the third movement, in which northern industrialists proposed and strove to implement a form of industrial education for racial subordination that will be the focus of the larger part of this section. My argument is that the industrialists’ goal of universal education entailed an effort to impose a limit on potential autonomy, or a limit on the possibilities of forms of social organization that would be antithetical to the needs of industrial society. The form of education supported by industrialists was, in this sense, education against difference. The deliberate design of education to be a limit on possibility is apparent in Armstrong’s descriptions of his Hampton model, in which he posits that the ideal education for black students at Hampton should not encourage “too
much” in the way of intellectual training: “‘Over education,’ the Founder defined as one of the most salient ‘dangers with the weak races… For the average [black] pupil,’ he contended, ‘too much is as bad as too little’” (Armstrong in Spivey 1978). The reactionary facet of northern industrial intervention in education is also apparent in individual theorists’ comments regarding the need to separate black youth from their parents. Armstrong described the need for education to train black students to resist the “passions” that their parents could not resist: “Colored youth, to escape the terrible associations of negro life… and to become better than their fathers, need the training and the refuge of Christian [white] homes” (Armstrong in Watkins 2001). Members of an industrial and business class who became interested in black education were aware of the Freedmen’s Bureau report, and the motivation of freed people to build lasting institutions for learning; they sought above all to prevent the growth of those institutions into a social force that would be beyond the control of industry. Anderson summarizes the preventative intent of this “third” movement of education in the South by depicting it as a reactionary measure against the broader efforts of ex-slaves to create their own institutions:

…southern and northern whites who thought it wiser to redirect the social purpose of freedmen’s education rather than attempt to destroy it rallied to this new model of special instruction… As the period 1860 to 1880 was characterized by efforts to establish the legal, institutional, and moral foundation of universal schooling for ex-slaves, the quarter century following was characterized by movements to transform the content and purpose of instruction in black education” (J. D. Anderson 1988).
Beyond the preventative or reactionary aspect of industrial education for ex-slaves, there is broad agreement that the northern industrialist interest in education reform entailed a double goal: the development of a black labor force for a growing economy, and the restabilization of social hierarchy following the disruption of the Civil War (Spivey 1978; Watkins 2001a). On the first goal: the need, from the industrial perspective, for a growing population of laborers for industrial production, Spivey writes that northern industrialists concerned themselves with the creation of an industrial labor force for both the North and South: “Northern industry needed more black labor and Hampton helped meet that need. A great void developed in the field of domestic service as many of the Irish, who had comprised the majority of domestic servants in Boston and New York, began to move into the expanding factory system” (Spivey 1978), citing a statement by the creator of Hampton, Samuel Armstrong: “At the North… the housekeeping question becomes more serious every year” (Armstrong in Spivey 1978). However, Armstrong also observed that the South was losing much of its labor to industry in the North, and that the expansion of the industrial economy into the South would require a workforce that remained in the South. To this end, students at Hampton were encouraged to remain in southern states after completing their education: “The General now said that the North had nothing to offer the Negro. He told them that they could not hope to compete with the immigrants, who increased in number each day…” (Spivey 1978).
On the second goal, that of a class interest determined to maintain a system of power challenged in the act of freeing slaves: in order to develop a new labor class, and in order to maintain power while replacing the southern power structure with new forms of white domination, the northern philanthropists advocated forms of industrial education for the ideal of white rule, and the “dissemination of educational ideas that were conducive to perpetual slavery” (Spivey 1978). Watkins similarly suggests that industrialist education for ex-slaves was intended to be a model for the entire country, and that in this sense the northern industrialists involved in education reform in the South recognized that the “need” for black labor would be an increasing and nationwide matter:

Inextricably connected to the new corporate order were the interrelated critical questions of Blacks and the labor market. Resolving the ‘Negro question’ meant Blacks could not be totally frozen out of social participation. They would have to be politically socialized, given hope, and given at least minimal access to survival. A compradore, or middle class, as advocated by Booker T. Washington, of Black entrepreneurs, clergy, clerks, and teachers was indispensable to the new formula. The Black American population would have their preachers, morticians, insurance agents, postal employees, and beauticians in the segregated society. Simultaneously, capitalist labor economics required an abundance of semifeudal sharecropper labor alongside cheap semiskilled and skilled industrial labor. American industrialism would be built on the backs of Black labor” (Watkins 2001a).

According to the analyses of both Watkins and Spivey, the motive behind industrialist education reform was the effort by members of the industrial class to solve two problems with one solution: the need for ever more laborers to support the growing economy, and the restructuring of the social order following the end of slavery.
Samuel Armstrong is recognized by all three historians as the pivotal figure in the creation of an industrial model of schooling for ex-slaves. The founder of the Hampton Institute in Virginia was, as Watkins describes him, “...an effective and farsighted social, political, and economic theorist working for the cause of a segregated and orderly South,” who changed the course of United States industry and society (Watkins 2001a). Armstrong received the support of both business and “charity” communities in the opening of Hampton in 1868, where students engaged in manual labor in the morning and did schoolwork in the afternoon and evening. Students were not trained in skilled crafts or more intellectual pursuits; instead, the Hampton curriculum emphasized character-building: self-restraint, decency, industry. Watkins explains, “Armstrong repeatedly reaffirmed his view that Blacks had the intellectual capacity to learn. It was not book knowledge, however, that they required. Rather it was the knowledge required for people in the ‘ruts of barbarism.’ Blacks, he felt, needed character, morality and socialization...” (Watkins 2001a). Like immigrant and working-class students in the North, Armstrong felt that black students should be educated out of their culture of origin: the “…terrible associations of negro life, the temptations of which are inconceivable to those in good circumstances...” (Armstrong in Watkins 2001).

According to Armstrong’s vision, the Hampton Institute was dedicated to the training of teachers who would leave Hampton to reproduce its work in myriad other black schools: “The negro teacher is the hope of his race; he is looked up to; his influence for
good or evil is vast; when well-fitted for his work he has not been found wanting. What
the colored race needs most, and needs now, is teachers of the right sort... Let us make
the teachers and we will make the people” (Armstrong in Watkins 2001). Booker T.
Washington became the model pupil of the Institute, and went on to reproduce much of
its example in the leadership of Tuskegee.

Of course, many northern industrialists besides Armstrong played a key role in
the development of the concept of industrial education for ex-slaves. In addition to those
listed above, Watkins discusses Franklin H. Giddings, the Phelps Stokes family, the
Rockefellers, and William Henry Baldwin. It is not my intention to thoroughly depict the
roles of each of these actors in this chapter. Instead, I would like to provide a broad
sketch of the northern industrialist intervention in black education in order to best
understand the factors that contributed to the curtailment of black autonomous
education as described by Du Bois and Anderson.

2.4.3 Black Resistance

To understand how industrialist schooling contended with existing autonomous
practices of schooling, it is useful to investigate briefly to the real effect of black
resistance against the industrial model. Anderson in particular provides ample evidence
to demonstrate that the Hampton Institute and other industrial models failed to replicate
themselves in their intended form precisely because black people refused to participate

\[15\] And Watkins has already provided a detailed assessment of each.
in this form of education. Additionally, Anderson describes opposition to the Hampton model that occurred among students at Hampton, who protested that they were not learning any skilled craft, as had been promised by the school, but were instead working excessively: “The Hampton model of industrial education was viewed with suspicion and resentment by significant segments of the black community. The black students who experienced the Hampton routine delivered an important critique” (J. D. Anderson 1988).

Resistance to the Hampton model began with its students, who objected to the absence of training in skilled trades at the school. An outspoken student who had come to Hampton with the intention of learning the printing trade, William W. Adams, wrote that at Hampton he was “…not learning anything…” “…going over what I had learned in a primary school…” (Adams in Anderson 1988). Adams ended up leaving Hampton in contempt for its failure to provide students with educational resources. Another student, Thomas Mann, also complained to Armstrong regarding the lack of training in skills required for his chosen trade, also printing, as did students who had come to Hampton hoping to acquire knowledge in the fields of blacksmithing, shoemaking, and carpentry (J. D. Anderson 1988). Not only did students compose letters to Armstrong individually, but in 1887 issued a petition of protest, demanding increased training in skilled trades, to which every student at Hampton signed his name. Students followed the petition with letters also objecting to the taxing amount of manual labor required by
the school, low wages and poor working conditions. At other times, students consistently asked for a decreased labor load (J. D. Anderson 1988).

Specific objections to the Hampton model extended beyond school walls, as well. William Roscoe Davis, who was not a student at the school, but was an exslave who had come to live in Hampton after the Civil War, spoke out against Hampton, saying, “If Negroes don’t get any better education than Armstrong is giving them… they may as well have stayed in slavery” (Davis in Spivey 1978). In 1876 a Virginia newspaper edited by the black journalist John Wesley Cromwell, The People’s Advocate, described the Hampton Institute as dedicated to black subordination, in its depiction of the inequality of treatment of white and black visitors to the school. The article states that it would be “…better, far better, yes infinitely better that we have no high schools and colleges, if our youth are to be brought up under such baneful influences” (People’s Advocate in Anderson 1988). Another journalist for the same newspaper wrote, “I had rather my boy, should grow up ignorant of letters, than attend an Institution to be taught that Negroes, notwithstanding their acquirements, are and must forever remain inferior to the whites” (People’s Advocate in Anderson 1988). Anderson goes on to cite criticism to the Hampton Institute from statements made by the black leader Henry M. Turner, who objected to pictures of Robert E. Lee and Andrew Johnson that hung on the school’s walls, and also emphasized the unwelcoming treatment he received as a black visitor at Hampton, as did the editor of the Virginia Star, R. A. Green. Other newspapers, including the
Louisianian, the Cleveland Gazette, and the Washington Bee published criticisms of the model, and black educators and writes such as Harry Smith, Alexander Crummell and Calvin Chase spoke out against the school (J. D. Anderson 1988). Crummell wrote in 1898, “All the talk about ‘industrialism’ is with regard to the Negro and Negro education, and there is a lot of white men in the land… who take up this miserable ‘fad,’ and are striving by one pretext or another to put this limitation upon our brains and culture” (Crummell in Anderson 1988).

Resistance transcended editorial objection and written statements, as well as specific rejection of the Hampton model. Black communities throughout the southern US rejected the industrial model by refusing to allow for the construction and establishment of industrial schools. Anderson refers to the protests, occurring in the 1920s and 30s, against industrial high schools that were similar to Hampton in the sparseness of resources that they offered for either intellectual stimulation or equipment for training skilled laborers. These schools were proposed and funded by the same interested industrialists who had supported Hampton, and who had convened in conferences on how to best implement that model among black urban residents (J. D. Anderson 1988). The belabored plans were thwarted by the residents, themselves, who simply stopped the schools from opening.

In Little Rock in 1928, the black community protested the establishment of an industrial high school. A local black attorney, W. A. Booker, wrote to the head of the
Rosenwald Fund to explain, “Our people here have been waiting patiently over a span of years for a real high school, one that would not be a subterfuge; one that would give a thorough educational training and literary background, and a curriculum upon which a college education could be well predicated” (Booker in Anderson 1988). Booker also informed the Fund of taxpayers and citizens’ complete objection to the name “Negro Industrial High School.” By the following year, the Rosenwald Fund had caved to the influence of the black community and the school was named Paul Lawrence Dunbar High School. The school still lacked a core curriculum, and offered industrial classes that did not include instruction in the skill set of specific trades. However, black parents steered their children toward more academic classes, and ensured that they would proceed from the high school to matriculation in Little Rock’s three black colleges (J. D. Anderson 1988).

White philanthropists attempting to direct the decisions of the Rosenwald Fund similarly failed to create an industrial high school in New Orleans. In this case, no school was ever built, because the Rosenwald Fund withdrew its funding “…as philanthropists became disappointed with the apathetic and obstructive behavior of Orleans Parish School Board Members” (J. D. Anderson 1988). The school board was comprised of white southerners who opposed black education in any form. However, without support from black leaders and communities in New Orleans, the philanthropists found that they had no position from which to support their plan. Though the school board
initially agreed to authorize the construction of the high school, coverage of the plan in local newspapers informed black community members of the industrial plans for the school, and community protests followed (J. D. Anderson 1988). For Anderson, the New Orleans example of black opposition to industrial schooling is especially important to an understanding of the school system as it existed in the twentieth century, because it “illustrates what the philanthropists might have done were they not forced to compromise” (J. D. Anderson 1988).

The protests against industrial high schools that occurred in Little Rock and New Orleans are just two examples of the way in which white investors’ plans for the implementation of an industrial model of schooling for blacks in the South failed as a result of black resistance. In 1931, the Rosenwald Fund withdrew from all of its campaigns, as philanthropists accepted the failure of their model, and the country responded to economic depression. Anderson concludes:

Between 1928 and 1932, the Rosenwald Fund contributed money to the building of industrial departments in black high schools in Little Rock, Arkansas; Columbus, Georgia; Maysville, Kentucky; Winston-Salem, North Carolina; Greenville, South Carolina; and Atlanta, Georgia. It considered projects in many other cities. At no time, however, did the fund persuade any southern city to build a black high school devoted exclusively to industrial education despite its official policy of paying one-third of the total cost of such high schools... Although the philanthropists achieved limited success, the overall outcomes were far from their larger goal of establishing in the urban South a system of black secondary education that would train black youth for racially prescribed occupations and socialize them to fit into a repressive social order. The white South was too indifferent to the idea, and the black South generally resisted the philanthropists’ model of secondary industrial education (J. D. Anderson 1988).
Black resistance prevented the implementation of the Hampton model and other models of industrial schooling across the South and the US. For the philanthropists interested in renewing a stumbling racial hierarchy for the sake of economic production, however, it is possible to say that though the model failed in part, the goal was reached by other means, including the invention of Jim Crow. Anderson writes that with the mass migration of both white and black people to urban areas after 1930, the industrial jobs in the South that had been designated “black jobs” were given to whites. Philanthropists were then faced with the question of the wastefulness of training black high school students for industrial positions for which they would not be hired. For this reason, by 1940, only 18% of black youth attended high school, as more and more whites did so. Though the education reformers of the industrialist class failed to permanently install their model of education as an institution for racial hierarchization of laborers; the same goal was achieved by keeping black youth out of school and subsequently out of jobs. With no schools, and later ‘failing’ schools for blacks, industry was guaranteed the racially classified laboring class that would reinforce white dominance and an industrial societal model, and succeeded in creating a school system that would effectively sort and condition factory workers. In this way the urban high school became, in the words of 1970s education policy specialist Ray C. Rist, a “factory for failure” (Rist 1974).

Watkins analyzes the ways in which the Hampton model was in fact successful: “It trained thousands of teachers in accommodationist social, political, and religious
outlooks. It became the model for the ideological training for the Black South. It fostered a politics of gradualism and moderation. Most important, it helped ready a labor force for its position in the new industrial era” (Watkins 2001a). Watkins goes on to say that the Hampton model was additionally instrumental in creating a black comprador class, which would serve to anchor white exploitation of black workers. It is also important to note that the Hampton model had destructive effects beyond its role in the US South. As Spivey discusses, US industrialists were interested in the stabilization of a social order based in white rule throughout the world, not only in the US South, and “…the adoption of industrial education throughout Africa was given a big push…” from US investors (Spivey 1978). Though the vast majority of black schools in the South were not designed as replicas of the Hampton Institute in the twentieth century, the educational system that did come into being clearly was in part a legacy of the model.

If the philanthropists failed in their model while succeeding in their goal, I argue that their partial success was in large part due to their undermining of the creation of autonomous schools by black communities. As black communities were forced to struggle against the model pushed upon them by northern industrialists, while simultaneously combatting the violent white southern backlash of the period following Reconstruction, the practice of creating schools and nurturing them gave way (until the 1960s) to other struggles. Anderson writes, “As black southerners lost political and economic power, they lost substantial control of their educational institutions… and the
shape and character of their education took a different turn... this system of second-class education for blacks did not just happen” (J. D. Anderson 1988). As Anderson demonstrates, the white northerners did not succeed in relegating black youth to industrial schools according to the Hampton model, but succeeded in limiting the possibility of other kinds of educational institutions by preventing the autonomous creation of sites of learning.

2.4.4 The Three Models

The conflict between a civic republican model for education in the US and an industrial model was internal to the logic of state formation. Both projects addressed the need for the stabilization of social hierarchy leading up to and following the abolition of slavery in the US, and both required the domination and exploitation of suppressed classes. Proponents of schooling for citizenship, such as Thomas Jefferson, proposed the perpetuation of slavery for the purpose of stabilizing the possibility of citizenship; industrialists proposed a form of schooling that would maintain relations of domination in a manner more suited to industrial production. Only the autonomous creation of schools, led in the US by black people both before and after the Civil War, posited a form of education that would allow for the possibility of equality in self-government. The difference of this form of education then, from the other two models, was not in the curriculum, or even in the theory of education, but in the question of who created the model for what purpose. Education for self-government designed by an elite class could
not entail opposition to a relationship of domination between “citizens” and “non-
citizens.”

2.5 Context for Understanding Disciplinary Education

2.5.1 Disciplinary Society

Foucault’s theory of disciplinary society helps to conceptualize the shift to industrial models of schooling in the US.\textsuperscript{16} Throughout his work, and especially after Discipline and Punish, Foucault analyzes power as a relation of force that produces subjects. His genealogical method, unlike the traditional historical method, concentrates on the relations of power, knowledge and the body in modern society, viewing psychological motivation as the result of the play of forces that are never constant, but that link local social practices to broad organizations of power. There are three periodizations that become relevant in Foucault’s genealogy, and which he explores by articulating the characteristics of their specific technologies of power: sovereignty, disciplinarity, and control (which is less a focus of his work, as the most recent organization of power). A fourth term, biopower, entails the technologies of power of both disciplinary and control societies. Discipline and Punish addresses the transition from sovereign to disciplinary power, and its conclusions are highly relevant to an

\textsuperscript{16} Here by “industrial models” I mean models of schooling that would be for the benefit of industrial production.
understanding of the educational institution that came into being in the nineteenth and twentieth century US.

It is only with the invention of disciplinary power that the modern state comes into being, and the term “biopower” becomes descriptive of the application of disciplinary power by the state. As articulated in *Discipline and Punish*, sovereign power operates on the body through the threat or spectacle of intense pain. In contrast, discipline acts on the body not primarily through pain but through organization, supervision, surveillance, etc. Discipline operates on bodies not in response to wrongdoing, in a corrective way, but as a way of shaping the body into an individual (Foucault 1977), through specific institutions that organizes the use of parts of the body, and the orientation of bodies in space as individuals. Disciplinary power normalizes bodies through individualizing institutions, and biopower in turn controls and manages life at the level of the population (Foucault 2003). I will say more in the next section about biopower and its importance in the formation of state power that cannot rely on a sovereign. However, to ground a discussion of why Foucault’s concept of disciplinary power is relevant to the introduction of universal state schooling in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, I will use this section to explore Foucault’s analysis of the relationship between disciplinary power and industrial production.

Discipline creates the individual for purposes of production. Discipline is linked to production in that it codifies space, time and motion, as well as the organization of
bodies in space through specific enclosures, into an orderly grid that facilitates the supervision of individuals. The organization of time, specifically, into quantifiable segments, allows for the “correct use of the body,” the capitalization on time. By dividing duration into segments, it is possible to articulate what activities are appropriate for what individuals in what period of time, forming these combined forces of the individual body, chronological time and determined activity into an efficient machine (Foucault 1977).

Discipline, furthermore, makes people into “docile bodies,” or capable, but obedient workers. The bodies worked upon by disciplinary power become both more productive and more submissive to the forces of production that they enter into as workers:

Thus discipline produces subjected and practised bodies, “docile bodies.” Discipline increases the forces of the body (in economic terms of utility), and diminishes these same forces (in political terms of obedience). In short, it dissociates power from the body; on the one hand, it turns it into an ‘aptitude,’ a ‘capacity,’ which it seeks to increase; on the other hand, it reverses the course of the energy, the power that might result from it, and turns it into a relation of strict subjection (Foucault 1977).

Disciplinary institutions in this way are directly relevant to a form of economic production that relies on the reproduction of labor as capable but obedient.17

Obviously, the modern school is a disciplinary institution according to Foucault’s definition; it is one of the major examples that he provides. With the transformation of

17 This is also precisely the role of the ‘reproductive school’ as described by Althusser and Jason Read, to whose work I will refer in Chapter 2.
agricultural to industrial production in the US came the need for new pedagogical forms that would shape the new working population. Thus, as we have seen, schools were created in the North leading up to the Civil War that would both inculcate in students the chronological measurement of time, as well as increase their capacity for work while decreasing their power in political terms. The invention of the “egg crate model” for the design of schools, as well as the beginning of grading students according to age and aptitude are directly relevant in this regard. It is no coincidence that the modern school and industrial production grew in the North in the same period.

Importantly, however, Foucault writes that we should not imagine that disciplinary technology came into being all at once, and was replicated in the same way in all disciplinary institutions. Rather, disciplinary technology

...is a multiplicity of often minor processes, of different origin and scattered location, which overlap, repeat, or imitate one another, support one another, distinguish themselves from one another according to their domain of application, converge and gradually produce the blueprint of a general method. They were at work in secondary education at a very early date, later in primary schools... They sometimes circulated very rapidly from one point to another.... Sometimes slowly and discreetly... On almost every occasion, they were adopted in response to particular needs (Foucault 1977).

I argue that the school as a disciplinary institution evolved with the Civil War and the termination of slavery in its “general method” as a state apparatus. That is, the universal state school had the role that it had always already had: to produce workers and to constitute the state as a state, but in an intensified and more fully developed way. The threat that the freeing of slaves posed to the industrial class still trying to solidify its
hold on state power greatly increased the importance of the institution of the school to the operation of power in the US.

### 2.5.2 State, Nation, Racism

Even more important than the need for a disciplined workforce, according to Foucault’s theory of the modern state, is the need for a legitimization of a concentration of power in the hands of the new capitalist class. Foucault explains that the modern state comes into being when the bourgeoisie, having freed itself from the sovereign power, seeks to legitimize its own societal dominance and capacity to exploit the working class in a new organization of political power. It seeks to make disciplinary power, a sovereign invention, its own. However, in differentiation from the monarch, the bourgeoisie cannot rely on an external divine sanction for its sovereignty. The bourgeoisie therefore must construe the state, and disciplinary power, as its own justification (Foucault 2003). In their investigation of Foucault’s work, Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow explain this analysis of the bourgeois state as self-legitimating, and its relationship to the invention of the technologies of biopower:

The first principle of this new political rationality was that the state, not the laws of men or nature, was its own end... The object to be understood by administrative knowledge was not the rights of the people, not the nature of human law, but the state itself... And this required the gathering of information on the state’s environment, its population, its resources, and its problems... a whole array of empirical methods of investigation had to be developed or advanced to generate this knowledge... Politics thus became bio-politics. Once the politics of life was in place, then the life of these populations, and their destruction as well, became political choices (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1983).
In other words, with the rise of the bourgeoisie as the dominant class, the organization of political power can only refer to itself for legitimacy, requiring a new form of knowledge to take precedence: the knowledge of the function of the state. The state “…established its own legitimacy, by making itself stronger, so to speak” (Foucault 2003).

The State becomes the nation State because the bourgeoisie, as the dominant class, in order to preserve itself as the one, dominant group, makes the State into a safeguard of itself as the universal. That is, Foucault writes the modern State inverts the temporal axis by positing that the creation of the State is not required by “…a consensus, a victory, or an invasion…” but by the potential of one group to embody the State.

Foucault writes from the point of view of the bourgeoisie, in defining itself as the nation: “…the nation that we constitute is the only one that can effectively constitute the nation. Perhaps we are not, in ourselves, the totality of the social body, but we are capable of guaranteeing the totalizing function of the State. We are capable of Statist universality” (Foucault 2003). If the State is a justification for itself, the group capable of fulfilling the requisite of Statist universality can claim its own legitimacy as the dominant group, and claim that legitimacy in the political organization of the State. The bourgeoisie sees itself as the only unified group capable of ensuring the universality of the State, the only legitimate “nation.”
In turn, the State as a juridical form safeguards the nation against threats internal to the social body. The unified society, the nation, must be kept safe, by the State, from any internal threat, what Foucault refers to as a “sub-race.” With the reworking of disciplinary power in the context of the nation State, discipline comes to operate not just on particular bodies, but on the population more generally, in the control and management of life. Disciplinary power thus becomes biopower. This is the origin of modern racism, the inscription of racism in the mechanisms of the State, in Foucault’s analysis, as racism entails a technology of biopower that allows for the legitimate killing of the “sub-race,” the aspect of the social body that threatens the health of the nation. Foucault distinguishes between the killing exercised in political terms by the sovereign, directly, and the killing that occurs under biopower, which is justified in biological and not political terms, and which occurs indirectly: “…the fact of exposing someone to death, increasing the risk of death for some people…” (Foucault 2003).

In what way does the sub-race threaten the health of the nation? What must be “let die” from the perspective of biopower is that which cannot be part of the universal, the normalized society. Foucault writes,

…there is one element that will circulate between the disciplinary and the regulatory, which will also be applied to body and population alike, which will make it possible to control both the disciplinary order of the body and the aleatory events that occur in the biological multiplicity. The element that circulates between the two is the norm. The norm is something that can be applied to both a body one wishes to discipline and a population one wishes to regularize (Foucault 2003).
The sub-race is a biological threat because it yields neither to discipline nor to regulation. Biopower divides the population that it controls into races, one of which is superior and one inferior, in order to set up its capacity to “let die” that which cannot be disciplined or regulated according to the application of a norm. A relationship is established between the life of the “superrace” and the death of the “subrace.” Because the health of the superrace entails the ongoing process of normalization, the health of the normalizing society, that which cannot be normalized, must be let die.

What Du Bois describes as “the negro idea...” of “...public education for all at public expense...” did not correspond to the normalizing function of the State because the autonomous control of schools by communities outside of the bourgeois class did not. Autonomy in any realm of life, in the context of normalizing society, and particularly the ex-slaves’ drive for autonomous learning and thinking, threatened the self-legitimizing State in its positing of another kind of organization of power, and a knowledge outside of the State’s referral to itself. The State, which established its own legitimacy by making itself stronger, was weakened by the capacity of part of the population it purported to control to create their own non-State institutions and to fulfill their own needs. Because they threatened the entire health of the nation State, the autonomous school had to be “let die,” as did its constituents, the race that could be neither disciplined nor regulated.
2.5.3 Whiteness

The freeing of the portion of the population of the US that had been enslaved, following the Civil War, required a scrambling on the part of the white wealthy class to re-stabilize its exploitation of other groups, to reconstitute and solidify the nation State that guaranteed its privileged status with respect to the element of the norm. This scrambling involved first and foremost the elimination of any threats to the privileged status of the white bourgeoisie, beginning with the elimination of any autonomous activities among the working poor, immigrants, and especially among the freed slaves themselves. Secondarily, the reorganization of power for the privileging of the white wealthy class required the concrete establishment of class categories and rank that would best allow for ongoing disciplining and regulation of both individual bodies and the population as a whole.

However, the process of nation building in the twentieth century US was not a solely bourgeois project. Scholars George Lipsitz and David Roediger have followed Du Bois in analyzing the way in which working class people came to view themselves as ‘white,’ in alliance with the bourgeois State. Working class people not only accepted, but themselves reinforced and fabricated racial definitions in order to situate themselves on the side of normalization and biopower, and promote their own survival. I have discussed earlier in the chapter the racist application of the philosophy of republicanism among poor urban, newly ‘white’ people. Also relevant is Roediger’s exploration of the
way in which poor immigrants in the northeastern US allied with whiteness as a coping mechanism for the disciplining that developing industry forced them to undergo.

Roediger explores the emergence of racism among urban populations in the North leading up to the Civil War, and draws on the analyses of historians George Rawick and Herbert Gutman in connecting that racism to the experience of industrial disciplining that members of the working class endured in the nineteenth century. As he explains, Roediger sets out “…to combine the insights of Rawick and Gutman…” in order to treat

…the attractions of blackface, not just on the minstrel stage but also in popular crowds and even in racist language, as the result of the desire to project onto Blacks the specific behaviors that brought such conflicted emotions to whites during the formation of the first American working class… [T]he growing popular sense of whiteness represented a hesitantly emerging consensus holding together a very diverse white working class and that part of that consensus derived from the idea that blackness could be made permanently to embody the preindustrial past that they scorned and missed (Roediger 2007).

Roediger’s is an argument that deals with the psychological and emotional forces that contributed to poor immigrant workers’ choice to contribute to the construction of a racial order, in response to the anxiety of shifting from a rural or preindustrial context to the discipline of an industrial urban setting, and who felt simultaneously a need to validate that transformation and a longing for their former lives. Roediger gives the example of the themes of minstrel songs, which

…idealized the preindustrial pasttimes familiar to its white and often formerly rural audience. Hunting, especially of coons and possums, was a recurring delight during blackface performances, which also featured the joys of crabbing, eel catching, eating yellow corn, fishing and contact with animals not about to be killed... But the
identification with tradition and with preindustrial joy could never be complete. It was, after all, ‘niggers’ who personified and longed for the past (Roediger 2007).

Lipsitz likewise argues that the racist stereotype produced in the minstrel show “…presented white society with a representation of the natural self at odds with the normative self…” and “…enabled whites to accept the suppression of their natural selves…” (Lipsitz 2001).

Those among the working class who allied themselves with whiteness did so not only in responsiveness to the anxiety of industrial disciplining, and nostalgia for past lives, but also in the pursuit of the benefits (“wages”) of an alliance with State power.

Thus, the struggle over jobs best explains Irish-Americans’ prizing of whiteness if that struggle is considered broadly, to include not only white-Black competition but white-white competition as well. Similarly, we must widen the focus from a struggle over jobs to include an emphasis on the struggle over how jobs were to be defined to understand more fully why the Irish so embraced whiteness (Roediger 2007).

Roediger further describes the perceived need of poor immigrant groups, particularly the Irish, to make themselves more desirable as employees for less agonizing work, but argues that this explanation for the development of racism is limited without also taking into account the projection of a desire for the preindustrial onto blacks as discussed in the previous paragraph. Thus, in the milieu of both the conflicted psychological experience of industrial disciplining, and the sense of a need for self-promotion in competition for work, a diverse group of working class people came to identify itself as

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18 The “natural” here is a idealized form of the disciplined worker’s memory of behaviors and desires experienced previous to industrial disciplining.
white and others, slaves and free people of African descent in the North, as black, in
order to claim for itself the benefits of an alliance with the dominant industrial class.

In order to solidify the ideological difference between themselves and free blacks
living in the North prior to the Civil War, racist mobs donned blackface and attacked
both individuals they identified as black and sites of interracial social activity.
Contradicting standard historic accounts of the attacks, which regard the violence as
stemming from the frustration white people felt at increasing competition for
employment, Roediger suggests that the attacks were the action of groups that “...both
admired what they imagined blackness to symbolize and hated themselves for doing
so...” (Roediger 2007). Blackface served to “...connect its wearers with the preindustrial
permissiveness imputed to African-Americans...,” however, the act of attacking black
people and interracial social sites in blackface served to emphasize the final difference
between attacker and victim (Roediger 2007). This differentiation was especially
important to individuals who fit into social categories that were at times conflated with
blackness:

...the Irish were frequently conflated with Blacks and sometimes were themselves seen
as the group symbolizing preindustrial license. So much was this the case that rowdy,
undisciplined behavior in the 1830s was sometimes called ‘acting Irish.’ Blackface
masking defiantly disregarded the charge of respectable society that sweeps and
Irishmen were ‘like Blacks’. But late night attacks on actual Blacks underscored that
blackface was only an appealing disguise to be washed off in the morning (Roediger
2007).

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Roediger points to the difference between violent racist mobs which wore blackface, and those which did not (Roediger 2007).
The result of the alliances, the attacks, the termination of social activities that involved both Blacks and whites, etc. was the creation of a new sense of racial whiteness, a category largely empty of positive content, defined through contrast against the projected content of blackness, that was very much the product of the working class. Of course, this creation allied itself well with the strategy of the industrial class for the disciplining, sorting and ranking of the working population, the creation of a political State that would best protect the dominance of the bourgeoisie, and the delineation of racial “norm” that would legitimize that dominance. The efforts of the bourgeois industrialists and the newly white working class converged to shape the developing nation State.

Still, certain tensions existed between the racist mob attacks and the State-building project from the perspective of the industrial class, as Roediger highlights in stating that even pro-slavery newspapers based in New York expressed disapprobation for mob violence:

…the reaction to the riots became a way to express tension between the radical but respectable ‘labor empire’ and the rowdy ‘traditionalists’ of street republicanism. It might be added that even the more popularly rooted creations of urban artisan culture, such as the penny press, had considerable reservations about race riots, objecting not to the mob’s racism but to its preindustrial disdain for respectability and discipline (Roediger 2007).

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20 Roediger writes, for example, that white minstrel artists wearing blackface “…were the first self-consciously white entertainers in the world” (Roediger 2007).
In this way, blackface minstrelsy serves as an example of a compromise between the violent anxiety of the white working class and the bourgeois State.

2.6 Conclusion: Education for Industry, Against Self-Government

Faced with the upheaval of the social order entailed in the end of the institution of slavery, those interested in promoting the development of industry and the growing power of an industrial class influenced the formation of State education for industry and against self-government. The influence of civic republican values across a broad sector of the US population continued to inform models of universal schooling as education for citizenship, but without the goal of equality. Education as a disciplinary institution for the promotion of a certain organization of life and the “letting die” of all alternatives took form through the deliberate “reforms” of industrialists and republicans alike, allied with poor sectors of society who sought the reassurance of the new status of whiteness in a changing social order. Thus the autonomous creation of sites of learning in the US gave way for a period of time to disciplinary State education. The next chapter will be an exploration of resistance to State schooling and the reemergence of practices of autonomous schooling that occurred in the 1960s and 70s.
3. Movements for Autonomous Education, the 1960s and 70s

3.1 Introduction: Schools, Knowledge, Power

Between 1966 and 1980, substantial numbers of people in the US became involved in the reinvention and creation of schools for people of all ages, particularly for children, with the common goal of forming institutions for learning that would differ from the structure of schools that had become predominant in the decades preceding the 60s. The individuals and groups involved in this educational movement recognized the US school system as having a crucial role in the reproduction of existing relations of power: of the circulation of a “dominant” knowledge and a relation of domination.

In this chapter, I argue that in challenging the relation of domination that existed in the school, and in the attempt to create non-dominating relations, the groups involved in movements around education contributed to an as-yet unresolved societal crisis. That is, a question emerges as to how to organize society after the crisis of existing ordering institutions.

Estimates of how many people and schools were involved in the effort to alter the structure of US schooling vary depending on what kind of school mobilization is studied: from struggles around “community control” of urban public schools to struggles to create schools that would be completely autonomous from the public school system. According to an extensive study by sociologist Pamela Irving Jackson, in 1968 alone minority groups expressed demands for community control of schools in at least
57 US cities. Meanwhile, in his recent study of “free schools,” education scholar Ron Miller estimates that between 400 and 800 of these schools, defined by Miller as “small educational communities that were free from state control” were begun between 1960 and 1972 (Miller 2002). Educational sociologist Lisa M. Stulberg cites a 1992 report stating that the African American independent schooling movement of the 1970s led to the creation of 200 to 250 schools, including only the schools that fit the definition of a “‘self-governing institution that is not financially dependent on a larger public or sectarian organization’ and that also ‘serves an African American community, and has a governing board that is majority-African American’” (Stulberg 2008). For the purposes of my own study of educational political movements in the US in the 1960s and 70s, I consider as relevant both the struggle for community control of public schools among predominantly black and Latino communities, and the creation of autonomous schools by communities of all races and by interracial communities.

I look at three well-documented examples in particular: the struggle for community control in Ocean Hill-Brownsville, the schools created by the Council of Independent Black Institutions and the Black Panther’s Oakland Community School. I mention several other schools and organizations to show that these three examples are not anomalies, but were part of a broader range of movement.
Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man* frames my investigation of the examples. Though the novel deals with the institution of the university, and not the primary or secondary school, the Invisible Man’s escape from the university provides a conceptual framework from which to understand the autonomous creation of schools as contributing to the creation of social relations that differ from domination.

**3.2 Against School**

Before discussing the alternatives that groups created, it is necessary to ask more precisely why schools became a focal point for political mobilization in the US in the 1960s and 70s. In other words, why did momentum build in the 60s and 70s around the creation of new institutions of education? What were the criticisms that individuals and groups leveled at the educational institution as it was, and why did they focus on education? As a preliminary answer, and to be explored more fully in this section, in the late mid-twentieth century there was broad consensus among activists and intellectuals in the US and elsewhere that schools performed a key role in the reproduction of an organization of human life that was unacceptable to a large and diverse number of people: the domination of the capitalist class over all other groups via the State. That is, as I have begun to suggest above, a crucial aspect of the function of school was the making dominant of one knowledge over others. Movements and philosophers have
articulated this process of knowledge domination in contradictory ways, but have agreed that political organization around the school opposed State domination.

In order to make my arguments clear in this chapter, regarding why individuals and groups opposed the school system as it existed in the US, I refer to French philosophers who describe a similar moment in the 60s in France, in their analyses of student movements: Michel Foucault, Louis Althusser, Jacques Rancière. I also refer to the Brazilian philosopher and educator, Paulo Freire, and to the written work of individuals and groups involved in struggles around education in the US that extend beyond the examples I have chosen to focus on in the second half of the chapter, but resonate with those examples.

It is my premise that the movements around education in the US in the 1960s and 70s developed their own analyses, as evidenced by their organizational forms (discussed below). I do not cite the philosophical texts in order to augment or legitimate the movements’ analyses, but rather in order to clarify my own understanding. However, I make note of the ways in which the philosophers themselves make their claims based on their observations of student movements in France.¹ Movements around education in

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¹ Foucault asserts that his later theoretical work, in which he most directly addresses the question of power in discourse (“whom does discourse serve?”) only became possible after the social movements of the 60s, which themselves demonstrated the power inherent in knowledge: “This task could only begin after 1968, that is to say on the basis of daily struggles at grass roots level, among those whose fight was located in the fine meshes of the web of power. This is where the concrete nature of power became visible, along with the
the US, like student movements in France, disrupted the relation of domination of one form of knowledge over another, and therefore preceded the philosophical analysis of the relationship between knowledge and power. It is still useful to refer to the subsequent philosophical debate in highlighting why and how this disruption occurred.

3.2.1 Ideology

To begin with the most well-known examples: 1970, Althusser made his now famous statement, the truth of which Rancière tells us that everyone already knew, as evidenced by the student movements in France in May 1968 (Rancière 2011), that the school in the period of industrial capitalism is the primary State Ideological Apparatus (Althusser 1970). The school, that is, more than any other State institution, reproduced the dominance of State ideology: “the system of ideas and representations which dominate the mind of a man or a social group” (Althusser 1970). Ideology, for Althusser, is “a ‘Representation’ of the Imaginary Relationship of Individuals to their Real Conditions of Existence.” Capitalist ideology is the representation of an individual or group’s imaginary relation to class relations (Althusser 1970). The capitalist class, in order to reproduce capitalist production, mobilizes both the Repressive State Apparatus
and State Ideological Apparatuses in order to reproduce the individual and group’s imaginary relation to relations of production that entails acceptance of or submission to those relations. The school as the predominant ISA of the twentieth century functions to interpolate individuals doubly as both subjects, capable of acting on their own; and subjected, submitting to a higher authority, “…stripped of all freedom except that of freely accepting his submission” (Althusser 1970).

Foucault rejects the use of the concept of ideology due to its inherent reference to an external “truth,” in the case of Althusser, the reference to an external truth of the economic relations as infrastructure, and insists instead that what is at stake is the truth itself. For Foucault, it is not so much that state power creates a myth about relations to production that allow true relations to be masked, but that power circulates its own truth (a system for the control and circulation of statements). This system—or regime of truth—is not secondary to any material or theoretical external reality, but is itself constitutive of the reality of the situation:

…basically I do not believe that what has taken place can be said to be ideological. It is both much more and much less than ideology. It is the production of effective instruments for the formation and accumulation of knowledge—methods of observation, techniques of registration, procedures for investigation and research, apparatuses of control. All this means that power, when it is exercised through these subtle mechanisms, cannot but evolve, organize and put into circulation a knowledge, or rather apparatuses of knowledge, which are not ideological constructs (Foucault 1980b).
Though Foucault objects to the concept of ideology as imprecise and misleading in relation to a description of the functioning of power, Althusser’s outline of the double interpellation that occurs in the school as an ISA resonates with Foucault’s conceptualization of the school as a disciplinary institution, which exercises power over bodies, “both to increase the subjected forces and to improve the force and efficacy of that which subjects them” (Foucault 1980b). Drawing on both philosophers, Jason Read concludes that the school before 1960 performed two major functions for the production of subjectivity as linked to the reproduction of the mode of production of industrial capitalism: 1. The production of subjectivity for subsequent participation in an industrial workforce, “the abstract potential of any subjectivity,” and 2. The docility of that subjectivity for capital, “The capitalist mode of production must fetter this abstract subjective potential…” (Read 2003). In the following sections of this chapter I will investigate further each of these functions of the school (the manipulation of worker capacity, and subjection), in the context of resistance to school. Movements of the 1960s and 70s opposed both functions of the school, in opposition to the school as an “apparatus of knowledge,” which created a relation and therefore a knowledge of domination. In doing so, they directly contested the superiority of State knowledge and the relation of superiority more generally.
3.2.2 Production of Subjectivity: Worker Capacitation

Activists combatted the production in schools of worker subjectivities in their objection to the role of schooling in dividing student populations into hierarchically positioned labor categories. Many individuals and groups in the 60s and 70s took up the now familiar argument that the school actively determines what kind of job each student will eventually fill, ensuring that the majority of students from specific socioeconomic backgrounds would ‘fail’ in school, or dropout, finally coming to work in low-income jobs, while the majority of students from an elite class would go on to universities and high-paying positions. In their analysis of the movement for community control of schools in the 1960s, advisors to the Ford Foundation cite education scholar Colin Greer in stating that public education has always failed more students than it has benefitted:

“’The public schools have always failed the lower classes—both white and black,’ says Greer. ‘In virtually every study undertaken since 1898… more children have failed in schools than have succeeded, both in absolute and relative numbers’” (Fantini, Gittell, and Magat 1970). Writing in 1971, the highly influential educational and social critic Ivan Illich furthered the argument that schools do more to reproduce class and hierarchical divisions of labor than they do to promote learning in his text Deschooling Society:

“…selection for a role or category in the job market increasingly depends on mere length of [school] attendance… instead of equalizing chances, the school system has
monopolized their distribution“ (Illich 1971).² The argument that experience in school reproduces divisions of labor that are allotted according to class background is also the foundation of Paul Willis’s 1977 study Learning to Labor: How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs.

Of course, in the US, class and labor divisions have always been inextricably bound up with and dependent on racial divisions. Throughout the twentieth century writers and activists stressed the manner in which schools facilitate the reproduction of racial inequality in part by propelling nonwhite and poor white people into low-paying jobs.³ Annie Stein, secretary of the Parents’ Workshop for Equality in New York City Schools in the sixties, describes the way in which segregation policies deliberately subject nonwhite students to poor school conditions in order to ensure the students’ “failure” in her essay “Containment and Control:”

In the segregated school, the system could with impunity send in its most inexperienced teachers, maintain the most antiquated buildings, and equipment, provide the most indifferent and impoverished curriculum, prophesy—and succeed in achieving—gross academic failure. These children were needed to man the restaurant kitchens, the hospital orderly jobs, the handtrucks and workrooms of the garment district, the unskilled port jobs, and the draft calls of our city. Any higher education would only ill-fit them for the rigors of their destiny (Stein 1970).

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² Illich also notes, most importantly, that poor students are already complete awareness of the reality of “what the schools do for them” (Illich 1971).
It is important to note, however, that by 1971, the All-African People’s Union in Detroit already acknowledges the position of the school as a warehouse for surplus labor. That is, the Union already recognizes the changing role of schools in a postindustrial economy, and the conditions of inadequate employment for the majority of the population, which drives the transition of the school from a site for the preparation of workers to a site for the warehousing of a lumpen population. The AAPU saw this shift as consistent with the previous role of ‘sorting’ students for the labor market, in that the school-as-warehouse continues to overdetermine individuals’ places in a societal hierarchy by Designating who will “fail” and be warehoused and who will “succeed” and proceed into high-paying employment:

With the automation of industry following the Second World War and the Korean War, the swallowing up of small family businesses by big firms, and the widespread use of labor-saving appliances in the average home, the labor of the dropout teenager became surplus and the adolescent became highly visible. What now should be done with these "losers"? The obvious solution was to keep them in school. Thus, instead of the high schools acting as automatic sifters to sort out the "losers," they were turned into mass custodial institutions to keep everyone in the classroom and off the streets (All-African People Union 1971).

As the AAPU makes clear in their text, analyses of the ways in which school preselects individuals for specific roles in an economic and social hierarchy were relevant to discussions of the late sixties and seventies of the ways in which school ‘capacitates’ students into hierarchical social categories, first as laborers, and increasingly by 1971, as ‘the unemployed.’
3.2.3 Production of Subjectivity: Worker Subjection

Beyond its role in the distribution of material resources and jobs, however, those who struggled to reshape education in the 60s and 70s objected to the school as a force for the definition of a societal relation. They saw the school as instrumental in determining an individual’s relationship to herself and to others, and therefore as crucial to the creation of a societal norm of relating, and in the subjection of students to the societal norm. According to French philosopher and student of Althusser, Jacques Rancière, there was a hypothesis common to struggles around education in the late 60s that the pedagogical relationship of teacher to student is a basic element of domination and social inequality, in that through school individuals come to experience knowledge as first and essentially the property of the teacher or ‘superior’ (Rancière 1991; Rancière 2011), and that the exercise of dominating power by the teacher imposes a limit on knowledge, determining what kinds of knowledge will circulate in society as a whole. In explaining this hypothesis of struggle, Rancière writes from the perspective of the student movements of May 1968 in France:

...the bourgeoisie’s ideological domination was not the result of a social imaginary wherein individuals spontaneously reflected their relations to the conditions of their existence. It was, instead, the result of the system of material power relations reproduced by different apparatuses. Ideological domination was not exerted on students primarily through the content of courses themselves, or through their spontaneous ideas, but through the concatenation of the forms of selection, transmission, control and use of knowledges” (Rancière 2011).
What educations activists understood in the 60s and 70s, was that the domination of the selection, transmission, control and use of knowledges occurs in large part through the teacher-student relationship that is reproduced in the school.

This is the question of the exercise of power through pedagogical practices that Paulo Freire refers to in 1968 when he describes pedagogy as either “humanizing” or “dehumanizing.” “Dehumanization” for Freire is the process by which persons are conditioned by others, or as oppressors, to life in an unjust order, in which one portion of the population of the world dominates and exploits another; “humanization,” on the contrary, is to “create” one’s humanity, with autonomy and responsibility, in pursuit of an equitable society, which will be “human in the pursuit of freedom” (Freire 1970). What is at stake in the struggle over a theory of the origin of knowledge becomes clear in thinking through the results of a dehumanizing pedagogy in which knowledge originates always with those who wield power, and never with those who are oppressed by it. Freire asserts that though the problem of humanization has always “…from an axiological point of view, been humankind’s central problem,” the struggle for humanization in a practice of sharing and creating knowledge becomes an “inescapable concern” with the worldwide youth rebellions of the 1960s (Freire 1970).

4 This relationship could also be described as the relationship between knowledge or instruction and the student.
The movements and scholars analyzed the ways in which a theorization of knowledge that posits the individual, detached mind as the origin of knowledge legitimizes social domination by a “knowledgeable” dominating class. Primarily, the theory of the individual knowledgeable mind contributes to the formation of what the AAPU described as a “warehousing” relation to knowledge, through which children are deprived of “the opportunity to carry on productive activity” (All-African People Union 1971), and learn to experience themselves as unequal to the “more knowledgeable” teacher or individual. Education instructs children that they are consumers of knowledge dolled out by superiors, rather than participants in the creation of knowledge, which serves to both curtail human creativity in individuals and limit the creative power of students and people collectively. As intellectual and journalist Robert C. Maynard writes in 1970, “there is a deep concern among black parents in this country that the urban school systems have become a relentless and unstoppable machine, grinding down the creative qualities of their children” (R. C. Maynard 1970).

The reproduction that occurs in the school of the individual’s experience of him or herself as unequal, is what Paulo Freire describes as the major effect of “antidialogical education” (Freire 1970) and Jacques Rancière refers to as the creation of “superior inferiors” (Rancière 1991). Antidialogical or nondialogical education for Freire is the

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5 Freire articulates a similar concept in his description of the “banking concept of education.”
prevalent form of education in European and colonized society, which acts as a cultural
invasion, producing the dominating “I” of the teacher and the dominated “it” of the
student. “The first characteristic of antidialogical action is the necessity for conquest. The
antidialogical individual, in his relations with others, aims at conquering them——
increasingly and by every means” (Freire 1970). In the context of a concrete social reality,
the individual student who experiences antidialogical education either approaches the
role of the teacher, simultaneously becoming antiadialogical and oppressor, or becomes
the (also dehumanized) colonized or oppressed (Freire 1970). Rancière describes the
process by which each individual in going through the process of education becomes a
“superior inferior,” embodying the permanent inequality that is inherent to the
“temporal delay” of learning, when learning is posited as approaching the knowledge of
the “superior mind.” This is the process by which one learns to “compare oneself, to
establish social exchange as that swapmeet of glory and contempt where each person
receives a superiority in exchange for the inferiority he confesses to” (Rancière 1991).

Beyond the implementation of a sense of inferiority in individuals, education
‘subjects’ students to societal domination in the destruction of alternative collective
knowledge. The theory of individual knowledge isolates the “successful” student from
any community relation, and simultaneously robs individuals of the power exercised by
a community asserting knowledge in common, and robs communities of its knowledge,
by asserting that the individual student is the origin of her own thought. The AAPU describes the school as a kind of “Trojan Horse” in Black communities, in that “…students succeed only to the degree that they set their sights toward upgrading themselves as individuals out of the community, so that the schools are in fact an organized instrument for a brain drain out of the community” (All-African People Union 1971). By the leaving the community, the student reasserts the superiority of external knowledge.

3.2.4 Power/Knowledge

The antagonism between US activist groups’ proposals for societal change and the regime of knowledge circulated in part by the school becomes clear in the prevalence of groups’ insistence that school curriculums be directly relevant and useful to community life (Zinn 1964; All-African People Union 1971), and the importance of direct experience of communities as a factor in the selection of school teachers and administrators (Five State Organizing Committee for Community Control 1968; Gordon 2001). In order to alter basic societal inequalities and unacceptable life conditions, students and activist groups sought above all to alter the methods by which knowledge is controlled, by asserting that knowledge originates not in an individual, theoretical ‘mind,’ but in practice of individuals living and working to change life together.
Rancière echoes the hypothesis of China’s Cultural Revolution and May ’68: “...it is the oppressed who are intelligent, and the weapons of their liberation will emerge from their intelligence...” (Rancière 2011). The AAPU affirms that the new hypothesis of the primacy of intelligence in struggle was relevant to the context of the United States, and the US activism around education as well in stating that truth is created and recreated through experiment: “Truth is not something you get from books or jot down when the teacher holds forth. It has always been and is today more than ever something which is constantly being created through conflict in the social arena and continuing research and experimentation in the scientific arena” (All-African People Union 1971). This theorization of knowledge originating in action and experiment is also the message that Huey Newton asserts in writing that Black Panther Oakland Community School teaches students “how to think, not what to think” (Newton 2002a).

By asserting that those who practice and struggle to change society are themselves ‘producers’ of knowledge, students and communities undermined the basic relation of domination that allocates the power of ‘owning’ and controlling knowledge to the academic, theoretician or expert. As stated in an early publication by the Navajo-controlled Rough Rock Demonstration School, one of the most enduring experiments in community control:

Rough Rock Demonstration School will show whether or not so-called uneducated and unsophisticated Indians can assume leadership and control over the total education of
their community. In the past the ‘father-knows-best’ attitude was most frequently practiced and the level of local community involvement was minimal. The philosophy underlying and permeating the Rough Rock Demonstration School is that the Navajo people have the right and ability to direct and provide leadership in the education of their community (Tippeconnic 1999).

The Director of Rough Rock in 1968 argued likewise that the significance of the success of community control at Rough Rock Demonstration School extended far beyond the Navajo Reservation or even the question of Indian education, to the question of how ‘professionals’ in a given field might be made to follow the lead of community organization (Roessel 1968).

Students, activists and politicized communities like the AAPU recognized the institution of the school as continuously reproducing a relation of domination between the one “true” knowledge and “illegitimate” knowledge. For these individuals and groups, confrontation with the school directly opened the possibility of another knowledge, inseparable from their own ‘practices,’ and simultaneously the possibility of a social relation different from domination.

3.3 Imagining and Creating Alternatives

The function of school as reproducing a relation of domination is a focal point of Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*. The title character recalls his experience in a black college in the US South, founded by white philanthropists, where a black school director mediates “between the millionaire and the sharecropper,” exercising power to
reproduce an ordering logic of race. It is only when the Invisible Man leaves the school, and participates in a life beyond the tutelage of the college, the political party and the trained ‘expert’ of community organizing that he experiences himself becoming “more human.”

Speaking as the white-sponsored black college personified, Dr. Bledsoe tells the narrator,

‘When you buck against me, you’re bucking against power, rich white folk’s power, the nation’s power— which means government power!... And I’ll tell you something your sociology teachers are afraid to tell you,’ he said, ‘If there weren’t men like me running schools like this, there’d be no South. Nor North, either. No, and there’d be no country—not as it is today’” (Ellison 1947).

The school, in its training of black young men and women to “accept and love” the knowledge imparted by white figures of power, serves to prevent the possibility of any other form of knowledge than that of dominating power. The college reproduces a racial binary, and a dualism within the geography of the US—North and South—that provides the foundation of dominating power. The school as a State institution circumvents the possibility of any possibility for the organization of society that would be alternative to that binary and the domination it supports: “the country” as we know it.

On his last day at the college, the narrator sits in the chapel and reflects on the manner in which the doctrine of the school, repeated in the sermons of the “others,” the speakers who come to give sermons at the college, circumscribe the world of the black students of the college:
...who trailed their words to us through blood and violence and ridicule and condescension with drawling smiles, and who exhorted and threatened, intimidated with innocent words as they described to us the limitations of our lives and the vast boldness of our aspirations, the staggering folly of our impatience to rise even higher... This was our world, they said as they described it to us, this our horizon and its earth, its seasons and its climate, its spring and its summer, and its fall and harvest some unknown millennium ahead; and these its floods and cyclones and they themselves our thunder and lightning; and this we must love and accept even if we did not love. We must accept—even when those were absent.... the words of the others were stronger than the strength of philanthropic dollars, deeper than shafts sunk in the earth for oil and gold, more awe-inspiring than the miracles fabricated in scientific laboratories... (Ellison 1947)

For the narrator, the man who gives the sermon is “part of Dr. Bledsoe.” His attempt to reproduce a message in the minds of the students is the purpose of the school: a belief in dominating power as the origin of knowledge, and a limit on the possibility of other knowledges. The students are the “fate” of whiteness, because it is their submission to or rejection of relations of domination that will determine the future of the capacity of white power to dominate and exploit for profit.

The chapel speaker, Homer A. Barbee, who the narrator realizes is blind (to other possibilities), describes the students working to acquire the knowledge that the college imparts in the way that Moses worked to acquire the knowledge imparted by God. Ideological domination functions in the college in the way that Rancière describes, “through the concatenation of the forms of selection, transmission, control and use of knowledges.” The Invisible Man recalls the college students marching to the chapel “with minds laced up, eyes blind like those of robots to visitors and officials on the low, whitewashed reviewing stand” (Ellison 1947).
However, even while still enrolled in the college, the Invisible Man demonstrates suspicion of a different possibility. Dr. Bledsoe tells the narrator, “…you have some vague notions about dignity. In spite of me, such notions seep in along with the gimcrack teachers and northern-trained idealists.” The college serves as a necessarily constant suppression of that possibility. Having fully become the Invisible Man, the narrator remembers and scoffs—not without pain—at the students’ reception of Homer A Barbee’s speech: “Ha! acceptance, Ha! a river of word-sounds filled with drowned passions, floating, Ha! with wrecks of unachievable ambitions and stillborn revolts…” (Ellison 1947).

3.3.1 Running Away

It is only when the Invisible Man is expelled from college that he becomes capable of experiencing and participating in the creation of a knowledge that differs from dominating power. After reaching New York, and fully realizing the content of Bledsoe’s letter, the Invisible Man becomes active in an organization called “The Brotherhood,” representative of the Communist Party. At a crucial turning point in the novel, the narrator gives a speech to a crowd that has gathered for a rally in Harlem. He feels his understanding of dispossession increase as he participates in the crowd and speaks to the crowd, and states that those who rob the poor have a tendency to treat those that they dispossess as if they are “dumb,” using “a theory and a practice” to “dispossess,” “evict,” “break,” and “deprive.” He tells the crowd, “Why, they even tried
to dispossess us of our dislike of being dispossessed! And I’ll tell you something else—if we don’t resist, pretty soon they’ll succeed! These are the days of dispossession, the season of homelessness, the time of evictions. We’ll be dispossessed of the brains in our heads!”

Finally, he urges the crowd to come together to see and understand together what they cannot understand as individuals who have each been dispossessed of one eye, and announces to the crowd that he feels himself becoming more human. Later, after it is clear that the “Brotherhood” disapproves of the speech, the narrator questions the meaning of the conclusion of his speech:

What had I meant by saying that I had become ‘more human’?... I thought of Bledsoe and Norton and what they had done. By kicking me into the dark they’d made me see the possibility of achieving something greater and more important than I’d ever dreamed. Here was a way that didn’t lead through the back door, a way not limited by black and white, but a way which, if one lived long enough and worked hard enough, could lead to the highest possible rewards. Here was a way to have a part in making the big decisions, of seeing through the mystery of how the country, the world, really operated. For the first time, lying there in the dark, I could glimpse the possibility of being more than a member of a race. It was no dream, the possibility existed. I had only to work and learn and survive…” (Ellison 1947).

The knowledge that is created by “dispossessed” individuals thinking together opens the possibility of another reality for the Invisible Man, one that was not possible to know in the college of Bledsoe and Norton. Thinking outside of the school, and beyond the control of the Brotherhood, the Invisible Man both understands how power operates in the world, and how to work toward the possibility of an alternative organization of life that does not function according to the logic of dominating power.
To fully realize the potential of his speech and capacity to move beyond the logic of domination, the Invisible Man must also renounce the tutelage of the Brotherhood and the established political vanguard. The novel demonstrates that the pedagogical relationship must be overcome in political imagination and organization, not merely in the school.

**3.4 Autonomous Schooling of the 1960s and 70s, US**

The Invisible Man’s successful ‘escape’ from the relation of domination frames the rest of this chapter, which will be a return to experiments in autonomous schooling of the 1960s and 70s. Like Ellison’s Invisible Man, the groups that struggled to create community control and autonomous schools in the US 1. rejected the “love” and acceptance of dominating knowledge, 2. asserted their own capacity to create knowledge and 3. recognized how the assertion of their collective knowledge contributed to shifting power relations in the world, and the construction of a different societal model. The examples of struggle that I look at most closely in this section—the struggle for community control in Ocean Hill-Brownsville, schools created within the framework of the Council of Independent Black Institutions, and the Black Panthers’ Oakland Community School—demonstrate the conceptual relevance of the Invisible Man to the movements against school as it was and for autonomous schools.
As a caution, before turning to brief historical accounts of the groups that struggled to create autonomous education in the 60s and 70s, it is helpful to mark a further distinction between the expressed needs and concerns of two broadly articulated social groups involved in struggles to change schooling in the US: a white middle class struggling to find a meaningful existence in a consumer driven society (Miller 2002; Swidler 1979), and members of an African American and interracial underclass, struggling to find ways to create a nourishing life for children while simultaneously addressing the broader concerns of racial marginalization and poverty (All-African People Union 1971; Kozol 1972). It is clear that divergent socioeconomic groups approach the question of political struggle with discrete concerns and motivations; activists and theorists of the era are accordingly divided in their explanations and descriptions of struggles around education, and the vocabulary that they use to describe the activism around education in the two-decade period. Often, those who participated in or investigate the analysis of primarily white education activists use the term “free schools” or “alternative schools” to describe the trend of creation of primary and secondary schools by communities, parents and educators. Those who contribute to the analysis of African American, Latino, Native American and interracial activist groups refer to a movement for “community control,” “independent schooling,” or in the case of the Black Panthers, “model schools.” The difference in language demonstrates a
difference in intention: the alternative/free opting out of societal categories vs. the control/model of systemic change. This difference will be important again in evaluating how charter schooling as an “alternative” leaves existing societal relations intact.

One exception is Jonathan Kozol, who uses the term “free schools” to indicate specifically and solely the schools created by and for African American communities in urban areas. Kozol explains his decision to focus on African American schools as a political decision in his chapter “Free School as a Term Meaning Too Many Different Things,” in a passage that merits quoting at length:

Some of the most conscientious and reflective of the people in the upper-class Free Schools will often seek to justify their manner of escape by pointing out that they, and their young children with them, have in a sense ‘retired’ from the North American system as a whole, and especially from its agencies of devastation, power, and oppression. Though earnestly presented, this argument does not seem honest. Whether they like it or not, or whether they wish to speak of it or not, the beautiful children of the rich and powerful within this nation are going to be condemned to wield that power also. This power, which will be theirs if they are cognizant of it, and even if they aren’t, will be the power to affect the lives of millions of poor men and women in this nation, to do so often in the gravest ways... It will be the power, as well, to influence the lives of several hundred million people who are now subject to North American domination in far distant lands. Even in the idealistic ritual of formal abdication of that power, as, for example, going out into the isolated hills of western Massachusetts or into the mountains of Vermont to start a Free School, they will still be profiting from the consequences of that power and from the direct profits and extractions of a structure of oppression. Free Schools, then, cannot with sanity, with candor, or with truth, endeavor to exist within a moral vacuum... The passive, tranquil and protected lives white people lead depend on strongly armed police, well-demarcated ghettos... (Kozol 1972).

Like Kozol, I am more interested in the analysis of the role of education generated in the struggle of African-American, minority and interracial communities to determine their own educational institutions and experiences, because of the depth of
awareness of societal relationships of power evident within that analysis. It is my argument that these were the struggles that most concretely disrupted the prevailing role of education in the deployment of State power, and are therefore most relevant to a discussion of the ways in which State forms transformed in reaction to political organization. Therefore, in the following brief history of individual and group struggle to reshape institutions of education in the 1960s and 70s, I will primarily consider the writings and conceptualizations of activists and intellectuals working within or with nonwhite, and interracial communities, and theorists of education whose work resonates with the writings of primarily nonwhite and interracial activist groups, and whose work was found useful by those groups.

Nevertheless, most struggles of the period around education emphasized the importance of community creation of institutions of learning, and contributed to the critique of the organization of authority. In spite of differences in perspectives relevant to experiential difference (to be addressed further below), activist groups around education in the 1960s and 70s that self-identified as oppositional to State schooling shared an existential valorization of learning as one aspect of a satisfying life of good quality, and an agreement that the education system as it existed did not provide individuals with intellectual sustenance. In a statement that speaks to many of the educational activist initiatives of the period, the All-African People Union in Detroit in
1971 writes, “Our concern is for the millions of children, born and yet unborn, not only black but of all races, whose spirits, minds and lives will be destroyed if we do not struggle and if we do not win... The human condition is our major concern” (All-African People Union 1971). In an explanation of why even white, rural free schools are “revolutionary,” in an attempted refutation of Kozol, education activist Barry Wood wrote in a 1970 essay entitled “Free Schools and the Revolution:” “It has always been a myth to assume that a free school in the country could be an island of growth and joy in an ocean of repression. We can’t escape the reality of Amerika 1970... It’s impossible to be self-actualized in a repressive society” (Deal and Nolan 1978). Education activists shared a longing for the improvement of individual human life, and viewed their involvement in the invention of new institutions of learning as both directly destructive of repressive State education and contributory to a more existential goal.

In representing the history and origins of the social movements around primary and secondary education of the 60s and 70s, sociologists and historians often refer to widespread disillusion amongst African American communities and parents regarding the possibility of desegregation as a tool for the improvement of their childrens’ school experiences and chances for upward mobility. Scholars Lisa M. Stulberg and Jane Anna Gordon provide a more nuanced interpretation of the ‘origins’ of the Black Power

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Movement, and educational activism specifically. The struggle for integration in schools was not the only struggle for equality that African American and American underclasses drew upon in their efforts to transform education in the US. Furthermore, the hypothesis that the struggle for integration was untenable as a strategy for political transformation, due to the fact that it tacitly or explicitly supported existing government and social structures, had been an argument of Du Bois’ long before the Civil Rights Movement (Du Bois 1935b).

3.4.1 Rejecting Dominating Knowledge: Harlem and Ocean Hill-Brownsville

The mobilization of large numbers of African American and Puerto Rican New York City residents in the effort to achieve community control of Harlem’s I.S. 201, and later of eight schools in the new “experimental” district of Ocean Hill-Brownsville were two of the first instances of the wave of movements for community control in the US in the late 60s and into the 70s, and served as inspiration for subsequent organization. The immense number of people who chose to become involved in determining the characteristics of their childrens’ and communities’ educational institutions (1,100 area residents participated in the selection of a governing board for Ocean Hill-Brownsville) demonstrates the education movements’ strength in circulating and communicating knowledge produced and controlled in common by members of a working and exploited population.
Although movements for community control and Black Power in general were not solely or primarily responses to failed mobilization for school integration, the direct impetus for the opening of the first “experimental” community-controlled school in New York was parent and community protest against and organization in response to the broken promise of Intermediate School 201 in Harlem. Before the opening of the school in 1966, the Harlem school district had affirmed that I.S. 201 would be the first fully racially mixed school in New York City. Just before the beginning of I. S. 201’s first school year, however the superintendent Bernard Donovan announced that the school would be integrated, with black and Puerto Rican students only. In response, parent organizations demanded that the Board of Education either create racially mixed and equally funded schools across the City immediately, or cede inner city schools to community control. In this way, I.S. 201 became symbolic of the initiation of a national movement for community control of schools in predominantly African American urban centers (Gordon 2001). The New York City Board of Education designated I.S. 201 and its four “feeder” elementary schools to be under the jurisdiction of parent and local activist organization on a trial basis.

Following parent and community mobilization for direct control of the policies, staff and curriculum of I.S. 201 in Harlem, other Black and minority New York residents sought control of their own neighborhood schools. Parents and activists in the Ocean
Hill-Brownsville neighborhood in Brooklyn demanded control of local middle school I.S. 55 and its six feeder elementary schools in 1967 after the new I.S. 55 was built on a site that would ensure de facto segregation (Gordon 2001; Stulberg 2008). An activist group from the neighborhood that had initially formed around the demand for representation of the Ocean Hill neighborhood in the new District 17, a school district that included both Ocean Hill and Flatbush, but no representation from Ocean Hill, coalesced further around the demand for community involvement in the plan for I.S. 55, calling themselves “The Steering Committee for I.S. 55.” Though the group was made up of both teachers and activists, and mixed in its point of view regarding community control, the Board of Education acquiesced to pressure from the group in their agreement to create an “experimental district” out of eight schools in Ocean Hill-Brownsville, and a church involved in the Steering Committee secured financial support from the Ford Foundation. (I will discuss the role of the Board of Education and the Ford Foundation in chapter four.) The Steering Committee’s proposal called for the election of a local governing board that would include one parent from each school (Gordon 2001; McCoy 1969). Without clear authorization from the Board of Education, a portion of the steering committee made up of parents and activists from the community organized and held elections for a governing board for the school. Eleven hundred area residents came to individual schools to participate in the vote, electing seven parents to the school
governing board, who in turn selected five community leaders (Gordon 2001; McCoy 1969).

The governing board claimed the right to select a project administrator for the experimental schools, to approve the appointment of principals, to determine curriculum and professional-personnel policies, and have full control of budget and funds, and to make provisions for project evaluations (Gordon 2001). By the fall of 1967, governing board members were holding regular meetings as well as intensive training workshops to prepare themselves for the decision-making role allotted to them by the neighborhood residents. They also established communication centers within the neighborhood to place themselves in constant communication with all interested residents (McCoy 1969).

Proponents of community control in New York and other US cities did not think that the implementation of parent and resident control of schools would be a panacea for the problems of discrimination and poverty faced by nonwhite inner city children in the late 60s. However, as unit administrator of the Ocean Hill governing board, Rhody McCoy writes in 1969, the prevalence of efforts for community control contained both a critique of the racist conceptualization of the ‘need’ for white instruction in black and Latino neighborhoods, and an affirmation of the capacity of nonwhite groups to create
their own institutions of learning that would be better suited to the growth and dignity of their children:

The parents of Ocean Hill-Brownsville are determined to have a permanent voice in matters pertaining to their schools and to have it now. They are dedicated to the goal of joining forces to bring about better educational results for their children. The community… has finally risen to demand a change—to make history. And it is demanding not only change but also a share in bringing about that change (McCoy 1969).

A black caucus at the Harvard Conference on Educational Subsystems in 1968, referring to itself as the Five-State Organizing Committee for Community Control, expressed the matter even more strongly:

Black people in America in the year 1968 find ourselves at a critical point in our history. Having survived more than 350 years of brutal oppression at the hands of the white majority, we are now faced with two alternatives: 1. We can submit to continued control by white people of the institutions that control our lives, realizing fully that those people are victims of an ethnocentric ideology which cannot envision the development of a viable non-white civilization in modern times, and which, therefore, is bent on the genocide of all black people. 2. We can battle with whatever weapons and through whatever means necessary to wrest control of these basic institutions from the hands of those in power in order to develop our own black consciousness in accord with our sense of human values and the possibilities of human development (Five State Organizing Committee for Community Control 1968).

The importance of these statements in an account of the self-theorization of the movement for community control lies in the affirmation of individuals and groups of color as themselves the agents of the creation of sites of learning and the development of “consciousness,” and as the agents of the transformation and creation of societal institutions more generally. The goal of community self-determination and self-instruction in nonwhite, urban schools, linked the movement for community control to
other projects involving the creation of learning institutions among communities of color, and to other struggles of people of color for self-determination in other parts of the world.

The Ocean Hill-Brownsville experimental district is remembered for the strong antagonism that developed between unified black and Puerto Rican neighborhood residents on the one hand and white Jewish teachers who opposed community control in the fear that it threatened job stability and earlier union achievements, and would lead to the entrenchment of “extremism” and “black power” in New York school districts (Karp 1969; Gordon 2001; Williamson 2005). Much has been written on the details of the confrontation between the United Federation of Teachers union and the Ocean Hill-Brownsville governing board. Racial conflict was and continues to be an relevant to an understanding of the manner in which attempts at community control and creation of schools have been overwhelmed by state, federal and corporate interests.

Though conflict with the Board of Education and the UFT prematurely terminated the development of community control in New York City, African American groups took up the struggle for community control of schools in other cities, including Detroit, Washington D.C., Philadelphia, Chicago, and Seattle (P. I. Jackson 1978; Altshuler 1970; Blumenthal 1969; Danns 2002; Blair 2005). The tremendous number of area residents involved in the struggle for community control in Ocean Hill-Brownsville
should also be remembered as at least as important as the ensuing conflict; Residents of Harlem and Ocean Hill-Brownsville served as a preliminary demonstration of the power that had aggregated among African American and minority communities in inner cities. Other groups seeking control of their childrens’ sites of learning found it necessary to create their own schools, which would be independent of the public school system and the perceived hostility of state Boards of Education, but found in Ocean Hill-Brownsville evidence of the possibility of altered power relations.

3.4.2 Self Determination: The Council of Independent Black Institutions

In her investigation of African American parent and group efforts to shape and control the schools that their children attend since Brown, Stulberg goes on to describe the creation of schools as part of an alternative, African American independent school movement, the “Council of Independent Black Institutions” (CIBI). One such school, the Uhuru Sasa Shule, or “Freedom Now School” was created in Ocean Hill in 1970. The school’s founder, Jitu Weusi, had been involved in the public school community control movement, and had come to the conclusion that the only way to ensure the financial and political independence of African American schools was to establish schools that would be completely separate from the public school system, and which would be structured as part of self-sufficient communities (Stulberg 2008). The Council of Independent Black Institutions was founded in 1972 by the African-American Teachers Association (ATA).
of New York, a group that had previously supported community control initiatives. The organization was formalized in a meeting in South Carolina, in which participants resolved to create independent African American schools throughout the US (Shujaa and Afrik 1996; Stulberg 2008). Learning from the experience of Ocean Hill-Brownsville, members of the Council emphasized the importance of community self-sufficiency as an aspect of self-determination.

By the 1980s, 200 to 250 CIBI schools had been created (Stulberg 2008). Educators involved in CIBI schools, Mwalimu J. Shujaa and Hannibal T. Afrik explain that CIBI founders intended to unify an existing and “rapidly developing movement” of the creation of independent schools that shared a Pan-Africanist orientation. Independently of each other, groups had, prior to the formation of CIBI, begun to establish Pan-Africanist schools in different US cities, including the Uhuru Sasa Shule, the Freedom Library Day School in Philadelphia, and the New Concept Development Center in Chicago (Shujaa and Afrik 1996; Stulberg 2008).

In their emphasis on community self-sufficiency, CIBI schools were often begun as one aspect of broader, interconnected community organization building. The New Concept Development Center, located in a majority African American neighborhood in Chicago, was part of a larger organization, the Institute of Positive Education, that included an independent press, a food cooperative, a bookstore, and a typesetting
business, and which also organized lectures relevant to community life. The independent, community-oriented business of IPE provided funding for the school and financial autonomy for the neighborhood (Stulberg 2008). Likewise, Uhuru Sasa was part of a broader community organization called The East, which included a community center, a bookstore and a restaurant. In 1973, of 21 member CIBI schools, 10 were connected to independent bookstores, five to grocery stores and four to clothing cooperatives (Stulberg 2008; Doughty 1973). In his doctoral dissertation on CIBI schools, James Doughty, coordinator of teacher training at the Umjoja Sasa Shule in Columbus, Ohio, explains that CIBI schools necessarily take on the responsibility of improving life in the African American neighborhoods of which they are a part: “The Independent Black Schools are vehicles for substantive changes in Black neighborhoods. These changes must effect the educational, political, economic, social, housing, legal defense, imprisonment, communication, and the self-defense areas of Black life…” (Doughty 1973). Doughty goes on to cite the Uhuru Sasa Schule’s guidelines for the recommended actions of CIBI schools in each of the categories of change, including “…to work in the economic area for community ownership of all businesses…,” “…assist housing groups and individuals by supporting rent strikes…,” “…providing 24 hour free legal service…,” “…demand radio time to air Black political and educational viewpoints…,” etc. (Doughty 1973). As Doughty’s work demonstrates, the Council of Independent
Black Institutions regarded the independent school as an integral part of the creation of a broader autonomous community.

Participants in the CIBI movement conceptualized an essential relation between self-determination and learning. In addressing questions of funding, curriculum and management of schools, CIBI members constantly raised the question of the connection between political forms and knowledge circulation (Stulberg 2008). Shujaa and Afrik assert, “…we feel it is important to restate that our concern is with the politics of education and the relationships of power involved in the societal and cultural contexts of schooling and education” (Shujaa and Afrik 1996). CIBI school members strove to create curriculum that promoted culture as a political force for the organization of a given society, and specifically an “Afrikan” culture that emphasized the link between “the individual and his community,” and values that benefit Black people.

The essay by Shujaa and Afrik includes a list of the six concepts fundamental to schools categorized as “Independent Black Institutions.” The first two concepts listed are “1. Communalism—the antithesis of competitive individualism, and 2. Decolonization—the acquisition of ownership and control by African people of the political, economic, social, and educational institutions that are rightfully their own” (Shujaa and Afrik 1996). That participants in CIBI schools saw themselves as directly connected to a global,  

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7 For this reason, participants in the creation of CIBI schools claimed that the focus on Pan-Africanist cultural forms was a necessary part of their political endeavors (Stulberg 2008; Shujaa and Afrik 1996).
and particularly African, decolonial movement is clear. Like many of the participants in
the public school community control movement, CIBI activists interpreted the
relationship between the US government and educational institutions for African
American children as a colonial relationship, similar to other instances of colonial
domination around the world. Self-determination in learning and thinking, and
therefore in institutions of education, was seen as a strategy for the disruption of
American imperialism (Stulberg 2008). Doughty writes, “…the definition of community
allows Independent Black Schools to perceive of themselves as part of an international
group of people, organizations, and institutions with a common purpose… CIBI
members are attempting to responsibly move with the masses of Afrikan people toward
greater self-sufficiency…” (Doughty 1973).8

8 Huey Newton both critiques and expresses solidarity with US proponents of Pan-Africanism, depending
on the extent to which a specific Pan-Africanist position in the US recognized the need to dismantle the US
power structure, and ally with all oppressed groups, in order to achieve self-determination for black people
in the US. For example, in an essay “on Pan-Africanism or communism,” he writes, “What does ‘Pan-
Africanism’ mean to the black African who did not live Nkrumah’s dream, but lives in the real nightmare of
U.S. economic/military might?… Pan-Africanism, as defined by Mr. Padmore, is hardly the issue. It is not
only outdated, it sets back the liberation of all oppressed people. It leaves room for exploitative endeavor by
men… it fails to encompass the unique situation of black Americans… If, however, we are speaking of
eliminating exploitation and oppression, then the oppressed must begin with a united, worldwide thrust
along the lines of oppressed vs. oppressor” (Newton 2002b). However, in the instance of welcoming Robert
Williams back to the US, Newton expresses support for the Republic of New Africa and suggests that the
group should work more closely with the Panthers, “because we know from people whom I’ve talked to…
who are familiar with the philosophy of the Republic of New Africa… they seem to be very aware that the
whole structure of America will have to be changed in order for the people of America to be free…”
(Newton 1970).
The Council for Independent Black Institutions is particularly useful to an analysis of the way in which the creation of independent institutions of learning depended on the simultaneous creation of programs for community self-sufficiency that could strengthen new institutions in their initiatives to shift existing power relations.

**3.4.3 Modeling an Alternative Organization of Society: Black Panther Model Schools**

As Ocean Hill-Brownsville neighborhood groups struggled to achieve community control of the public schools in their district, and separately from CIBI the Revolutionary Action Movement strove to create independent and community-controlled school, members of the Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM), established in 1963, also called for the development of freedom schools. RAM members described the purpose of the organization: to achieve self-determination for all African Americans, through social cooperation rather than capitalist individualism. RAM was very influential to the formation of the Black Panthers, as RAM members were instrumental in the creation of Black Panther Party chapters across the US.

The It is clear from speeches made by Eldridge Cleaver, Black Panther Minister of Information until the Party’s split in 1971, and other documents circulated by the Panthers, that the Black Panther Party supported all efforts by black communities for community control of education, including organization for community control of public schools (Heath 1976a). The Black Panthers in Oakland, California and eventually
across the US asserted the need for black communities to create and control their own schools. Education is the fifth point in the Panther’s “Ten Point Plan.” The plan reads,

We want decent education for our people that exposes the true nature of this decadent American society. We want education that teaches us our true history and our role in the present-day society. We believe in an educational system that will give to our people a knowledge of the self. If you do not have knowledge of yourself and your position in society and in the world, then you will have little chance to know anything else (The Dr. Huey P. Newton Foundation 2011).

In its own efforts for the transformation of primary and secondary education, the Black Panthers resolved to form their own schools, as “model schools” that would both 1. Provide the best possible learning experience for their children and 2. Demonstrate to people throughout the US the possibility and need for all oppressed people, and particularly black people, to create their own schools in order to be able to ensure a learning experience of the best quality for their children. Leading Black Panther member and Oakland Community School director explains, “…we’d like to see people start schools all over the country. That’s why I said we’re a model. We hope that people can take our example and do the same kind of thing” (The Black Panther 1976).

The Black Panthers’ determination to establish their own schools grew out other “survival programs” that they had previously instituted, beginning in 1968. The programs were termed “survival programs” because, as Huey Newton explains, the US
system of oppression threatened the very survival of black and poor people. The Black Panthers thought of the survival programs not as revolutionary in and of themselves, but as necessary measures for the formation and continued existence of a group that might bring about societal change: “…very much like the first-aid kit that is used when a plane falls and you find yourself in the middle of the sea on a rubber raft. You need a few things to last until you can get to the shore… If you do not have the things necessary to get you to that shore, then you will probably not exist” (Newton 2002a). Therefore, like other groups of the time, but especially so, the Black Panthers did not think of the formation of schools as an action adequate to the transformation of society in and of itself. Instead, the creation of schools was theorized as a necessary part of the creation and preservation of a group of people capable of exercising broader self-determination.

In 1969, Black Panther Party chapters in cities across the US started “liberation schools,” in storefronts, churches and homes with the intention of fulfilling the Black Panther goal of supplementing the inadequate and destructive US education system, by creating educational institutions that would teach African American and poor people about their history in the US, and their role in present-day society. Liberation schools were after-school programs and summer morning-long schools that provided academic

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*Samuel Yette’s *The Choice: The Issue of Black Survival in America* contains a collection of evidence of the way in which racist and exploitative US policies threatened the lives of black people in the US throughout US history, and in the 1960s and 70s (Yette 1971)*
support, “created a forum for young people to explore a factual history of America,” and provided “a sense of connection and community” in learning (Huggins 2008). In 1970, the Black Panther’s first full time day school, The Children’s House, was started in Oakland for the children of members of the Black Panther Party. This school subsequently moved into a larger building in Berkeley, and then another in Oakland to have the capacity to serve more children, and was renamed the Intercommunal Youth Institute. For two years, the IYI offered educational programs and dormitory to 50 children. In September of 1973, the Intercommunal Youth Institute was replaced by the Oakland Community School, which further expanded the Black Panther Party’s educational initiative in enrolling 150 children (Huggins 2008). The BPP organized and ran the Oakland Community School until the school closed in 1982.\footnote{Two charter schools, the “West Oakland Community School” and the “North Oakland Community Charter School” opened in 2000.}

Less information is available on other Black Panther schools. According to the House Committee on Internal Security (HCIS), which existed from 1969 to 1975\footnote{The successor to the “House Un-American Activities Committee,” established in 1934, and again in 1938 after disbanding. HCIS formed a subcommittee in 1970 to focus specifically on investigating the Black Panther Party (“CIA, FBI and Other Government Documents” 2006).}, at least seventeen chapters of the Black Panther Party operated or had operated a Liberation School by 1970 (Williamson 2005; Heath 1976b). The Panthers also initiated adult

Black Panther newspaper articles and pamphlets, and essays and speeches by Huey Newton and others, repeatedly make explicit the intention of the schools to teach children “how to think, not what to think” (Hilliard 2002; The Black Panther Party 1972). The implication in this goal of the Black Panthers was that existing schools did the opposite: school in the US: the Panthers posited, as I have discussed above, that school in industrial US society related to the student as a recipient of knowledge and not as a participant in the creation of knowledge. For the Panthers, as for other groups, this was a major reason for the rejection of existing schools and the need to create an alternative to them. A Black Panther pamphlet requesting funding and resources for the Samuel L. Napier Intercommunal Youth Institute describes the creation of the Institute:

…in direct response to the educational system, which manifests itself today as the public school system, [which] has systematically produced individuals that are totally incapable of thinking in an analytical way… Our plan is to educate Black children to become fully capable of analyzing the problems we face and to develop creative solutions to deal with them (The Black Panther Party 1972).

Like other groups of the time, the Black Panthers set out to educate their children to believe in and engage their own capacity to think and contribute to the production of knowledge. For example, from the instructor handbook of the Oakland Community School:
In traditional educational facilities, math has been taught as a collection of numbers and rules... Emphasis has often been on ‘what’ and not the ‘how’ and ‘why’ in learning math. Children at the Oakland Community School learn concepts that give rise to the basic operations, following a line of continuity into advanced math and its practical applications... Math at the Oakland Community School, as it should be, is the essence of understanding the most elemental degree of our knowledge and workings of the real world (Oakland Community School 1976).

The theme in Panther writings on the importance of the creation of institutions of learning that distinguish between ‘what’ and ‘how’ to learn is important to my argument in its demonstration of the way in which the Black Panthers, along with other groups, directly challenged the power of disciplinary institutions to control the “selection, transmission, control and use of knowledges” through the creation of alternative institutions.

Furthermore, the Black Panthers were strong advocates of the conceptualization of knowledge that resonated in movements throughout the world in the late 60s, which asserted that all knowledge originates in practice rather than in the theoretical musings of an individual mind divested from material experience. The pamphlet published on the Intercommunal Youth Institute goes on to state “the second principle” emphasized in the Black Panther schools: “...that in order to be able to transform any situation or thing, one must be in contact with it. The youth, at various times, study the physical and social phenomena of their community firsthand and test out their theories for making basic changes through practical activity” (Oakland Community School 1976). Children in the Intercommunal Youth Institute, and later in the Oakland Community School,
were taught that analysis is built on experiment, and that to know something is to interact with it, in opposition to the dominating pedagogical relationship described by Freire and Rancière. The Black Panthers strove to create a new relationship to learning, one that would not reproduce abusive authority founded in the superiority of established knowledge.

The importance of experiment to thought was a major theme of the philosophy on which the Black Panther Party was founded. Taking inspiration from the Cultural Revolution and the philosophical writings of Mao, Huey Newton describes the Panthers relationship to knowledge as one of deliberate and careful study involving practical experiment, which is then applied directly with the purpose of creating change:

We must be as objective as possible without accepting dogma, letting the facts speak for themselves. But we will not remain totally objective; we will become subjective in the application of the knowledge received from the external world. We will use the scientific method to acquire this knowledge, but we will openly acknowledge our ultimate subjectivity. Once we apply knowledge in order to will a certain outcome our objectivity ends and our subjectivity begins. We call this integrating theory with practice, and this is what the Black Panther Party is all about (Newton 2002a).

This passage makes evident the position of the Black Panther movement regarding the relationship between knowledge and power; knowledge does remain objective, but becomes subjective in its application to life. Power, Huey Newton writes, “is first of all the ability to define phenomena, and secondly the ability to make these phenomena act in a desired manner.” Rather than accept the power exercised by the abusive and exploitative authority, in accepting knowledge offered in school as given, without
experimentation and without application, the Panthers proposed that oppressed people of all races and ages exercise their own power by first learning through experiment, and then applying the information they acquired in order to change their own lives.

The Black Panthers described most clearly, and were arguably most conscious of the way in which the struggle for community control of schools connected to broader struggles for the assertion of the power of alternative knowledges, the origin of knowledge in practice, and the strategic implementation of that assertion for the transformation of society. Though the Panthers describe this relationship most effectively, my argument is that the broader phenomenon of struggle for community control was also implicated in the transformation of power relations, as the Panthers understood them.

3.4.4 Autonomous Universities

The movement to create autonomous institutions of learning extended beyond the needs of younger students in the creation of Black independent universities, including Nairobi College in East Palo Alto, the Malcolm X Liberation University in Durham, North Carolina, which subsequently relocated to Greensboro, and the affiliated Center for Black Education in Washington D.C., the New School for Afro-American Thought in D.C., the Institute of the Black World in Atlanta, the black Communiversity
of Chicago, Chicago’s Malcolm X University, and the “five-day black university” of the National Association for African-American Education’s Atlanta summit. Chicano students who had attended Nairobi College also formed an additional institution, Vencerémos (“We shall win”) College, in Redwood City (Rickford 2009).

Nairobi College and MXLU were themselves affiliated with the creation of preschools and primary and secondary schools. Along with two additional political organizations, MXLU opened the Betty Shabazz Early Education Center in the basement of the Operation Breakthrough building and the Pan African Early Education Center in Durham, and the Willie Grimes Community School (a high school) in Greensboro. Nairobi College was loosely affiliated with the Nairobi Day School in East Palo Alto (Rickford 2009).

These universities brought into question the tendency of industrial education to regard learning as an activity of a specific and limited age group, instead positing learning as a lifelong activity. Full-time students at MXLU ranged in age from 16 to 22, but night courses were also offered to older black residents of Durham while the university was located on Pettigrew Street (Belvin 2004). The autonomous institutions also provided new answers to the question of the purpose of higher education. In its

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12 MXC remained connected to the city college system, but was fully conceptualized and transformed by “student activism and community pressure.” Black Panther member Fred Hampton attended MXC (“CIA, FBI and Other Government Documents” 2006).
statement of purpose, the Institute of the Black World described itself as “a gathering of black intellectuals who are convinced that the gifts of their minds are meant to be fully used in the service of the black community. It is therefore an experiment with scholarship in the context of struggle” (Institute of the Black World Advisory Council 1969). MXLU and Nairobi College shared the goal of serving as a base of both knowledge and skill for local black communities. A 1969 position paper issued on behalf of MXLU stated, “blackness must change in its emphasis from that which is seen, such as afros and dashikis, to that which is necessary, such as living and working with Black people to achieve our goal of liberation…”; the MXLU curriculum emphasized both a “de-colonization of the mind” and training in a technical skill that would be supportive of the creation of black community (Belvin 2004). Students and staff at both universities participated in local struggles for quality affordable housing. MXLU offered Greensboro residents classes in “The Law and Black People,” first aid, and farming in addition to its history program (Rickford 2009). They also invented new relationships between “teacher,” and “student,” and reimagined individual’s capacities to offer instruction in specific knowledge sets. Students at MXLU were expected to teach at the University in their third year of enrollment; faculty at the University were termed “resource people” to highlight their accountability to everyone at the school (Belvin 2004).
3.4.5 Other Autonomous Schools

Finally, it is important to include in this brief history the struggles for self-determination of other communities of color in the US that also challenged the dominating power structure. Of course, activism around education in New York City, and the Ocean-Hill Brownsville movement for community control involved the Puerto Rican population of Brooklyn and New York as much as the African American population. The Black Panther School was also open to enrollment of all children of color. Other communities in the US also built their own schools, drawing inspiration from African American groups and from their own histories of community creation.

Navajo activism for community control created the most enduring of community-controlled schools, Rough Rock Demonstration School established in 1966 and still open; Diné College, established in 1968 and still in existence; and Ramah Navajo High School, opened in 1970, relocated and renamed Pine Hill School in 1975, and still in existence. The Ramah Navajo School Board’s website states that “…the School Board’s success has inspired other tribes around the world that the indigenous people of the Earth can do wonders with their mind and not only with their hands” (Ramah Navajo School Board 2012).

Members of the American Indian Movement (AIM) established independent schools that they named “survival schools,” beginning with the Heart of the Earth
Survival School, and the Red School House in Minnesota in 1972. The AIM Movement itself was founded in July of 1968, by approximately 120 people, mainly women and children, who called themselves the Concerned American Indian Coalition. Clyde Bellecourt, present at the first AIM meeting and a participant in the AIM movement throughout the seventies, described AIM’s intention to transcend protest in the formation of institutions that would be alternative to US institutions that killed American Indians and destroyed Native American language and knowledge (Norrell 2008). AIM documents described the Heart of the Earth Survival School (HOTESS) as “the first model of community-based, student-centered education with culturally correct curriculum operating under parental control” (Waterman Wittstock and Salinas 2006). Curriculum included Native American language and training in practical skills related to survival (Norrell 2008). Ultimately, AIM affiliated established Survival Schools in twelve or more locations in the US and Canada (Fardelmann 1983).

This history of community control and creation of schools is by no means exhaustive, but offers examples of the prevalence within the US of community creation of autonomous schooling in the particular moment of global struggle of the 60s and 70s. Above all, the significance of the creation of all of these schools, and the movement for

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13 Other autonomous primary and secondary schools begun in African American communities, but not directly affiliated with the Black Panther or the CIBI schools, included the Clifford McKissick Community School in Milwaukee, Our School New York in Harlem, and the Chad School in Newark (James 1972).
community control in general, lies in the groups’ determination to reinvent the possibilities of an organization of learning institutions on their own terms. Debate and disagreement among individuals involved in the creation of schools, presses and universities, detailed in Russell Rickford’s dissertation for Columbia, points to the way in which groups directly made and remade institutions, questioning all characteristics of existing institutions, and allowing changes to emerge out of democratic process and discussion. The institutions remained open to debate and transformation in every aspect, from the age of ‘students,’ to the qualifications of a ‘teacher,’ to the question of how to best ‘teach’ and ‘learn’ alternative relations of power in the context of race and in general. This collective reorganization of learning contributed a worldwide phenomenon of collective reinvention that challenged the need for organization by a higher authority.

3.5 Conclusion: Crisis in the City School

By the year 1970 there was broad concern among academic administrators of a growing crisis in the US education system, particularly with respect to inner city schools in the largest US cities: New York, Washington D.C., Los Angeles, etc. Wilson C. Riles, the Associate Superintendent of Education in California (later to become the State Superintendent), expressed his opinion in a 1969 presentation to the President’s
Committee on Mental Retardation\textsuperscript{14}, that the urban school system was at risk of “breaking down—or being torn apart” (Riles 1969). In 1972, the Charles Kettering Foundation, a nonpartisan research foundation, undertook a study of crisis in secondary schooling in the US in order to offer recommendations for the reform of education. In an explanation of the study’s rationale and context, the Foundation writes, in agreement with Riles, “Our large city schools are on the verge of complete collapse. Two decades ago, the cities operated the best school system in the United States. Today, these schools are at the bottom in academic accomplishment” (The National Commission on the Reform of Secondary Education 1973).

In their explanations of the reason for the sudden crisis in inner city school quality and stability, Riles and the educational administrators who contributed to the Kettering study cite the growing diversity of inner city populations, as well as student and community dissent:

\begin{quote}
What is new is that a majority of Americans are now living in metropolitan areas, and among the ‘immigrants’ are large proportions of persons from minority groups and low-income families. In effect, the educational problems which have always been with us are becoming more concentrated in certain parts of our large cities and are thus becoming more visible... And most significantly, what is new is that the poor and the alienated are no longer willing to accept the status quo. They are demanding what any middle class parent would have demanded long ago if his child did not seem to be getting anything out of the educational system. They are demanding an accounting and a change in the system to make it more relevant to their needs (Riles 1969).
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{14} The forum of an advisory committee on “mental retardation” as the location for Riles’ presentation on the problem of inner city schools is itself demanding of attention, though an analysis of Riles’ association of questions of mental capacity and issues of inner city school management is beyond the scope of this chapter.
Likewise, the Kettering Foundation report introduction cites the year 1968 as the significant year in the development of the crisis of urban secondary schooling. Though the authors of the Foundation’s study characterize secondary schooling in the US as having always been a site of frequent crisis, dating from the moment of the nation’s founding, they state that no crisis in education prepared the secondary school system for the crisis of 1968, and the demands of the schools’ “altered clientele”:

Despite a tempestuous history in which it had moved from crisis to crisis, the high school was ill-prepared for the widespread turbulence which began in 1968 with the White Plains (New York) High School Incident (the first recorded student demonstration (race riot) at the high school level—Tuesday, March 26, 1968)—and the succeeding years of student dissent, unrest, and racial discord. These influences, coupled with countless court decisions, have radically changed the high schools’ student bodies, and the attitudes of students on racial, cultural, and socioeconomic matters (The National Commission on the Reform of Secondary Education 1973).

From the perspective of many school board members and government officials in education departments, the growing activism of nonwhite students and communities around education in US cities threatened to devastate the US system of education. Of course, the ‘tearing apart’ that Riles fears refers to the creation of schools outside of a public school system; the conclusion of Riles’ presentation is a warning against the allocation of school administrative powers to community groups “…which [do] not have the same expertise and resources that the central city administration can gather together” (Riles 1969). The Kettering study suggests, somewhat desperately, that the
pressure on schools for racial and cultural sensitivity limits their capacity to demand academic rigor from students:

The schools, which only six years before had feverishly geared for a substantial concentration in mathematics and science courses, were required to make an abrupt shift in a massive effort to improve the education of the disadvantaged… Social legislation and administrative action also assigned to the schools responsibility for changing racial attitudes and correcting a broad range of social deficiencies… The American comprehensive high school today must be viewed as an establishment striving to meet the complex demands of a society in the throes of social change, at a time when the school system has become too large as an institution and \textit{is literally overrun with a mix of young people from inconsistent social backgrounds}. This is a difficult circumstance. The pressure of these forces exhausts the strength of the high school as an organized institution” (The National Commission on the Reform of Secondary Education 1973).

The study projects an image of a school threatened by its students. For the administrators who participated in consultations with the Kettering Foundation, students and activist communities of “inconsistent social backgrounds,” exercising questionable “expertise,” were the immediate hazard; at stake was the institution of the school and the relation of the school to a ‘scientific’ knowledge that could not coexist with student and community activism.

\textbf{3.5.1 Crisis of Authority}

Like other movements in the 1960s and 70s, the movements around education in the US emphasized the importance of the knowledge and creativity of working and exploited people in contradicting the authority and oppressive knowledge of colonizing and exploitative classes (El Kilombo Intergaláctico 2013). The activists in struggle for community control of schools and the creation of community-controlled schools were
part of the broader creation in disparate places and situations, of experiments in people’s capacity to create better lives. As Hardt and Negri explain in *Empire*, the movements of the sixties and seventies were particularly “intense” and “coherent” in their creation of a “new production of subjectivity,” one that both opposed the limits that disciplinary institutions imposed on life, and affirmed instead the capacity of people in organization to create modes of life that would be preferable to the life dictated by disciplinary production, in that they would be based in “mobility, flexibility, knowledge, communication, cooperation, the affective” (Hardt and Negri 2000, emphasis mine). The distinct movements’ emphasis on the viability of their own knowledge creation is clarified in thinking of the movements as *experiments* in ways of living, in the sense of Huey Newton’s emphasis of the importance of the scientific method to the actions of the Black Panthers.

Also like other movements of the time, the movement for community control of schooling in US cities and the community control of schools involved both a rejection of the authority and societal organization entailed in a dominating, exploitative power structure, and a question of what kind of social organization would replace the organizing function of dominating authority. For Badiou, the question of 1968 in disparate parts of the world was the question of what kind of politics would replace the politics of authority (whether State or revolutionary Party). He writes that the problem
revealed by the Cultural Revolution and subsequently May ’68 in France, is the question of how “truly and globally to free politics from the framework of the party-state that imprisons it” (Badiou 2010). That is, since the end of the sixties, liberatory social movements have attempted to answer the question of “what type of organization we need” after the realization of the failure of the emancipatory potential of the party and representative democracy. In this context, it is possible to think of the struggle for community control and the creation of schools in the US as moments in a global “experiment with non-party forms of organization” after the Cultural Revolution and May ’68.

The statements of Wilson Riles, the Kettering Foundation study and others clearly demonstrate the threat that urban activism around education posed to the dominant system of authority, but the activist groups and communities struggling for control of education, and experimenting with new forms of social organization, would contend with many other social forces in the effort to reimagine and reshape society.

3.5.2 Recodification

Foucault’s theorization of the process of social transformation is useful in thinking through world events since the 1960s.

He writes,

I would say that the State consists in the codification of a whole number of power relations which render its functioning possible, and that Revolution is a different type of
codification of the same relations. This implies that there are many different kinds of revolution, roughly speaking as many kinds as there are possible subversive recodifications of power relations, and further that one can perfectly well conceive of revolutions which leave essentially untouched the power relations which form the basis for the functioning of the State” (123).

In other words, a transformation in a societal paradigm (revolution) comes about as a “recodification” of existing power relations. The movements of the 60s and 70s against disciplinary institutions upset the State disciplinary exercise of power by creating institutions that had the capacity to articulate and circulate knowledge. This is not to say that alternative knowledges and powers did not exist previous to these institutions, but that the institutions recoded the power relationship between an alternative knowledge, originating in the experiments of social organization without domination, a “hypothesis of a world that had been freed from the law of profit and private interest,” as Badiou describes it, and the knowledge produced and circulated in disciplinary institutions.

Movements across the world, including movements around education in the US, were successful in shifting the power relation between these two knowledges (or, perhaps more correctly, between the one knowledge of oppressive authority, and the multiple knowledges of social movements), making the knowledge of the creativity of working and oppressed people powerful in relation to disciplinary knowledge that insisted on the increase of worker productivity and subjection. In explaining the growth in power of the knowledge produced in working and exploited classes, Michael Hardt
and Antonio Negri explain that the alternative forms of knowledge and life produced in
the movements were explicitly incompatible with material production as it had
functioned in disciplinary society. That is, in combatting a disciplinary ordering of
peoples’ lives, creative movements across the world raised the cost of production, and
undermined the extraction of resources and “superprofits” (Hardt and Negri 2000).
Faced with declining profits, the capitalist class was forced to either repress the
movements, or find methods through which to continue the process of extraction in
conjunction with the movements’ creativity.
4. School in the Current Moment

4.1 School in the Ongoing Crisis

In this chapter, I argue that the charter school can be understood as having three social functions: 1. As a new site for the production of profit after the decline in profitability of previous sites of production, and in relation to this, as a site for the production of ‘controlled’ subjectivities 2. As an instrument for the facilitation of the theft of existing wealth and 3. In relation to the prison, as a site for the control of a surplus population that might otherwise come up with its own alternative systems for the organization of life. I argue that an investigation of the emergence of the charter school might be an approach to understanding the contemporary conjuncture as the drawn out crisis of the organization of power on a global scale. That is, following Reyes and others who assert that the most recent “financial crisis” is not so much an isolated period of economic decline as it is evidence of the ongoing crisis of capitalist society, temporarily stalled by neoliberal strategies of theft and control (Reyes 2012c),

I will begin the chapter with a brief history of immediate responses by the capitalist class to the free school movement, in order to understand how this three-sided industry took shape. Reacting to groups’ struggles for community control of schools, and to the autonomous creation of community schools after the 1960s and 70s,
government entities and businesses straddled attempts at containment and cooptation that informed these three ‘functions’ of primary and secondary education.

With reference to sociologists in the field of education, journalistic studies of education and theorists who study US capitalist society, I then go on to discuss the three functions of education that I have outlined above via contemporary examples of US school systems in major cities.

It is my contention that the examples of developments in charter schooling that I cite are representative of developments in US cities in general. Federal incentives for states’ expansion of charter schooling have produced similar patterns in cities throughout the US: the closure of public schools and the opening of charter schools in urban neighborhoods, and the militarization of schools that remain. The examples that I draw on are from various US cities, but speak to the same national analysis.

4.2 Reschooling: Reactionary Decentralization

Max Rafferty, the superintendent of education in California from 1963 to 1971, gloated in 1970 that the following decade would mark the end of minority groups’ struggles for control of their communities’ schools, a “Paradise Regained” from the perspective of bureaucrats and those most threatened by community organization among marginalized groups. Certainly, the vision of schools governed by and for autonomous communities, focused on the learning processes of children and the
strengthening of community autonomy does not seem descriptive of the US school system of the past thirty to forty years. The period of the late seventies to the present has involved a shift in school control not from government bodies to community processes but from government to corporate entities and from school boards to so-called “public-private” partnerships.

This section will be an exploration of the immediate reactions of state and business actors to community creation of alternative forms of education, addressing the processes that set the precedent for the state institution of education to assume its three major contemporary functions. I argue that the principal motivation of state entities in their response to “deschooling” was the attempt to secure profit and power in a changing social context. In response to movements for control and creation of autonomous schools in the US, existing power structures initially attempted direct repression and/or strove to ignore the alternatives created. However, a second response swiftly followed the first, in which administrative and bureaucratic bodies recognized the effectiveness of a strategy of adopting the language of activist and neighborhood groups in order to displace the antagonism—between their desires and the reality of existing public school structures—that those groups had successfully highlighted.

In New Jersey in 1973, state education agencies contributed to the creation of the Upper Atlantic Regional Title V Interstate Project, with the intention of designating
alternative schools as an area for inquiry and focus. A participant in the Project, Gary Natriello describes the state’s initial reaction to the plan as one of indifference, primarily using the money available through the project to fund activities that had “nothing to do with the phenomenon that came to be known as the alternative schools movement” (Natriello 1978). On the initial dearth of state responses to the creation of alternative educational institutions, Natriello writes,

The reasons for this first response are not hard to understand. When an incumbent political and educational system is confronted with a challenge from a competing political and educational system, any recognition of the challenger by the incumbent, even in the form of criticism, can only aid the challenger in its attempts to gain recognition and support... This is exactly what SEAs did in the face of the alternative schools movement” (Natriello 1978).

However, Natriello states that he gradually became aware of a “second phase” in state responses to the project, in which SEAs began “to facilitate and support or actively encourage and initiate alternatives in education” (Natriello 1978). In the second phase of state responses, education agencies recognized the benefits of adopting the movements’ language and implementing some of the less “alternative” practices of the movements1 as a strategy for the maintenance of administrative authority: “…the State Education Department of New York certainly did so both by ignoring the movement in its most challenging form and by seeking to incorporate a politically acceptable form of the

1 Such as the creation of alternatives that emphasized community participation in advisory committees while maintaining the authority of bureaucratically appointed school boards to make all major policy decisions.
movement for alternatives into the public school system” (Natriello 1978). State agencies and their employees determined that a strategy of involvement, or “participation,” would better inoculate existing educational structures against “challenge from a competing political and educational system” (Natriello 1978). In a document explaining the creation of state-administered Neighborhood Education Centers in Detroit, for example, the Detroit Board of Education writes, “In recent years we have come to realize however slowly or even reluctantly, that the ‘community school’ is no passing fad… community study and service through school education is here to stay” (Detroit Board of Education, MI 1971). Though it initially ignored the efforts of city residents to control their own educational institutions, the Board ultimately determined that a more adequate response would be the creation of government-managed “community schools.” This “second phase” of state response involved the state adoption of administrative decentralization as a politically ‘acceptable’ alternative to the free school movement, an alternative that did not deprive state institutions of the power to design institutions for learning.

There is an essential distinction between the concept of “community control” and that of “decentralization” involving “community participation.” The political science scholar Jane Anna Gordon discusses the importance of this distinction in the context of US school management in the late 1960s, defining “administrative decentralization” as
“a way of structuring the public school system [which] calls for duties and power formally centralized at the Board of Education… to be transferred to the level of the district, the borough, or the school” (Gordon 2001). Importantly, decentralization does not necessarily imply community or parent participation in decision-making processes. “Community control,” on the other hand, “refers to a model of educational governance; it presumes decentralization but does not merely move authority over schooling down a bureaucratic hierarchy. Instead, it calls for the transmission of that authority directly into the hands of specified individuals in the community” (Gordon 2001). Allan Ornstein, a professor of education, includes a third category of “community participation:” “…although decentralization need not always lead to increased lay participation, there is often such an increase. With this policy, the decision-making power still remains with the professionals… community participation usually results in the formation of advisory committees, truly only advisory in nature” (Ornstein 1974).

Clearly, to conflate community control solely with decentralization (without community decision making processes) is to reestablish power relations between autonomously creative city residents and traditional authority structures. Immediately following, and in response to movements for community control and creation of

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2 It is important to emphasize here that I am not talking about parental authority vs. state authority, but something more like alternative to authority. The creation of community schools, and in the struggle for “community-school,” as discussed in Chapter 2, often depends on a hypothesis of a form of organization in which all members of a group participate in decision-making processes.
autonomous schools, representatives of preexisting state authority such as the Vietnam war-advisor turned head of the Ford Foundation and its funding of educational experiments in New York City in the late 60s, McGeorge Bundy, proposed decentralization and community participation in an effort to decrease the influence of the institutions of alternative groups, and the political implications of that influence. Jason Epstein, the founder of The New York Review of Books, described the conflict around schools in New York City as he perceived it in 1969 as a “classic revolutionary situation,” and goes so far as to imply that Bundy drew on his expertise of combatting the revolutionary forces of Vietnam in his response to the Ocean Hill-Brownsville incident:

Mr. Bundy’s report represents his debut in urban affairs, but for the former White House official the political crisis which his report hoped to settle is nothing new. In the ghettos of New York, as, a decade ago, in the Mekong Delta, an angry and insurgent population feels that it has exhausted its last political options and is now ready for violence, even if violence means suicide… The city is thus faced with a classic revolutionary situation. The problem for Mayor Lindsay and Mr. Bundy is to keep the peace, but the present strategy is the opposite of what it had been in Vietnam. There we strengthened the mandarins. The plan now is to weaken them and to offer a form of self-government to the indigenous population (Epstein 1969).

Likewise, Mario Fantini, Ford Foundation program officer and advisor to Bundy, describes the counterrevolutionary benefits of a plan for schools in NYC that allowed for community participation:

…participation has a positive effect on the participants… For example, as parents in East Harlem became more engaged in the education process, ‘quality education’ replaced ‘Black Power’ as the slogan… The pattern of the revolutionary is that, upon assumption
of power, he shifts from destroying institutions to building order and new institutions (of his own kind, to be sure) (Fantini 1969).

From the perspective of the Ford Foundation in 1969, then, the principal objective behind this highlighting of administrative decentralization as an integral component of education reform was the containment of “revolutionary” impulses among city residents. The primary Foundation advisor proposed to transform Black Power militancy into an institutional support system.

Thus, the Ford Foundation and New York Mayor John V. Lindsay cooperated to propose decentralization as the logical step for the New York education system, and the Nixon administration created the National Institute of Education to include an “Experimental Schools Program.” In suggesting procedures for decentralizing school administration, the Ford Foundation, acting as an advisory panel to Mayor Lindsay titled its report, “Reconnection for Learning: A Community School System for New York City,” stipulating however that the “community school districts should be governed by boards of education selected in part by parents and in part by the mayor selected from lists of candidates maintained by the central education agency…” (Mayor's Advisory Panel on Decentralization of the New York City Schools 1968, emphasis mine). As State Commissioner of Education in New York in 1973, Ewald Nyquist describes the importance of alternative schools to his goal of creating “humanistic” education in New York, and writes that he hopes that New York’s support of alternative schools will be a
model for other states, stressing both the “impact of alternative schools” on the traditional school system, and the continued importance of state oversight in schools.

Nyquist goes on to posit the State Education Department as the responsible, regulatory figure in the management of alternative schools, listing regulatory measures as “specific factors that make such experimentation possible…” (Nyquist 1973, emphasis mine). In direct response to the influential book by the social critic Ivan Illich, *Deschooling Society*, and the political movements that shared his analysis, Nyquist states, “There are those who would de-school society. For this radical and unacceptable notion I would substitute the need to reschool the educational system” (Nyquist 1973).

The Experimental Schools Program (ESP) in Washington DC, introduced by President Nixon in 1970 in his “Message on Educational Reform,” and funded by Congress in 1971, directly funded “alternative schools” in 18 school districts (Theimer 1974), including the Berkeley Unified School District (BUSD) in Berkeley, California (Experimental Schools Program staff 1972). The sociologist Ann Swidler describes the intention and effect of federal grant funding of Berkeley’s alternative schools in her book *Organization Without Authority: Dilemmas of Social Control in Free Schools*, stating that ESP

3 In his explanation of how regulation “make[s] such experimentation possible,” Nyquist writes, “Local procedures involve steps to obtain specifications as to the nature of the program, information about the qualifications of those teaching the courses or directing and supervising the activity… and evidence of successful completion of the program on the basis of examination, performance, or other appropriate achievement indicators…” (Negri 1984). “The point, here, is that there presently is ample authority delegated to the local school officials to permit the introduction of many options” (Nyquist 1973).
chose to fund the Berkeley school district’s decision to create independent and alternative schools in response to preexisting community and activist mobilization. The head of ESP contacted the Superintendent of Berkeley schools to encourage him to apply for funding (Swidler 1979). Swidler raises questions as to both the intention and the effect of the federal institution’s grant to the Berkeley school system, stating, “It can be argued that neither the BUSD nor the Office of Education ever intended to establish a radical school experiment that would give real autonomy to groups outside the established school bureaucracy….,” (Swidler 1979). In fact, control of the plan for the creation of additional “alternative schools” in Berkeley remained with high-ranking employees of the school district and the ESP office in Washington. Furthermore, Swidler writes, “Federal funding… weakened the local political strength of Berkeley’s alternative schools by making them dependent on the federal granting agency rather than on the maintenance of active community constituencies” (Swidler 1979).

Swidler does not mention the close proximity of the Berkeley school district to the extremely influential Black Panther Oakland Community School, but states that Berkeley residents in the early 70s were politicized, active and informed in their participation in the creation of alternative schools with “forceful pressure” (Swidler 1979). According to her observations, a marked decrease occurred in residents’
excitement and involvement in schools after the establishment of the ESP-funded schools:

The history of alternative education in Berkeley divides into two periods—before and after federal funding of the Berkeley Experimental Schools Project in July 1971… During the period when I studied Ethnic High, Berkeley’s political life had settled into a mood of discouraged quietism. Although the community was still sensitive to issues of social justice, the exhilarating atmosphere of political activism was gone. Within the [Berkeley Experimental Schools Program], some of the glow of alternative education had begun to fade, and political changes in Washington under the Nixon administration were making themselves felt in the national ESP (Swidler 1979).

The actions of the newly formed Experimental Schools Program, as well as the processes of administrative decentralization enacted by state educational institutions had the desired effect of quelling political activism around education and disempowering community efforts to secure control of schools. In Berkeley as elsewhere, the reduction of community and neighborhood-driven initiatives into an administrative policy that upheld the authority of state school boards and systems of evaluation decreased the possibilities of political activism around schools. In her conclusion to the history of the Ocean Hill-Brownsville community control movement, Gordon writes, “Battles for community control by communities of color have been more or less displaced by movement toward site-based management and charter alternatives” (Gordon 2001).

From the early 1970s on, public policy makers in education pursued decentralization with a new zeal. At stake was the future of the political makeup of not
just the education system, but the political possibilities of community organization in the US more generally. In his essay on “The Politics of School Decentralization,” Epstein writes that plans for top-down administrative decentralization ensued with “urgency and aggressiveness, partly because their sponsors feel that it is no longer a matter merely of improving the schools but of saving the city, and perhaps, since the case of New York is typical of all large-city systems, of saving the entire country…” (Epstein 1969). This idea of “saving the entire country” by containing and destroying the possibility of community alternatives will be consistently relevant especially in thinking of the education system in relation to prisons and the repression of surplus populations.

A sketch of the history of state response to movements in education demonstrates the connection between these negotiations and broader interactions between autonomous organization and traditional power structures more generally. The commitment of government and business entities to the restructuring of educational institutions in the late 70s, 80s and beyond provides an example of the backlash of those interested in maintaining power against the more egalitarian proposals and inventions of what Immanuel Wallerstein refers to as “the 1968 current” (Wallerstein 2011). I do not claim that the reactions of Nixon’s Experimental Schools Program and the Ford Foundation in New York are representative of all state responses to autonomous education; however, these examples are adequate to demonstrate the interest of state
and business actors at a prominent level in implementing some of the inventions of the movements while preserving the given social order.

4.3 Making Education Profitable

4.3.1 Education as Productive

The implementation of administrative decentralization as a strategy for the containment of activism does not illustrate all responses of state institutions to the free school movement and movements for community control, however. In part, this narrative fails to explain the involvement of financial and business interests in decentralization following the 60s, and the way in which the state “community school” proved relevant to an altered global economy. Another relatively immediate facet to the phenomenon of state support of so-called alternative schools from the early 70s on, also prevalent in state and administrative discourse on education in response to the free school movement, was the realization among members of a capitalist class of the potential profitability of changes in the management of schools, including “community participation.” A new vision of education as a potential site for the extraction of profit becomes evident after the 1970s. It is in this sense that the application of the concept of real subsumption, as discussed below, provides insight into the attempted neoliberal regeneration of capital after the 60s and 70s. At stake in this section is not the question of whether or not neoliberalism was successful as a capitalist strategy for renewing the
possibility of profit, but the way in which the goal of regeneration of capitalism contributed to the shaping of contemporary institutions of education.

With the first experiment in the implementation of a “voucher system” in the US, in 1970, the concept of profitability of education began to circulate among school administrators and business and finance groups in a way that piggybacked off of and proposed responses to struggles for community control. Citing the expressed desires of groups for institutions of learning that will be better suited to community needs, flexible and community-specific in their design, Leon Lessinger, as assistant US Commissioner for Elementary and Secondary Schools, pronounced the wonderful capacity of private businesses to satisfy both public demands and government objectives. In what the education scholar Carol Ascher terms, “a forgotten experiment in school privatization,” Lessinger prompted the creation of the first partnerships between private businesses and public schools in 1970 in carefully chosen school districts across the country (Ascher 1996; Lessinger 1970). Lessinger explains his conviction that private industry will provide a superior structure of accountability in education, and, significantly, describes the private company as the solution to the need for variability in institutions of education. “The word ‘accountability’ like the word ‘responsibility’ has a solid ring. The word suggests strength, order and a simple resolution to complex and baffling situations” (Lessinger 1970).
One “baffling situation” that Lessinger’s vision of the accountability of private companies proposed to solve was community mobilization for a different kind of learning institution, one that would have “greater freedom to innovate” (Lessinger 1970). Lessinger describes the process by which his plan might be implemented as follows: “A public authority grants money to a local educational agency to contract with private enterprise to achieve specific goals [such as] bringing the underprivileged and undereducated up to competitive educational levels, helping the students whose mother tongue is not English…” (Lessinger 1970). This, along with the promise of innovation, was the marketing of the private education industry to community groups as an answer to their demands. Furthermore, Lessinger hints to the potential skeptic in public office that the private company is the best possible mediator between public institutions and politically active community groups, because it is not vulnerable to community pressure. Referring to the importance of managing “At the community level, the vested interests of powerful groups…,” Lessinger describes the role of the involved company:

…the [Management Support Group (MSG)], acting as a buffer between the [Local Education Agency (LEA)] and these interest groups, both within and outside the school system, can obtain such information in an effective and politically advantageous manner (e.g. the superintendent could point to the MSG as a scapegoat if specific ideas or recommendations are not accepted by the Board) (Lessinger 1970).

For the activist parent, the private company proposes to offer the possibility of a better and more innovative educational institution, with the freedom to be completely different from traditional schools. For the government official, the private company’s
involvement in education will be a buffer against the power of politicized community groups. Lessinger stresses the potential of private educational institutions to implement educational change that is “nondisruptive” and “politically palatable” (Lessinger 1970).

Lessinger’s vision is the realization of the possibility of education to be a directly productive industry. Private companies that entered the education industry through Lessinger’s experiment did so because they concurred with his understanding that participating in the education of children had suddenly become immensely profitable. Not only would the “MSG” channel funds from a public education budget to its own private assets, but infinite opportunities for investment and profit had emerged in the collection of public opinion, the evaluation of private companies’ success in relation to existing schools, the tracking of students’ progress, the facilitation of education companies responsiveness to parent and teacher demands, etc. In imagining a privately-owned instrument that he terms an “Independent Educational Accomplishment Audit” [IEAA], Lessinger writes, “It is built around a financial core since money is a common denominator for the heterogeneous elements of inputs, but its focus is upon student attitudes, skills, and knowledge” (Lessinger 1970). In other words, the newly privatized instruments of education could convert the knowledge of students into the “common denominator” of money. Lessinger sees the potential for growth in the privatized
education industry to be as infinite as the capacity of students to think and imagine and form opinion:

Out of the IEAA, a whole range of useful by-products are anticipated. First, it may lead to a knowledge of optimum relationships between outputs and inputs, e.g. the “critical mass” in funding different types of compensatory programs. Second, it can form a basis for the discovery and improvement of good practice in education. Third, the IEAA creates the need for performance-type contracting and/or budgeting in the basic academic and vocational skill areas. Finally, it can renew credibility in the educational process by effecting more responsiveness to the needs of children and supplying the understanding necessary to produce change (Lessinger 1970).

Lessinger’s description of the myriad ways in which private companies might involve themselves in the education process for a profit demonstrates the “real subsumption” of productive processes that are not capitalist in origin: students’ thoughts, a school’s responsiveness to children, the development of understanding and of the production of basic skills. All of these become sites for intervention by private companies and for the accumulation of value.

Educational policy documents from the 1970s also mark an awareness among educators themselves that the future of the institution of education in the US after the 60s is inseparable from the potential profitability of education for business investors. There is growing consensus in the early 70s that the traditional government-funded school has lost its relevance in a changing economy. Two presentations made by educational scholars to business investors in the early 70s provide insight into educators’ concerns regarding the increasing obsolescence of schools, and their efforts to reimagine
and recreate the school as an integral, rather than negligible, part of the new
“knowledge industry.” The national Council on Anthropology and Education (CAE)
writes that a new system of “delivering education to people” will likely bypass the school with technological advancement. “The beginning signs are already there... It may be that the industry as a whole will develop faster than schools can change to meet new markets…” (B. Anderson, Lipton, and Morros 1975). The CAE members facetiously write that they would “sell” the Council’s stock in education if they could (B. Anderson, Lipton, and Morros 1975). Similarly, in a presentation entitled, “Education as an Economic Investment,” Professor of Education Administration, Jerry H. Robbins suggests that the business investor would do well to think of the institution of the school as a site for “developing the means whereby knowledge may be used,” rather than a site for the creation of knowledge (Robbins 1972):

The traditional view of the school as an intellectual skill center cannot be expected to produce solutions to the critical problems that we face in this century... The electronic age has produced knowledge in such abundance that there is now infinitely more knowledge available outside the school than within it. We are fighting a losing battle if we insist upon competing in the knowledge-producing race (Robbins 1972).

Both documents cite the adverse effects of “deschooling” and “militant groups” to the future of the school (B. Anderson, Lipton, and Morros 1975; Robbins 1972).

The intention of the documents is not to decry the end of schooling, however, but to convince business investors that an investment in a restructuring of schools will be profitable for them. The authors of the document are interested in saving their jobs and
their relevance, and thus attempt to sell a vision of an altered educational institution that will be more suited to competition in a developing “knowledge industry” (B. Anderson, Lipton, and Morros 1975). “We could take action to make the stock more attractive, inducing increased speculation in schooling. This campaign should lead people to continue to demand access to schooling” (B. Anderson, Lipton, and Morros 1975). To that end, the CAE recommends specific alterations that could be made to education in order to make it profitable for the investors: 1. Increase the capacity of the education industry to be a market for its own “products,” stipulating for example that teachers of primary and secondary education should have master’s degrees, and that every successful PhD candidate should complete a postdoc before proceeding on to a permanent academic career, 2. Stress the concepts of “accountability” and “career education” in order to “…divert public attention away from the role of schools as gatekeepers,” and “…convey to the public the image that schools were doing something about providing needed skills to their children,” 3. Seek out new markets: “Handicapped children, who, for all the good intentions of our profession have been overlooked for more pleasant surroundings, seem to be a current fad” (B. Anderson, Lipton, and Morros 1975). The logic behind these suggestions is clear: in order to preserve their jobs and significance, education researchers and administrators

4 The probable revulsion that students and teachers might feel to the phrasing of these suggestions aside, all three points are descriptive of the education industry as it has since developed in the US.
purposefully attempted to sell education to private investors, through an advertising campaign based in the notion that educational institutions merited saving for their capacity to be profitable for private investors.

The promotion of specific educational policies by business investors was not a new phenomenon\(^5\), what was new was the concept that education could be profitable in itself, and not as a source of labor development. Antonio Negri, in his own work and in his work with Michael Hardt, draws on Marx’s distinction between “formal” and “real” subsumption in capitalism in a well-known and compelling explication of the transformation in the production after the sixties. Subsumption, in Marxist terminology, is the process by which capital assumes control of productive processes that are not originally capitalist in character, distinguishing between two kinds of subsumption, formal and real. Though Marx first makes use of the terms “formal” and “real” in The Economic Manuscripts of 1861-63\(^6\), it is in The Grundrisse that he posits a distinction

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5 See Molnar 1996; Rose 2009
6 In The Economic Manuscripts, Marx distinguishes between formal and real subsumption as follows. In formal subsumption, existing non-capitalist production processes, which exist in order to produce some use value, are taken up by capital, and an intensification of the production process for the purpose of expanding surplus labor time occurs. “With the merely formal subsumption of labour under capital, the compulsion to do surplus labour and therewith on the one hand to create needs and the means to satisfy those needs, and on the other hand to produce in quantities which go beyond the measure of the worker’s traditional needs—and the creation of free time for development, independently of material production—merely takes on a different form from that of earlier modes of production, but it is a form which heightens the continuity and intensity of labour, increases production, is favourable to the development of variations in labour capacity and accordingly to the differentiation of kinds of labour and modes of gaining a living (Marx 1863). In real subsumption, on the other hand, this tendency of capital to produce for production’s sake (rather than for any preexisting need) is finally completely established. Whereas in formal subsumption, the worker is
between the subsumption by capital of basic labor processes and the subsumption by capital of society more generally, and it is this distinction that Negri applies in his analysis of the transition of the 60s and 70s. Negri refers to passages in *The Grundrisse* in which Marx notes a melting down of the distinction between circulating and productive capital, in order to articulate the crucial difference between capitalist production in which society is not subsumed, in which “*the labor process is taken as a simple element of the process of valorization,*” and a second point in which “*productive capital extends into*...

...forced to perform surplus labor, and the products of labor confront the worker as capital; in real subsumption, all social forms of labor are transformed into capital in relation to the worker: “...vis-à-vis the workers, realised science appears in the machine as capital. And in fact all these applications of science, of the forces of nature and of large masses of products of labour — applications based on social labour — appear only as means of exploitation of labour, means of appropriating surplus labour, hence, vis-à-vis labour, as forces belonging to capital. Capital naturally employs all these means only to exploit labour, but in order to exploit labour, it must employ them in production. And thus the development of the social productive powers of labour and the conditions for this development appear as the work of capital, and not only does the individual worker relate passively to this work, it also takes place in antagonism to him (Marx 1863). Hardt and Negri explain that “Marx uses the term ‘formal subsumption’ to refer to processes whereby capital incorporates under its own relations of production laboring practices that originated outside its domain” (Hardt and Negri 2000). Formal subsumption is the process by which capital aligns existing productive labor with the wage-labor relation, without changing other aspects of the labor process. Real subsumption, in distinction, refers to processes by which “the integration of labor into capital becomes more intensive than extensive and society is ever more completely fashioned by capital” (Hardt and Negri 2000). That is, whereas previously capital subsumed a production process without transforming all aspects of that process, now the production process in its entirety including and especially the social relations that contribute to increased productivity are transformed into capital. In this way, reproduction itself becomes immediately part of the production process: “…the entire context of reproduction is subsumed under capitalist rule... reproduction and the vital relationships that constitute it themselves become directly productive” (Hardt and Negri 2000).

7 For Negri, this is the distinction that Marx later expands in his conceptualization of formal and real subsumption. “Real subsumption can’t but be (in the same moment) real subsumption of society, in other words of the productive social forces... Here circulation appears as productive capital by taking the form of planning and of control of the reproduction of society. The subsumption of society has become the production of that same society...” (Negri 1984).
circulation” (Negri 1984). In his interpretation of capitalism after the 60s, Negri posits that capital has subsumed society to the point that “circulating capital appears as productive capital by taking the form of planning and of control of the reproduction of society. The subsumption of society has become the production of that same society” (Negri 1984).

Jason Read expands on Hardt and Negri’s analysis of the different characteristics of capitalist production before and after the late 1960s and early 1970s in his explanation of what does not change in real subsumption: the ownership of the means of production, in this case social space itself, remains with the capitalist class. Therefore, the capitalist must continuously and vigilantly assert the private ownership of social space. The production of subjectivity, not in its essence a capitalist process, is subsumed in “really” capitalist production when the capitalist compels labor as an abstract social force to act on the privatized fixed capital of the social space to produce value that can be appropriated by the owners of the social space. “With real subsumption, it is the city or social space itself that occupies the place of fixed capital… social space, especially the city, can be seen as an immense archive of immaterial labor…” (Read 2003). In capitalist production after the predominance of real subsumption, living labor is socialized to act on the privatized archive of “dead” immaterial labor (fixed capital) to continuously produce new ways of living, thinking etc., that entail a surplus for the capitalist. Real
subsumption occurs as long as there are ‘noncapitalist’ forms of subjectivity production to be dispossessed of the means of production, social spaces. Social spaces are continuously created anew, particularly in the city, and are continuously, violently appropriated by the capitalist in order to compel immaterial labor to apply itself to producing for capital.

4.3.2 Subjectivities of Control

Within the body of work on real subsumption, and on new forms of production that involve making profitable life “outside” of work, substantial thought has been given to the question of how people in education and in other sites of “immaterial” production are put to work for capital. Before moving on to the question of what else education in the current conjuncture does, it is worth pausing within the framework of real subsumption to consider the position of the immaterial laborer. To the extent that the school is profitable, production in school is the production of the particular subjectivity of the immaterial laborer, who in turn plays a role in facilitating the other functions of the education system. In this section, I will touch on the analyses of Jason Read, “Bifo” Berardi and Maurizio Lazzarato.

One of Read’s major points is that in putting collective creativity to work in production, capital relies on a process that it can never entirely control: “The capitalist mode of production may strive toward ‘the end of history,’ an ideal state in which
subjectivity is produced only to occupy its slot within the networks of production and consumption; but this ideal state is a material impossibility” (Read 2003). For Read, there is a constant and ever-growing conflict between the “collective productivity/production of subjectivity and the continual attempt on the part of capital to reduce this production to the valorization of existing capital” (Read 2003). In the attempt to reduce all collective productivity of life to the valorization of capital, capitalist production must secure ownership of the “fixed capital” of already-produced subjectivity, which is in fact not “fixed” at all, but takes the form of the city or social space. In order to dominate the immense productivity of social space, which can, in essence, never be owned by a capitalist class, capital must both interiorize control in the creation of subjectivities permeated by the production process, and must extend control across all aspects of the production process, meaning that production is often structured entirely through control (Read 2003). In both cases, the creation of control is directly productive rather than reproductive for capital⁸. As part of the process of extension of control, the institution of education becomes directly productive for capital in part in the way that it is put to work as fixed capital for the extension of control of other fixed capital (the social space more generally). As part of the process of the interiorization of control, the school contributes to the production of subjectivities that can be mobilized as ‘controlled’ fixed

⁸ That is, as discussed above, the creation of control becomes one part of the production of subjectivities in which surplus value is realized directly, and does not simply serve to reproduce the working class.
capital, not by directly instilling them in students, necessarily, but by serving as a massive advertising campaign for the making-desirable of specific subjectivities.

The subsumption of the cooperative practice of education for private profit involves both the implementation of new versions of privately-managed schools, and a dissemination of strategies of control. The aspect of control necessary for capital to reduce processes of subjectivity production to a site of accumulation for capital is the “interiorization” of control in the subjectivity of the individual. Theorists of immaterial labor have explored the way in which control, for the individual, functions through forced communication, or the imperative to “become subjects” (Lazzarato 1996; Read 2003). Through the work of Franco “Bifo” Berardi, it is possible to define three overlapping forces that contribute to the coerced communicativity of each individual laborer: 1. The way in which, as individual desires become productive for capital, individual workers become emotionally attached to their own exploitation, 2. The rapid acceleration of a digital and informational economy that subjects humans to cognitive overload, and “nervous incentives to act,” and 3. A constant sense of inter-individual competition and the need to take up “self-enterprising responsibility” (Berardi 2009). The interiorization of these tendencies within the individual subjectivity makes the subjectivity into an element of fixed capital that can be mobilized by generalized social.
labor for the production of more aspects of subjectivity (in knowledge production, consumption, leisure, etc.) (Read 2003).

In further consideration of the way in which control mechanisms force communication and subjectivity production, Randy Martin and Suely Rolnik have conceptualized ‘risk’ as a mechanism for the coercion of self-creation. A sense of risk as a quantifiable factor in the lives of both individuals and financial entities urges ‘preventative’ actions that are themselves productive for capital:

The self-managerial entailments and exclusions that finance sets in motion reveal a fuller extension of labor into many habits of life. People are to ponder their financial security into the wee hours and work their investment portfolios, consumer debt, and accruals for their retirement and their children’s college tuition accordingly (Martin 2007).

A subjectivity of risk-management, along with risk itself, can be activated for capital production because it contributes to the mobility and creativity of a labor force deprived of a constant location and means of subsistence (Martin 2007; Rolnik 2009).  

Individuals who are able to take part in self-management and risk-management become

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9 In an interview conducted by the Argentinean “Militant Research Collective,” Colectivo Situaciones, Suely Rolnik explains, “It is the subjectivity that lives fragilized to whom is directed the religious promise of capital. This person that is in crisis… turns out to be very vulnerable to the advertising message… And there enters the material dimension of capitalist production, because I am going to have to consume in my daily life all of the services and goods possible, I am going to buy clothes for my body and designs for my house, I am going to do an infinity of workshops and exercises to be marvelous as a woman and with my own strong subjectivity I am going to be capable of reconstructing my life” (Rolnik 2009).
the “ideal kind of beings” from the perspective of global finance and immaterial production: the “arbitrageurs” (Martin 2007).

Qualities advertised by CMOs and charter schools as the products of their education include competitiveness and entrepreneurship. The Cosmos Foundation describes the “culture of constructive competition” offered by its Harmony Schools (Cosmos Foundation 2011). The suggestively-named Entrepreneurship Preparatory School, a single charter school in Cleveland, describes its curriculum in entrepreneurship education, which “teaches students how to approach life with a creative and success-minded outlook…” (Entrepreneurship Preparatory School 2008). It is not traditional entrepreneurship of bootstraps business that these schools promote.

Thus the largest Charter Management and Education Management Organizations proclaim their adeptness at encouraging students’ capacities to be self-managing, self-directed in their learning, competitive with other students, etc. By advertising these kinds of subjectivities, the schools sell the imperative to produce them, the imperative to ‘become subjects’ that is the essence of control in an economy that capitalizes on the production of subjectivity. The most well-funded charter schools tout their own competency in producing self-managing subjectivities in ways that so-called traditional schools do not. Students in KIPP schools, for example, sign a commitment stating that they will be responsible for their own behavior; KIPP’s website explains, “No one is assigned or forced to attend a KIPP school. Everyone must make and uphold a commitment to the school and to each other to put in the time and effort required to achieve success” (KIPP Foundation 2011a). Likewise, the CMO Aspire Public Schools describes the “Advisory Curriculum” that is a part of every Aspire student’s education. The curriculum itself includes “Taking personal responsibility,” and “Building a cycle of success in setting and achieving goals.” In a list of “additional skills” fostered in advisory, Aspire includes “Time management,” “Resiliency/stress management,” and “Self-coaching skills” (Aspire Public Schools 2011). The strong emphasis on individual responsibility and self-management of all varieties is the schools' website publicity is a result of the relevance of these skills to the further valorization of all kinds of cultural processes by capital. The production of self-management is itself a valorizing process and the further valorization of subjectivity production will be facilitated by the self-managing subjectivities.
however, so much as the subjectivity of the arbitrageur explored by Martin in *Empire of Indifference*:

Leverage takes precedence over ownership, and the arbitrageur, one who preys on marginal fluctuations in price, balances with alacrity where once the entrepreneur stood fast. Whereas the entrepreneur decided for himself, the arbitrageur is embedded in the decisions of others, surfing the waves of decision and deriving unseen value from the undertow. The entrepreneur respects the boundary between property and speculation. The arbitrageur can no longer. No more moving property on and off the market, speculation has moved in full time. In the process of securitization, financial reason assembles these little bits of value, these tiny interventions, and links them to a universe of exchange (Martin 2007).

Students at numerous charter schools supposedly learn to navigate the treacherous waters of an ever-changing global economy. The CMO American Quality Schools explains, “Today’s children face a complex and troubling world sometimes filled with uncertainties. The traits that we hope to instill are neither readily apparent nor easy to grasp and put into practice… the self-esteem, energy, and knowledge necessary to survive…” (American Quality Schools Corporation 2011).

Furthermore, for Martin, “risk management” is the means by which the otherwise unquantifiable excess of social relations is made profitable for capital because by producing subjectivities engaged in the activity of risk management, finance ensures that at least a portion of the global population may be mobilized for the protection of profit against the danger of less-manageable and less-capitalist forms of subjectivity production. In this sense, the language of risk that is pervasive in education, and in the production of those subjectivities that will participate in immaterial production suggests
that part of the process of the internalization of control in the immaterial laborer is the creation of an awareness of a need to manage others and to manage a “risky” situation, the crisis of capitalism.

4.4 Education as Theft

It may, in that case, be useful to think of market capitalization in the US education industry in another way. There is evidence that the “industry” of education in fact operates primarily to reallocate rather than produce wealth. In much of his work describing the present economic situation in the US, David Harvey focuses on the way in which neoliberal policies of privatization, financialization, management and manipulation of crises and state redistribution serve to shift wealth especially from poor sectors of the population to the wealthiest members of society. Citing Marx, he states that this form of “accumulation by dispossession” has always been an aspect of capitalist domination and wealth: because “…no sooner does the worker receive ‘his wages in cash, than he is set upon by the other portions of the bourgeoisie, the landlord, the shopkeeper, the pawnbroker etc.’” (Marx and Engels in Harvey 2012). He attempts to show, however, that these practices of dispossession are especially pertinent to the present moment, in that they are more crucial now globally to the acquisition of wealth

11 Of course, primitive accumulation is nothing other than dispossession, and capitalism is therefore founded on dispossession. Harvey analyzes the dispossession of surplus wealth produced within the framework of capital, previously distributed to a poor or working class.
than any form of production (Harvey 2012). It is possible in this context to read the education “industry” as one of several methods for the transfer of wealth from the poorest members of society and from public holdings into finance.

The transformation of education in US cities involves the unprecedented channeling of resources from public or community ownership to private ownership, in the form of real estate and tax dollars. Many sociologists and education scholars have described the role of charter schooling in promoting a specific kind of urban development that caters to the consumptive practices of a majority-white upper class, and that tends to push majority black and Latino working class city residents out of city centers. Critical journalists have also researched the way in which reform toward charter school funnels resources upward. Glen Ford of Black Agenda Report consistently highlights that the Obama administration’s “Race to the Top” program for state school reform takes money, in the form of public funding and real estate, out of public education and redirects it to private investors: “dollars diverted from already tight public school budgets” (Ford 2013). Sam Smith of The Progressive Review writes that the charter school functions above all as a strategy for the marketing of cities to wealthier, whiter individuals and families and to corporations (Smith 2010). The “point” of charter schooling, in Smith’s analysis, is to “create a political illusion that would support the city’s myth, sell real estate, and attract new residents and businesses” (Smith 2010).
Smith refers primarily to the process by which the introduction of charter schools contributed to the gentrification of Washington DC, but others’ research supports Smith’s assertion that charter schools have a similar function across US cities.12

The case of school reform in Chicago provides an unambiguous example of the way in which the opening of charter schools shifts already-existing wealth from the poor and working class city residents and public control to real estate developers, business-class administrators and for-profit management companies. In an essay criticizing President Obama’s selection of Arne Duncan as Secretary of Education, Kenneth Saltman and Henry A. Giroux write that Arne Duncan’s plan as “CEO” of the Chicago Public School System incited Chicago residents’ criticism for his Renaissance 2010 plan, which proposed the dismantling of 15 percent of Chicago’s “underachieving” schools and the creation of 100 new experimental schools. Saltman and Giroux write,

…diverse critics have denounced [the Renaissance 2010 plan] as a scheme less designed to improve the quality of schooling than as a plan for privatization, union busting and the dismantling of democratically-elected local school councils. They also describe it as part of neighborhood gentrification schemes involving the privatization of public housing projects through mixed finance developments. (Tony Rezko, an Obama and Blagojevich campaign supporter, made a fortune from these developments along with

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12 Journalist Daniel Wolff has also researched the connections between investment in real estate and charter school reform, questioning companies such as Entertainment Properties Trust, a real estate trust that has invested over $170 million in more than twenty charter schools, and previously focused on investment in real estate for movie theaters (Wolff 2009). Juan Gonzalez and Elaine Magliaro have also looked specifically at charter schools and real estate profit in Albany, and the nationally-operating company Imagine Schools Inc., respectively (Magliaro 2013). “Public” charter schools are thus positioned to pay rent to private landlords, in some cases after public property has been sold to the landlord in the first place, thus redistributing a city’s wealth toward private investors and away from public ownership.
many corporate investors.) Some of the dimensions of public school privatization involve Renaissance schools being run by subcontracted for-profit companies—a shift in school governance from teachers and elected community councils to appointed administrators coming disproportionately from the ranks of business (Giroux and Saltman 2008).13

The Chicago Teachers Union also published a more recent statement in response to the school closings of 2013 making note of the benefits of the plan to private investors and businesses, using the example of a plan proposed by Bruce Rauner, former chairman of a Chicago-based private equity firm and former chairman of the Chicago Public Education Fund:

If enacted, Rauner’s plan would raise about $200 million in equity, borrow $600 million and purchase 100 CPS schools that the investor group would then lease to charter operators. In such a plan, the investor group would reap two benefits: First, they would receive steady streams of revenue from the leases, and second, they could claim tax credits from depreciation on the buildings... Public schools buildings would be sold to private individuals… The public would ultimately pay to lease back its own buildings... (Caref et al. 2012).

The “emergency management” of Detroit Public Schools serves as another immediate, glaring example of upward redistribution in the guise of education reform. Michigan’s Education Achievement Authority, established by a bill passed in 2011, created a separate, statewide school district with the authority to operate independently of the elected State Board of Education, ostensibly for the purpose of assuming control of “failing” schools. The Department of Education awarded the for-profit EAA a $35

13 This year, Chicago Public Schools has made plans to close 53 elementary schools, despite the objections of teachers and community members, and evidence that the replacement schools do not demonstrate improved test scores (Ahmed-Ullah, Coen, and Richards 2013).
million grant for its expansion, and Michigan House Bill 6004 gave the Authority the legal right to seize unused school buildings and force the sale or lease of buildings to charter, nonpublic or EAA schools (M. Maynard 2012; Lyons 2012). The more recent House Bill 4369 expands the reach of the EAA’s oversight to up to 50 schools across the state (Lyons 2013). The creation of the EAA is consistent with the subsequent “emergency management” of the government of other cities in Michigan, including Detroit, where the emergency manager Kevyn Orr has utilized his power to outsource formerly public services to private contractors and sell city assets (“Michigan Gov. Puts Detroit Under Emergency Fiscal Management” 2013; Howes 2013). In the case of Detroit, the emergency management of the school system appears as a kind of “rehearsal” for the authorization of private takeover of public assets more generally.14 I will say more on the case of Detroit in the section below on “Education as Prison.”

There are other examples of cities in which an investment strategy15 involving school “reform” has facilitated this transfer of resources from poor black communities to white communities and private developers: Washington DC, Atlanta, New York, New

14 The implementation of emergency management of Detroit Public Schools preceded the most recent instantiation of emergency management of Michigan’s cities by six months (Michigan Department of Treasury 2013), under Public Act 436 of 2012. The previous emergency management law in Michigan, Public Act 72, similar to emergency management laws in other states, did not revoke the authority of local, elected officials (Michigan Radio Newsroom 2011).
Orleans; it is not necessary to go into all of them in depth.\(^\text{16}\) At stake, to paraphrase Sam Smith is that school reform might have less to do with schooling, and more to do with the dispossession of the wealth of poor and working class communities by wealthier, whiter groups.

In an interview with the radio program *Against the Grain*, Harvey reasserts that private appropriation of public wealth and the wealth of poor classes is the dominant form of accumulation in the current conjuncture:

> You take a look at the world and some people are getting extremely rich right now. How are they getting rich? Are they getting rich because they are contributing to a global economy in productive ways or are they getting rich because they are taking away other people's rights? If you look at the history of things such as Enron, you see that a lot of wealth is being accumulated in the world right now by dispossessing others of their rights and their wealth and it could be natural resources as in Iraq, or in Bolivia or Chiapas, or... pension funds and so on. You could look at something like eminent domain in this country right now, something that is now being used to take away people's property so the developers of Wal-Mart can build a new store or a shopping mall. A whole pattern is emerging... (Harvey 2010).

The widespread “reform” of education, as advocated by billionaires, Republican and Democratic politicians alike, corresponds to this pattern. Even more than the implementation of eminent domain in the US, the conversion of “traditional public

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\(^{16}\) As stated by Elder Helen Moore of the Keep the Vote No Takeover Coalition stated in August: “Twenty different states have joined in... our assessment after a number of meetings has been that districts with Black and Brown children are being treated the same way nationally. They are being discriminated against. Here in Detroit, our children's resources are being stolen by charter schools, the Educational Achievement Authority, and site-based management” (Bukowski 2012).
schools” to charter schools transfers public funds and real estate from the poorest sector of society to the wealthiest.

As Hardt and Negri themselves suggest in Commonwealth, it may be that such an analysis complements rather than contradicts the analysis made possible via the concept of “real subsumption,” and that the issue is one of emphasis. In fact, they write, real subsumption is another, more specifically useful way of thinking of accumulation by dispossession, because the productive activities of the common that are subsumed are not capitalist in origin, but are parasitized by capital. They argue that it is important to go beyond the notion of dispossession, in applying the concept of subsumption, in order to understand what is productive in the common: that the commons is robbed not only of existing wealth, but also of its ongoing productivity. “Biopolitical exploitation involves the expropriation of the common, in this way, at the level of social production and social practice. Capital thus captures and expropriates value through biopolitical exploitation that is produced, in some sense, externally to it” (Hardt and Negri 2009). Hardt and Negri choose to emphasize the ongoing theft of the productivity of the common over the theft of existing wealth. I argue that although capital currently exploits the productive processes of noncapitalist cooperation, as discussed above, it is also the case that capital robs those cooperating of their previously accumulated, material resources, and in the process destroys the very possibility of cooperation. The next
section of this chapter looks at primary and secondary education in relation to the prison system, in order to posit a relationship between education reform and control of those who are not controlled with the framework of immaterial labor.

4.5 Education as Prison

A simultaneous and related phenomenon in schooling ‘reform’ in the past decades has been an increasing militarization of non-charter schools in poor areas. Though these schools do also participate in the education industry, they do so in another way. They do not produce the fixed capital of immaterial labor, and they do not serve as a massive advertising campaign for education brands and subjectivities, though they do also participate in the consumption of curriculum, tests etc. A crucial function of these schools, however, is in their relation to the strategies of control that Randy Martin and Jason Read have described as necessary for the constant containment of the incalculable excess inherent in contemporary production, and that the sociologist Loïc Wacquant describes in *Punishing the Poor*. As discussed above, the effort to accumulate profit from the social production of subjectivity is always a dangerous endeavor for capital. Control of these processes is never entirely stable, because social creation necessarily exceeds capital’s capacity to accumulate the products of that creation. In his exploration of the meaning of the term “at risk,” Martin explains:

Some aspect of difference gets reincorporated into cultural commodities, niche markets (that fall into a demographics of style delineating those interested in hip-hop or golf), and
expanded demand (for the legions of new consumer goods). Yet there is also a
remainder, an unabsorbable share made tangible in some bodily mass or population that
imagines life beyond the induced scarcities of the profit-taking market.

The incalculable is that which cannot be subsumed by capital, because it cannot
be reduced to a commodity form, because it is an actual, viable life.

Those who profit least from the processes of real subsumption, who have the
least ‘invested’ in the financial accumulation of human life, are also least susceptible to
the interiorization of control described by Berardi, Read, Lazzarato and theorists of
immaterial labor. These individuals are the “at risk,” and their creative capacities
prove the intervention of management, of the arbitrageur, but also of violent force.
The issue is not that the people who benefit least from real subsumption are not
productive for capital; rather, they are both extremely productive17 in the sense of
creating the difference that capitalism attempts to subsume, and also constantly
threatening to create a life so different that it will alter established power relations.
Capital cannot forget the ‘at risk,’ even if it would like to, and so public school is
militarized and the prison population grows exponentially.

The neoliberal state’s dependence on extreme systems of containment and
external control becomes apparent in Wacquant’s exploration of the expansion of the US
carceral system after the rise of neoliberalism. For Wacquant, the penal state is a

17 Naomi Klein gives one example of how productive the “unemployed” can be in her description of the
practice of “cool hunting” in No Logo (Klein 2000).
response to ubiquitous social and mental insecurity, directed at the neutralization and warehousing of a surplus working class that is likely to rebel against societal structures.

The penal state also functions

...by raising the cost of strategies of escape or resistance that drive young men from the lower class into the illegal sectors of the street economy... [serving] the symbolic mission of reaffirming the authority of the state and the newfound will of political elites to emphasize and enforce the sacred border between... the ‘deserving’ and the ‘undeserving’ poor (Wacquant 2009).

Wacquant writes that the contemporary state system has three strategies available to it for responding to practices deemed undesirable: 1. Socialization, asserting the responsibility of the state in addressing all social ills, 2. Medicalization, the definition of an unacceptable practice as an individual pathology, and 3. Penalization, reducing individuals to noncitizens and establishing a “judicial garbage disposal into which the human refuse of the market society are thrown” (Wacquant 2009). These three strategies are combined in political struggle for the preservation and spread of neoliberalism, and against the conception of an alternative life or reality, the racial “crisis” of the 1960s, and the ideology that people have a life in common (Wacquant 2009; El Kilombo Intergaláctico 2012).

The economy’s dependence on penal institutions, and on institutions of violent external control of individuals and groups that might otherwise successfully resist the accumulation of their creativity, entails a third kind of “theft,” in conjunction with, but different from the theft that occurs in the context of real subsumption (theft of the
commons, produced outside of capital) or accumulation by dispossession (theft of existing wealth). This third process is the prevention of the creation of alternatives, the theft of the possibility of what could be called a “commons.” Wacquant approaches this concept of a theft of possibility in his discussion of the “loss of the ‘buffering function’” of the ghetto. He writes that the ghetto of 1915 to 1968 in the US North was “Janus-faced,” enforcing hostility and exclusion, but also a “capacity to buffer its residents from external forces… a sheltered space for collective sustenance and self-affirmation…” (Wacquant 2001). This form of the ghetto existed in the “heyday of the Fordist-Keynesian era” (Wacquant 2001), when residents of the ghetto were employed as menial laborers for industrial production. After the decline of industrial production, a ghetto that allows for the creation of forms of collective sustenance entails substantial risk to the existing power structure, as we have seen. It is in this context that the ghetto “…has devolved into a one-dimensional machinery for naked relegation” (Wacquant 2001).

The vacuum created by the crumbling of the ghetto’s indigenous organizations has been filled by state bureaucracies of social control, themselves largely staffed by the new black middle class whose expansion hinges, not on its capacity to service its community, but on its willingness to assume the vexing role of custodian of the black urban subproletariat on behalf of white society (Wacquant 2001).

This transformation of ghetto to hyperghetto occurred not for the purpose of increasing exploitation of blacks as workers, but in relation to crisis and the need to restrain those populations deemed unemployable. This restraint took the form of a destruction of collective creation, or a “theft” of the possibility of collective creation. This
is the underlying theft of possibility that allows for the ongoing upward redistribution of material resources (El Kilombo Intergaláctico 2012).

Wacquant primarily addresses the penal state and prisons in the US. However, if we think of the traditional public school as increasingly an extension of the penal state, it is possible to recognize the penal school as equally a political strategy mobilized against the “at risk,” and for the preservation of current processes of accumulation. Wacquant’s description of the hyperghetto, which “now serves the negative economic function of storage of a surplus population devoid of market utility, in which respect it also increasingly resembles the prison system” (Wacquant 2001) could just as easily apply to the militarized public school. The emerging schools are not the same as the schools that are “directly” productive of immaterial labor; they do not advertise or produce subjectivities of internalized control. They are instead fundamentally repressive. Associate Professor of Social and Cultural Foundations in Education at

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18 The urban legend of a correlation between illiteracy rates and a state’s projection of how many prison beds it will need takes on meaning only in its demonstration of the close affiliation between ‘public school’ and prison in the current social reality.

19 And, indeed, on public schools in Chicago’s “hyperghetto,” Wacquant writes not only of their physical similarity to prisons, but of their function: “Indeed, it appears that the main purpose of these schools is simply to ‘neutralize’ youth considered unworthy and unruly by holding them under lock for the day so that, at minimum, they do not engage in street crime. Certainly it is hard to maintain that educating them is a priority when half of the city’s high schools place in the bottom 1 percent of establishments nationwide on the American College Test and two thirds of ghetto students fail to complete their cursus while those do graduate read on average at the 8th grade level” (Wacquant 2001).
DePaul University, Eunora R. Brown describes the penal school as the second tier of a two-tiered education system in her essay “Freedom for Some, Discipline for ‘Others’”:

While the ‘nonelite’ education at Groundview does not encourage poor African American youth to document or question their oppression, the transmission of power and privilege at Mountainview fosters students’ investment in the existing social order... What prevails is a two-tiered educational system maintained by systemic efforts to quell the stirrings of poor youth of color (Brown 2003).

In the same collection of essays, education policy researchers Pauline Lipman and Pepi Leistyna also describe the way in which the militarization of schools functions as a political strategy that subjects youth of color to violence in order to establish and maintain control of city spaces. For Lipman, the marginalization of youth in militarized schools has everything to do with the gentrification of US cities (Leistyna 2003). Leistyna discusses the obvious correlation between the mass incarceration of people of color and the parallel violent subordination that occurs in schools, quoting students in attendance at an unnamed US high school: “You mean the prison... It’s a joke cause that ain’t no high school. The whole time I was there I got one book” (Leistyna 2003).

There is something beyond the usurpation of real estate that occurs in the closing of public schools. The forced mobility of families, the destruction of neighborhood cohesiveness, and of the safety and proximity that exist within the site of the school20.

20 CPS has ignored parents’ and students’ concerns that the closure of neighborhood schools and the reenrollment of students in schools further from home will subject youth to heightened gang conflict (Perlstein 2013; Burnett 2013).
the destruction of the school as material support for community life, and the militarization of schools that contributes to the criminalization and containment of youth, comprises the “third theft” of the possibility of collectivity. Rick Perlstein gets at this aspect of school closings in his wrenching account in The Nation of students’ dismay at the closing of the middle school, Canter Leadership Academy, which they describe as a place that supports them and values them: “…‘welcoming schools’ is the slyly Orwellian phrase used to describe the buildings where kids from closed schools are being shunted off to. But community, a speaker says, that precious, delicate thing, ‘does not transfer to a welcoming school’” (Perlstein 2013). A high school student group in Detroit called the Social Justice League describes the effect of militarization and carceralization in one of six EAA-run high schools in Detroit: “We were promised equity, choice and reinvention by the EAA. In actuality, we received inequality, restriction, and regression.” They express a fear of attending school, describing security guards who harass students and do not protect them. “We are required to wear our IDs with our student/prisoner numbers around our necks and visible at all times. Security guards walk beside us in the hallway and constantly question us about what we are doing and where we are going” “We are getting half an education in a complete correctional facility” (Walker 2013; Social Justice League 2013). While the closing of schools and relocating of students destroys the possibility of cohesive communities and
supportive schools, militaristic and prison-like school policies operate to contain the growing population of youth thus dispossessed by society.

The destruction of the public school is not just the destruction of the community that exists, but is more importantly the destruction of the community that could be created. It is the destruction of the possibility of an alternative to current society, when the public school might otherwise suggest an autonomous school that would be part of a different organization of life. Perhaps in a moment of societal crisis, the public school system looks too much like a possible support for a renewed effort to pursue a more egalitarian way of life.

In observing the contradiction between students’ needs and policies of ‘reform’ in Chicago, Perlstein writes, “There is that nagging suspicion of a meta-explanation, one that feels almost too awful to contemplate. Destroying the village in order to save it, all in order to rebuild it on a more overclass-friendly foundation” (Perlstein 2013). What is for Perlstein a “nagging suspicion” resonates entirely with Epstein’s analysis of the motivation behind the early, repressive state and business responses to the creation of autonomous schools in New York: “... no longer a matter merely of improving the schools but of saving the city, and perhaps, since the case of New York is typical of all large-city systems, of saving the entire country...” (Epstein 1969). But for whom is the repression of autonomous, community-controlled schools a matter of saving the entire
country? The destruction and carceralization of schools fulfills the fourth and most important function of the contemporary school system in the US: the prevention of alternatives to an overclass.

4.6 Conclusion: Education as It Is and What Could Be

The militarized prison-like schools exist in combination with the charter schools that are more profitable and popular among education ‘reformers’ not because one is gradually or speedily turning into the other, but because they are mutually dependent. As Wacquant demonstrates, the economy as it currently exists strives to maintain some kind of order in conjunction with a penal state that represses potential disturbances, or alternatives that are ‘different’ enough to resist capitalist subsumption. The charter school, as an articulation of the economy as it currently functions, offers both the promise of a more profitable future, and the accumulation of the production of subjectivity at one of the most massive and historically legitimated sites of subjectivity production, the place where youth go to learn. The charter school is the future that guarantees the present: it offers an alternative that is commodifiable and therefore profitable, while promising the possibility of ‘escape’ for the individual from poverty into wealth. The traditional public school meanwhile serves as a warehouse for the poorest youth, populations that might otherwise create their own alternatives, because the charter school is not interested in or capable of accommodating everyone, so much
as advertising the city to a wealthier group of subjectivity consumers. The carceral school, like the prison, is needed for the warehousing of potentially resistant groups. Between these two schools the education system in the US fulfills three major functions: 1. To profit off of collectivity wherever possible, 2. To reallocate existing wealth upward and 3. To repress those who are positioned to construct alternatives.

The education system in the US is indeed in crisis, as people of extremely heterogeneous political agendas have declared for decades. I follow Reyes in arguing that it is in crisis because the framework for which it was created, capitalist production, is itself in crisis, and is not likely to recover the authority to determine the design of societal institutions (Reyes 2012c). The scattered and inconsistent manner in which these models have been applied across the US in the past ten years demonstrates a general uncertainty regarding what kind of societal model will now emerge. The measures of “control” of an ever-growing surplus population, via theft and the interiorization of “control” within the subjectivities of immaterial labor, do not seem in themselves capable of achieving permanent stability. What has been created thus far, from the perspective of the school system, is not a long-term model that engages everyone in a sustainable society. Perhaps it is not too much of a stretch to suggest that the political repressiveness of privatization of schools has increased in relation to the growing instability of the neoliberal model. In a worst-case scenario that has already played out
in Detroit, control of schools might be ceded to private entities in a kind of “practice run” for control of all public institutions for the purpose of restriction of a surplus class.

Just as those who would maintain a familiar power structure attempt to cede control of schools and the public to a private, predatory class in drastic experimentation with new societal forms, others propose new efforts at other kinds of experimentation. There are not many, but a few who suggest that what is needed is not mere resistance against privatization and finance, but disinvestment from existing institutions and attempts at the creation of new ones. It is in this sense that Anselm Jappe suggests schools as a testing ground for new forms of society:

...we have to make such a major leap into the unknown that everyone—understandably—rejects it in principle. But the fact that we are living in such an end of an era also means, despite everything, an unprecedented opportunity... We must not try to save ‘our’ economy and ‘our’ way of life, but force them to disappear as soon as possible, and at the same time give way to something better. We should follow the example of the recent conflicts in the schools and universities: instead of complaining about the reduction of grants for education and research, would it not be better to question the very fact that there would be no education and no research if they were not ‘profitable’?” (Jappe 2013).

Some residents of Detroit affected by the creation of the EAA have begun to think about this “major leap.” Dr. Thomas Pedroni, Associate Professor of Curriculum Studies at Wayne State University, participated with others in a denunciation of the EAA at a Detroit City Council meeting on August 30, 2012. Calling on the representative of the US Department of Education, Peter Cunningham, to cease to support the “neoliberal blueprint” for school reform, Pedroni stated,
You, Excellent Schools Detroit, Michigan Future Schools, EAA, you are the status quo. You defend what has been shown to not work; you defend what fails our kids. You see, the cities in America are talking to each other now... and we’re telling you we don’t want your failed blueprint... The community will bring the real education reform. It will bring the education reform that sends the test companies packing, the educational management organizations packing, the emergency managers packing... And in their place we are making our schools places of joy... Whose burden are you carrying? Whose burden will you carry? Don’t tell us about change and how hard change is if you’re bringing that same status quo blueprint... Say no to war. Say no to the war that’s being waged against our communities and our schools. Stop being part of the status quo, and join us in carrying the burden of real innovation... justice for our youth and our communities (Pedroni 2012).

In agreement, at the same meeting, Chief of Staff for the interim superintendent of Detroit Public Schools, Sherry Gay-Dagnogo drew the connection between the closure of schools and mass incarceration of black youth: “I want to have a true race to the top. I want you to support the people. We are capable of making our own decisions” (Bukowski 2012). More importantly, there are those in Detroit who have begun to form their own educational alternatives, such as the Boggs Educational Center, which cites James Boggs’ 1972 call to action to “…begin the long hard struggle to redefine the fundamental purpose of education... serving the community, governing the cities, and governing the country” (Boggs Educational Center 2009).

In the following and final chapter of the dissertation, I will write more on the relevance of autonomous education to the creation of societal alternatives in the current conjuncture, drawing on Raul Zibechi’s concept of “education in movement” and literary examples of liberatory education for our time.
5. School in the Future

5.1 Return to Autonomy

What kind of education makes sense in the current moment—if we take seriously the situation described by Jappe, Reyes and others, of a global economic system in crisis, incapable of engaging the majority of the world’s population except through ever more desperate strategies of control and containment? Like Jappe, Zibechi asserts that with or without ‘social movements,’ society is in movement: “The spinning top of social change is dancing for itself. We do not know for how long or to where” (Zibechi 2012).

Describing Latin America, he states that three major actors currently contribute to shaping a new social model: a global elite class, governments attempting to move beyond neoliberalism and “social movements”; defining the latter as that which is “building a new world in the breaches that have erupted in the model of domination” (Zibechi 2012), and as the only one of the three that offers a model of social organization with the intention of providing for the lives of those who make up the growing global surplus population. The forms of education that these movements are already creating support the “major leap” that Jappe proposes: a collective commitment to the rejection of existing institutions and to the creation of new ones.

In this chapter, I make use of Raúl Zibechi’s concept of “education in movement,” the examples he draws upon in Latin American movements such as the Movement of the Landless Rural Workers (MST) in Brazil and the Zapatistas in Mexico, as well as
fictional works by Octavia Butler, *Parable of the Sower*, and Samuel Delaney, *Tales of Nevèryön*, to open a discussion on the form of education adequate to the contemporary context. These texts challenge existing models of institutionalized education and posit a form of education that occurs not primarily in the space of the school, but in the activity of creating a way of life, what Zibechi calls “education in movement.” It is my argument that this is the form of education that is needed in the context of the contemporary US, as well.

**5.2 The Pedagogical Relation**

In the second chapter, I referred to Ranciere’s analysis of movements’ resistance to the institution of disciplinary education in the 1960s. Movements organized in objection to role of the school in reproducing societal relations of domination and inequality, and in many cases criticized the pedagogical relation between teacher and student as integral to the reproduction of social relations more generally. Rancière uses the concept of the “pedagogical myth” to refer to the belief reproduced by schools, and criticized by movements: that knowledge is first and essentially the property of the teacher or ‘superior’ (Rancière 1991; Rancière 2011), and echoes the movements of the past in asserting that the exercise of dominating power depends on this claim of knowledge as the property of the powerful. To reiterate:

...the bourgeoisie’s ideological domination was not the result of a social imaginary wherein individuals spontaneously reflected their relations to the conditions of their
existence. It was, instead, the result of the system of material power relations reproduced by different apparatuses. Ideological domination was not exerted on students primarily through the content of courses themselves, or through their spontaneous ideas, but through the concatenation of the forms of selection, transmission, control and use of knowledges” (Rancière 2011).

What is evident in the current context is that the movements of the sixties successfully abolished the institution of the school as the dominant site of the reproduction of the pedagogical myth, but did not succeed in defeating the pervasive influence of the pedagogical myth itself. As Deleuze states in his “Postscript on the Societies of Control,” “Everyone knows…” that the school as an institution of disciplinary society is “finished” (Deleuze 1992). The American public’s faith in the institution of public education has steadily declined since 1972, when Gallup began its now-annual survey of public confidence in a variety of US institutions, from 58% evaluation of “confidence in public schools” to an all-time low of 29% in 2012 (Jones 2012). According to other public opinion polls, more people distrust teachers’ unions than in previous years, and most Americans would evaluate public schools nationally with a grade of “C” or “D” (Strauss 2012; Peterson, Howell, and West 2012). Americans are also increasingly skeptical of higher education; six out of ten respondents to a survey by the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education believe that colleges and universities are concerned with profit rather than pedagogical goals, agreeing that institutions of higher education “could take a lot more students without lowering quality or raising prices” (Immerwahr and Johnson 2010).
Proponents of education “reform” in the US since the 1960s, interested in furthering the three “functions” of education: profit, theft of existing resources and containment, have encouraged and exploited distrust in teachers and schools in order to facilitate school privatization. Scholar Michael Potash draws this connection between the movements of the 60s and the exploitation of distrust for privatization by finance, investment and real estate industries in an essay on the privatization of public education. He writes, “The 1960s ushered in a change in the national consciousness that challenged the existing contract between the greater population and traditional authority figures” (Potash 2012). In the context of the school, the challenge to institutional authority was put to work by those who took an interest in profiting off of the destruction of the institution. At the historical moment when education no longer served the purpose of reinforcing relations of authority, nor that of training industrial workers, “The decision had been made that education for the masses was only useful when commodified and privatized for the enrichment of corporate executives and stock holders. To that end, publically funded education would be made to fail in order to facilitate its takeover by business interests” (Potash 2012).

Since the 60s, the knowledge of “resistance” to education has been put to use repeatedly for the goals of privatization and containment. In his foundational text on voucher schools, Milton Friedman denounces a government that denies black parents
living in urban areas the capacity to control their schools: “For schooling, this sickness [‘of an over-governed society’] has taken the form of denying many parents control over the kind of schooling their children receive, either directly... or indirectly, through local political activity” (Friedman and Friedman 1979). The Friedmans go on to write that a voucher system will benefit black communities “most:” “It would give them control over the schooling of their children, eliminate domination by both the city-wide politicians and, even more important, the entrenched educational bureaucracy...” (Friedman and Friedman 1979). As is adequately demonstrated by the forms of political organization that have adopted the voucher system as a platform, Friedman’s vision definitively promotes racial inequality rather than the stated goal of equitable education, and yet the vision is dependent on the previous struggles of people of color in its rhetoric.

The language of the movements continues to circulate amongst advocates of privatized charter schooling and in the language utilized by some of the largest Charter

1 The online magazine Rethinking Schools explains, “It’s not surprising that there is a gaping contradiction between the goals of the voucher movement and the education aspirations of African Americans... The first publicly funded vouchers in the United States were established in Virginia. Their purpose was to circumvent the Brown decision and to help white people attend private academies so they wouldn’t have to go to public schools with blacks. The Virginia vouchers and other ‘freedom of choice’ plans passed by Southern legislatures expressly sought to maintain segregated school systems... Part of what makes it difficult to untangle the ‘vouchers as civil rights’ rhetoric is that conservatives mask their attacks on the public sector in populist rhetoric” (Miner 2004).

2 The characterization of charter schools as “privatized” is controversial. Public charter schools offer open enrollment, meaning that in theory any student may attend any public charter school. I argue with many
Management Organizations (CMOs) and Education Management Organizations (EMOs), nonprofit and for-profit charter school management companies, respectively. The largest Charter Management Organization of all, The Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP), which manages 109 schools and serves more than 32,000 students across the US (KIPP Foundation 2011b), shares its name (without acknowledgement) with a standard slogan of the movements of the 60s, and of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) in particular (Carmichael and Thelwell 2003). Though the phrase was coined by Francis Bacon, it is reasonable to speculate that KIPP’s name resonates with the effort to build equitable schools not because of the sixteenth century English philosopher, but because of the movements’ application of the slogan.3 Black Agenda Report editor, Glen Ford, highlights the organization “Parent Revolution” as another, particularly extreme example of this kind of language cooptation. Parent Revolution, funded in part by Bill Gates, Eli Broad and the Walton family, contributed to successful lobbying for the passage of the “Parent Trigger Law” in California, which allows parents others that charter schools are privatized public schools because although the schools offer open enrollment, they are managed by private nonprofits and for-profit companies, and for the most part charter school advocates attest openly that the schools represent the implementation of a market logic in public schooling. Furthermore, charter school expands the market for other sectors of the education industry.

3 Foucault himself states that he was only able to analyze the relationship between power and knowledge after the movements of 1968; for Foucault, the task of analyzing “the mechanics of power in themselves… could only begin after 1968” (Foucault 1980a).
to “pull the trigger” on local schools, taking them out of public control and turning them into charter schools\(^4\) (Ford 2012). The Parent Revolution website includes buttons to sections of their site labeled “Organize Now!” and “Join the Movement,” as well as a link to a “Parent Power Handbook,” which tells parents, “…because your Parent Union chapter gives you real power over the educational destiny of your own child, and because your power is independent from those who currently have it, some powerful defenders of the status quo view your power as a threat to their own” (Parent Revolution 2012). This vague language, suggesting a conflict between different political groups, conveys a memory of the urgency of community control in an attempt to mobilize parents for the privatization of schools\(^5\).

By appropriating the movements’ critique of disciplinary schooling for the purposes of profit, theft and containment, the inheritors of capitalist power reserve the authority to select, transmit, control and use knowledge according to a superimposed value system. Jason Read describes the hierarchy of knowledge “produced after the fact, by the enterprises of immaterial labor, which select and determine what affects,

\(^4\) On the hypocritical rhetoric of Parent Revolution and similar organizations, Ford writes, “Black parents are especially susceptible to the privatizers’ propaganda, which uses the language of community control. But that’s the most cynical ploy of all. Corporate education is responsible to shareholders, not parents or students... A genuine parent’s revolution is anathema to the rich, because empowered parents would make the rich pay for quality public education. How about a law that would trigger that?” (Ford 2012).

\(^5\) Parents are not falling for the vague political rhetoric, however! Ford writes that in both of the two cases where the Parent Trigger Law has been deployed to close elementary schools in California, in Compton and Adelanto, “…the process dissolved in acrimony and bitterness, with many parents claiming they had been bulldozed into signing petitions” (Ford 2012).
knowledges and languages are most productive” (Read 2003). This ‘late’ selection and transmission of appropriate knowledge ensures that the collective production of ways of life and knowledge from below continue to uphold existing power structures (at least temporarily). The neoliberal model validates aspects of the analysis of the movement, while reserving the authority to control the circulation and application of the analysis.6

The concept of the “pedagogical myth” thus remains useful in the analysis of a top-down value system that limits collective capacity to both form and control knowledge, to analyze, and to apply analysis in collective decision-making processes.

5.3 Education in Movement

5.3.1 What Kind of Organization?

Zibechi, like Reyes, Badiou and Wallerstein, suggests that the current inventiveness of social movements draws on forms invented in the 1960s in ways that once again undermine existing relations of power. Because the MST and the Zapatistas design and put into motion their own, more just, ways of living, according to their own

6 In a Colectivo Situaciones’ collection of interviews, Conversations in the Impasse, Suely Rolnik describes the effect of the subsumption of the language of the movement in postindustrial capitalism: …what for us was to abandon the bourgeois kitchen and to eat in a way much more interesting for the body, questioning the consumption of industrial food, turns into a bio, light, super chic industry, the most expensive of all. All of this liberation of collective invention— which was reinventing the world—becomes the principal source of production of surplus value for capital… What happened?, you ask yourself. And in a first moment maybe it seems to you that it has to do with a great triumph. It’s a small, subtle difference that makes a complete difference. First, because creation transforms into a workforce for capital, and second, because the other ceases to exist…” (Rolnik 2009).
decision making processes based in their own analysis, these groups demonstrate the renewed possibility of autonomous knowledge creation. “They appear to be in a position to reconstruct forms of knowledge destroyed by neoliberalism” (Zibechi 2012).

The “destroyed” knowledge, circulating outside of the control of preexisting power structures, once again threatens the pedagogical relation that supports those structures: “When these ‘obstacles’ become subjects, and begin to change the course of history and produce forms of knowledge that call into question the monopoly of the specialists—when the ‘objects’ become subjects—then the established powers face a dilemma” (Zibechi 2012).

In experimenting with forms of organization, these existing social movements make the question of “what kind of organization” central to education, and education central to the movement. The MST and the Zapatistas do not pretend to have discovered the answer to the question of “what kind of organization” for all contexts and times, but both groups posit that organization itself be a learning process, and that learning never cease to inform organizational decisions. They practice what Zibechi has termed “education in movement” (Zibechi 2012), making the movement itself the site of learning.

Zibechi analyzes movements that have occurred exclusively in Latin America. In the US context, movements for autonomy have not reemerged since the 1960s and 70s.
My purpose in this section is to suggest that education in movement as described by Zibechi is also pertinent to the US context, and that the creation of education in movement in the US would benefit those who are otherwise caught between education for exploitation and theft and education for containment. To support this assertion, I find in contemporary US novels examples of practices of learning for the creation of a better life that resonate with the forms of education that exist in the movements that Zibechi studies. The novels take place in imaginary places and/or times but treat problems that arise in contemporary US society. That the forms of relating and learning in the novels share characteristics with contemporary movements outside of the US demonstrates how those interested in changing US education might refer to movements in Latin America for insight. The rest of this chapter section will be an exploration of characteristics of the form of education in movement.

5.3.2 Examples of Education in Movement

Education in movement is education for the cultivation of a new organization of life. The practices of instruction and learning taken up by the characters in both Octavia Butler’s *Parable of the Sower* and Samuel Delany’s *Tales of Neveryón* parallel and build on Zibechi’s concept of education in movement: providing examples of individual characters and organized groups struggling to create the learning environments that suit their intention to change their lives. In suggesting that these novels, like the movements
that Zibechi draws on for examples, exemplify the development of forms of education that share consistent characteristics, I refer to eight specific qualities that Zibechi observes of the form of education that he calls “education in movement”: 1. That the form of education has the goal of creating a different way of life, based in the creation of non-dominating relationships 2. That the form of education empowers or expands knowledge that already exists among the people participating in the educational process, 3. That the new way of life that is created will be conducive to self-emancipation, 4. That the learning process occurs not solely or primarily in a school or particular institution, but in all sites of living, and in all relationships 5. That the productive work of creating relationships is recognized as educational, 6. That the form of education is constantly navigating the contradiction between organization and change, 7. That the form of education assists its participants in learning to tolerate and address uncertainty and change, 8. That “education in movement” occurs differently in different contexts, and is designed by participants to meet their needs in a particular context. The following will be an explication of each of these qualities of education in movement, as discussed by Zibechi, practiced by the MST in Brazil and the Zapatistas in Mexico, and imagined in Parable of the Sower and Tales of Nevèryön.

Parable of the Sower begins in a gated community in California after peak oil and the decline of the US as a world power. Narrator Lauren Olamina senses that the social
and economic realities of her childhood will not endure through her adulthood. She assumes the responsibility of learning as much as she can, and of sharing what she learns with others. In her process of learning, she creates what she calls a “new religion,” “Earthseed,” which through her careful attention and the participation of other characters transforms from a notebook of her observations into a group of people attempting to create a life for themselves in difficult circumstances. In Samuel Delany’s *Tales of Neveyon*, a “wise woman,” Venn, teaches and learns from a group of island children. *Tales of Neveyon* takes place in an imaginary land in a period of time in which individuals and communities are grappling with the relatively recent invention of money and its effect on their personal lives and social configurations.

The first characteristic of education in movement in all of these locations and forms is that it has a purpose: the creation of a better life, and specifically non-dominating relationships. For the Zapatistas, the creation of education in movement is one part of the struggle for the creation of way of living that is different from neoliberal society. In the “Second Declaration of La Realidad for Humanity and against Neoliberalism” the EZLN lists what the Zapatistas are “against,” including “…the international order of death… the globalization of war and armaments… dictatorships… authoritarianism… repression… stupidity… lies… ignorance… slavery… intolerance… injustice,” and what they are “for,” including: “…the international order of hope, for a
new, just, and dignified peace. For a new politics, for democracy, for political liberties. For justice, for life, and dignified work… For intelligence, for culture, for education…” (EZLN 1996). Education in movement, the process of self-transformation, is one part of the struggle for all of the other “fors” of the declaration. The movement is for learning, for intelligence, for education because participants in education in movement learn to create movement, in order to achieve other goals. For the MST creating a just world involves primarily the creation of non-exploitative relationships; learning to relate in another way is both the method and the goal: “to transform oneself by transforming” (Zibechi 2012). MST educator Roseli Salete Caldart describes the movement’s objectives: “…to fight for land, for agrarian reform, and for the building of a just society, without exploiters and exploited” (Caldart 2002).

Zibechi studies movements in Latin America that share the goal of building relationships that are “non-capitalist,” stressing repeatedly that movements do not emerge with preconceived designs for utopias to implement, but that through movement-building they determine in different ways and to varying degrees what it might mean to relate in a “non-capitalist” way (Zibechi 2012). However, without exception, in part because of their position with relation to the “specialist” knowledge of the state and existing institutions, “The movements call into question what is perhaps modernity’s most perverse heritage: the subject object-relation” (Zibechi 2012). The
movements challenge the subject-object relation by asserting the knowledge created in movement by those historically excluded from the position of citizen-subject in capitalist society. The “subaltern” becomes the subject, and conducts theoretical activity that disturbs the “...relations of domination/subordination imposed by colonialism and reinforced by neoliberalism” (Zibechi 2012).

Relations that are new, or new forms of old relations, opposite to the colonial and neoliberal relations of domination, are evident in the way in which ‘teachers’ and ‘students’ relate to each other in education in movement. If the social space of movement is the pedagogical subject, then no sole person can have the responsibility for the pedagogical process. Instead, “...all of the people involved... are pedagogical subjects” (Zibechi 2012). Caldart agrees, an educational environment within the MST is “…shared by all of its members. In a true collective, all are at the same time educators and educated, because all are a part of the process of learning and re-learning to be human” (Caldart 2002). There is no ‘expert’ knowledge of movement that can ‘teach’ the less knowledgeable. All participants in the movement are learning and all have something to teach about their experience.

In order to emphasize the non-dominating relation between participants in educational processes in Zapatista schools, the Zapatistas use the term “promoters” rather than “teachers” to refer to those trained members of the movement who support
others’ learning processes in specific areas. Howard explains the role of the promoters:

“It’s important to note that these promoters are learning alongside their students. It’s not
the type of education where the teacher knows everything, and the students know
nothing. Rather, they are promoters, people from within the community committed to
promoting different types of work and knowledge” (Howard 2007). The adults who
participate in the Zapatista schools create an environment for learning without creating
a relationship with the students in which the children are dependent on the adults for
the transference of any knowledge.

In the examples of education in movement imagined in the novels, processes of
learning also have this purpose: the creation of a new “life” that differs from existing
society, especially in its prioritization of the creation of non-dominating relationships.
Lauren Olamina wants to create another way of living because she observes that the
community in which she grew up will not be able to endure impending crises. She feels
compelled to contribute to the creation of a new way of living before the chaos of the
world outside destroys the unprepared community. The goal of creating a new world
begins with a process of self and relationship-creation both in the plot of the novel and
in Olamina’s approach. In the beginning of Parable, Olamina struggles for several
chapters with her relationship to herself, to her friends and family members; her process
of learning from those relationships; and her conversion of the lessons of relating into a
framework for a new way of living, Earthseed. From the relationships that she has experienced, she strives to imagine a way of relating to life that will better prepare her and others for the perilous reality of living through the collapse of a previous society. “Earthseed is all that spreads/Earthlife to new earths” (Butler 1993). It is Olamina’s goal to move human life to a new world through careful thought and action.

A central theme of Parable of the Sower is the absence of a higher authority or knowledge to which to refer for guidance. Likewise, the children in Tales of Nevèryön go to “be with” Venn rather than to “learn from” her. In both novels, characters must learn independently in order to ‘know’ anything. Old Venn makes the relationship between the learner and knowledge even more apparent in her lessons for the children of her island. There is a major lesson in the tale, repeated in different forms: that “knowledge” when objectified, ceases to be knowledge at all. Therefore a “teacher” cannot ‘teach’ a ‘student’ by passing on objectified knowledge, though people can support each other in a learning process. Old Venn shows the children that written words, when reflected in a mirror, do not mean the same thing that they meant before being reflected, and in fact mean nothing. It is not until they are reflected a second time that the children discover a message written on the back of the paper, and the words again become meaningful in that they make up a new meaning entirely. Old Venn teaches the lesson in another way by telling the story of how she fought a sea monster as a young woman, and then
recounted the story to others who were not present, discovering that the story is not the same as the experience:

…as I told them, as I watched them, I realized: While for me, the value of the experience I had lived through was that, for its duration, I had not known from moment to moment if I would live or die, for them the value of the telling was that, indeed, I had lived through it, that here I was, safe and alive… The more I tried to remember the details… the more evidence they had… that I had lived through it… though the “what of it, just because of that certainty, was quite beyond them (Delaney 1979).

When she actively works on the story, making it into the best possible story for her audience, Venn discovers that the story has become something else entirely, and has another meaning. Knowledge cannot be passed from one person to another as an object and retain the meaning of an original relationship to experience. Only the learner’s willingness to recast the information in the creation of a new relationship gives the knowledge meaning again, but a different meaning.7

Venn tries to cultivate values in the children not by telling them what to do, but by recounting stories that allow them to determine values for themselves. Talking to the child Norema, Venn recalls a ritual that she observed among a tribe that she married into as a young woman, in which men and women dress up in each other’s clothes and perform skits and songs about the consequences of family members not caring for each other.

7 One thing that is certain is that Venn would hate this summary of her lesson. “‘There are certain thoughts,’ Venn said dryly, ‘which, reflected by language in the mirror of speech, flatten out entirely, lose all depth, and though they may have begun as rich and complex feelings, become, when flattened by language, the most shallow and pompous self-righteousness” (Delaney 1979). “To express it was to call it containable: and was its uncontainableness she had known” (Delaney 1979).
other. She tells Norema that the ritual “…doesn’t reverse values. It makes new values that the whole tribe benefits from. Now there’s a custom I wish would work its way down to the shore” (Delaney 1979). At the end of the “Tale,” Norema as an adult experiences the loss of her children to the plague, and her husband’s anger and rejection. Leaving him and the island they inhabit to travel to Nevèryön, she tells herself that this loss was the most important part of her life, and that everything else she experiences will be informed by it. Even as she tells herself this, she finds herself forgetting the tragedy and remembering the walks and lessons with Venn. Norema’s “education” with Venn was in fact the most important experience of her life, the experience that gave her the tools to continuously create a better life according to values that she forms out of observation. The crucial ‘value’ formed and communicated in Venn’s version of education in movement then is the capacity to think on one’s own and in equality with others. The life that is created when that value is upheld is up to the people doing the thinking.

The relationship between ‘students’ and ‘teachers’ in the novels is a relationship between ‘friends.’ The friendship relation highlights the way in which participants in education in movement relate as equals, and not as dominator and dominated, or
“superior-inferiors”. Norema wonders why Venn favors specific children, and determines that she does so not because those children are “cleverer,” but because they are the old woman’s friends. “…this particular group of children was finally not that clever, or wonderful, or talented. They were just her friends” (Delaney 1979). Venn is friends with the children rather than with adults because the children do not regard her with “awed respect;” she can relate her ideas to them, and they theirs to her, without devaluing or ranking themselves or each other. Likewise, Olamina and Zahra, and Olamina and her other students, are “friends” in that they learn from each other: just as Zahra teaches Olamina survival skills such as how to feel less thirsty by sucking on the pit of an apricot, and how to be careful when meeting new people, Olamina teaches Zahra the survival skill of reading and writing, and the verses of Earthseed that provide ideas for how to “shape” change. Olamina notes that children also ‘teach’: “The questions little children ask drive you insane because they never stop. But they make you think” (Butler 1993). The friendship relation, like the promoter relation of the Zapatistas, consistently undermines the dominating pedagogical relation, sustained by belief in the ‘superiority’ of the knowledge of the ‘expert.’

The second characteristic of education in movement that I highlight from Zibechi’s account is that it provides support for knowledge that already exists; that is, 

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8 Though friendship does not preclude anger and conflict, as discussed below.
not all of the knowledge produced in education in movement is ‘brand new.’ “The educational act must affirm, empower, expand, and set in movement the ‘knowledge’ that already exists in popular sectors’ daily life” (Zibechi 2012). On what Zibechi means by ‘knowledge,’ Caldart explains, “It was in this way that the [MST] made itself as it is: learning from those who had struggled before, cultivating the memory of their own path… planning for the future beginning with the lessons of the past cultivated in the present” (Caldart 2002). Education in movement refers to the knowledge of past movement and struggle, as well as the knowledge of a way of life already lived in the margins of society, built on that past struggle: “the lessons of the past cultivated in the present.”

Mexican journalist, Gloria Muñoz, describes the educational process of sharing traditional medicinal knowledge, and the importance of that process to the creation of Zapatista communities:

The dream started when we realized that the knowledge of our elders and our elderly was being lost. They know how to cure bones and sprains, they know how to use herbs, they know how to oversee the delivery process for pregnant women… So we came to an agreement among the people and brought together all the men and women that know about traditional healing… Now they have increased the amount of midwives, bonesetters, and herbalists in our communities (Muñoz Ramírez 2004; Zibechi 2012).

Zibechi and Muñoz affirm that the knowledge of creating collective life is both new and old. The majority-indigenous Zapatistas draw on the knowledge of the collective life of their predecessors in order to develop the knowledge of their own movement.
In a somewhat different way, Olamina also refers to the past in the creation of Earthseed. Unlike the Christianity of Olamina’s parents, Earthseed requires that its participants observe existing life in order to draw conclusions and form plans, to internalize knowledge that has been developed collectively over time (ex: in making acorn bread), and to return to ways of life discarded in modernity but useful in living through its end. She tells her friend Joanne to read anything on her family’s bookshelf that might contain knowledge that they might use in order to develop a way to live outside of the gated community: “Any kind of survival information from encyclopedias, biographies, anything that helps you learn to live off the land and defend ourselves. Even some fiction might be useful” (Butler 1993). To the same end, knowledge acquired in the past that does not suit the current context is discarded; but in this, too, Olamina and Earthseed learn from the past.

Venn learns especially from her observations of the Rulvyn way of life, before and after the introduction of money. She notes that since the use of money, the Rulvyn women are unhappy, because their husbands “make them work,” and the pride that the women take in the work is diminished. Men are unhappy because they are “harassed and harried by the worries of uncomfortable and competing working women” that they struggle to provide for financially. Everything has changed from the “look” in a bride’s eyes to the “tone” of daily chants—there is more shrillness and strain. It is Venn’s
knowledge of Rulvyn life before money, as well as life on her own island before money, that allows her to see the way in which money has distorted Rulvyn values. One of the children asks if she means “…that money, like a mirror, flattens everything out, even though it looks, at first, like a perfect copy…” Venn says,

“I certainly mean something like that,” and to Norema: “Your father’s a craftsman… To be a craftsman is to be a little dazzled by the magic of things… But at the same time, he can sense the flatness in the mirror of money that claims to give him for all his work a perfect and accurate copy… more and better, in that mirror, flatten to the same thing. But I suspect that is why he tries to bury himself in his work, not so much to make the money that allows him to go on working, more and better both, but to get away from it: only it surrounds him on all sides” (Delaney 1979).

Venn’s capacity to imagine a different value system with the children on her island later in life is a consequence of her knowledge of the earlier value system.

In all of these examples, the new world and the form of education that is created will be one that is conducive to self-emancipation. By the “logic of emancipation” in education in movement, Zibechi means specifically that participants in the educational process come to have more creative power in their own lives. That is, ways of life within the movement support people in becoming creative subjects in their lives. MST educator Roseli Caldart uses the terms “self-respect” and “dignity” synonymously with self-emancipation to describe the same processes in MST education that Zibechi observes. MST educators ask of participants in the movement, “Have our educational practices helped them to value themselves as persons?” (Caldart 2002).
In Zibechi’s analysis, because society in general does not operate according to a logic of emancipation, the context for self-emancipation must be created by a collective committed to its creation: “…a space-time marked by the logic of emancipation and not the logic of ‘the first in the class’—that is, a climate conducive to emancipation—that climate does not fall from the sky, but will have been created by the collective activity of the social movements (Zibechi 2012). In both the movements that he cites and the examples of the novels, a collective movement or social group provides a collective identity and dignity that is supportive of individual identity and dignity. Caldart writes that self-identifying with the collective identity of the MST has been demonstrated to increase the self-respect of individuals in the movement:

One of the things that often calls attention to the MST’s actions is the self respect of the people who take part in it. This self-respect, or feeling of dignity, is produced to the extent that these people learn to be Sem Terra and to be proud of that name. And on taking on this social, collective identity we are Sem Terra, we are of the MST these people gradually discover dimensions of their personal and collective identity as well: I’m a woman, I’m black, I’m a rural worker, I’m young, I’m an educator. They are new individuals who are formed and begin to demand their place in the world, in history; they know they can and ought to fight for the right to be human wherever they are, with or against whomever they are (Caldart 2002).

To create a world without exploiters and exploited, the MST focuses on educating people to first relate to themselves with respect.

In order to be real alternatives to participation in the institutions of global capitalism, Zapatista educational institutions act a cohesive force for the community, assisting young people in the acquisition of the skills and resources they need to build
collective life. In an article on the “Other Education” developed in Zapatista territory, journalist Amber Howard for the alternative *Narco News Bulletin* describes this aspect of the Zapatista Other Education:

The concept of collective work is one of the main tenants of Zapatista life. Each member of the community does a job, and the results are shared, including farming, transportation, education, etc. describes Jesus from Caracol IV. ‘What we believe in is collectivism, to support our community as a whole. We want our children to know this and to wake up to the value of life, and where they are at in the world. Children lose their culture when they go to school and learn things that don’t go with this form of life.’ In contrast with the government schools, where each person is encouraged to succeed for his or herself, which usually means finding work far away in the city or with big business. ‘Our children don’t go to the city to continue working on their individual job, they begin to support their community upon graduation...’ (Howard 2007).

The point is not that the Zapatista education compels people to stay in the community (it does not), but that unlike state education, The Other Education makes it possible for them to stay, to support the continued building of alternatives within the Zapatista communities. The individual participant in Zapatista education in movement is emancipated to the extent that she is able to choose to be part of the Zapatista community. As Subcomandante Marcos stated in an audio recording transcribed in Gloria Muñoz’s *The Fire and the Word*, “The fundamental aspect of this resistance is that it’s possible because it’s collective” (Muñoz Ramírez 2008).

The collective support of self-respect and dignity occurs in the educational processes of *Tales of Nevèryöń* and *Parable of the Sower* as well. In other words, these fictional examples of education in movement also create a collective climate of self-
emancipation. Earthseed, like the movements observed by Zibechi, is “…imbued with values and attitudes that encourage people to become the creative subjects of their own lives” (Zibechi 2012). Olamina writes in Earthseed: The Book of the Living, “A victim of God may/Through learning adaptation/Become a partner of God,/A victim of God may, Through forethought and planning,/Become a shaper of God.” (Butler 1993). Olamina urges all of the characters that she encounters to think: in order to save themselves and each other from destruction, to shape their lives rather than be victims of the changes that occur in their lives. But it is the creation of Earthseed that supports individual characters in thinking for themselves; the creation of the group requires the contribution of the intelligence of each individual, and the group is supportive of the intelligence of each individual. Speaking to her friend for the first time about the risk she perceives to their community’s way of life, Olamina tells her, “I want you to be serious. I realize I don’t know very much. None of us knows very much. But we can all learn more. Then we can teach one another” (Butler 1993). The creation of the serious group with the goal of creating a better way of life pushes the individual to think and to respect herself as a participant in the creation of her own life.

Other characters consider Venn to be a particularly wise woman; as evidence of her wisdom we learn that “Venn had figured out, by herself, a system for telling where you were by the stars” (Delaney 1979). Venn is wise exactly in this: that she has a
relationship to learning in which she fully acknowledges her capacity to deduce and invent “by herself.” Therefore it is noteworthy that the children are sent each day to “be with” Venn and not “to learn from” her. Venn and the children together create a climate in which they learn for themselves, a collective climate supportive of each individual’s self-teaching. As the Zapatista’s say of their education system, “Nobody educates anybody else, nobody is educated alone” (Zibechi 2012). After a conversation with Venn, Norema has the incredible experience of having a “new thought,” which is her own, and not a flattened reflection of Venn’s thoughts. This is the moment in which Norema comes even closer to Venn, and the two become “friends” in a new way.

The fourth characteristic of education in movement is that it occurs not just in the school, but in all aspects of life and in all relationships within the territory of movement. Zibechi writes, “...the [MST] movement itself has become an ‘educational subject.’ This is much more than intervention in educational practices and community involvement in schools. It means that the social movement itself has become an educational subject, and therefore all its spaces, actions, and ideals have a ‘pedagogical intention’” (Zibechi 2012). Describing how education occurs throughout Zapatista life Zibechi explains, “...the Zapatista system of education attempts to integrate the schools into the community and the struggle” (Zibechi 2012). Gloria Muñoz writes that the “biggest accomplishment” of the Zapatistas is the “...willingness and capacity to learn...,” not only in autonomous
schools, but in all areas of work and participation in the movement: “…to learn to fight, then to learn to recognize the enemy, to learn to recognize who isn’t the enemy, to learn to talk, to learn to listen, to learn to walk together alongside others, and to learn to respect and recognize difference… we’ve learned to learn…” (Muñoz Ramírez 2008). Marcos asserts in agreement that Zapatistas study the world, and what is occurring in the world, “…just as if we were studying history… to understand it and to derive lessons from it… This is the way to learn who we are, what it is we want, who we can be, and what we can do or not do” (Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos 1997). Among the MST and the Zapatistas, the territory of movement is itself the “school” where participants in movement “learn to learn,” and all spaces of movement become educational spaces.

In both novels, every relationship and every experience is a source of knowledge, and therefore, everything is material for learning and teaching. Venn often reminds the children: “We are sitting in the shadow of knowledge; knowledge is written all around us, in the trees and on the rocks, as clearly as my marks on reed paper” (Delaney 1979). Accordingly, the ‘class’ meets outside, in the forest, by the water, or anywhere that the group finds themselves in their daily walks. Also outside, on a much longer ‘walk’ toward a new home, Olamina has a conversation with one of her fellow migrants, Zahra, who grew up outside of the gated community:
‘I’m inexperienced,’ I admitted. ‘But I can learn. You’re going to be one of my teachers.’ ‘One?’ she said. ‘Who have you got but me?’ ‘Everyone.’ She looked scornful. ‘No one.’ ‘Everyone who’s surviving out here knows things that I need to know.’ I said. ‘I’ll watch them, I’ll listen to them, I’ll learn from them. If I don’t, I’ll be killed. And like I said, I intend to survive’ (158).

Olamina later composes an Earthseed “verse” that expresses the ubiquity of ‘teachers’ to anyone who works to learn. “Your teachers/Are all around you./All that you perceive,/All that you experience,/All that is given to you/or taken from you,/All that you love or hate,/need to fear/Will teach you—/If you will learn…” (257). The prerequisite for learning, to these characters, is the active participation in understanding experiences. This does not mean that people are to be held responsible for things that they did not learn due to limitations in their experience; they are responsible for learning from the experiences that are available to them.

If every aspect of life is educational, the experience of working to build another kind of life, the work of building human relationships, is especially so; this is the fifth aspect of education in movement. Caldart explains in detail the pedagogical aspect of building human relationships in the MST:

The MST forms the Sem Terra by putting them in a movement, which means in permanent action, action with the dynamic of a social struggle: occupations, encampments, marches, demonstrations of solidarity, the building of a new kind of life in the settlements, schools, activities of development. It is through such action that they learn that nothing is impossible to change, not even people, their propensities, their positions, their ways of life, their values. People are educated in action because it is the movement of action that molds the way to becoming human. Actions produce and are produced through social relations: that is, they set in motion another fundamental pedagogical element, which is the interaction between people, how they behave among each other, which is measured by the tools inherited from those who have produced
other tools before (culture). In these relations, people show who they are, and at the same time they construct and revise their identities, their way of being (Caldart 2002).

Working toward the creation of new relationships, without established information and ways of doing things to serve as references, people in movement learn to think for themselves, and to relate to themselves and others as people thinking for themselves. That is, the act of creating new social relations teaches participants how to relate. With the educational goals of the MST in mind, Zibechi writes on what is ‘educational’ about movement-building: “Productive work is educational if it is transformative; that is, if it is not only productive but a way of building human relationships” (Zibechi 2012).

Observing Zapatista autonomous education, the Fray Bartolomé de las Casas Human Rights Center (Frayba) and the Movement for Justice in el Barrio (MJB), based in New York, say that participants in the autonomous education system learn how to learn non-competitively, making learning a “shared” and “collective” experience. They learn to take up positions of responsibility, to respect people of all ages (Fray Bartolomé de las Casas Human Rights Center and the Movement for Justice in el Barrio 2011). In a “Gathering of the Zapatista People and the Peoples of the World” in 2006, members of the Zapatista Support Bases (BAZ) speaking on “The Other Education” also spoke to the relational goals of autonomous Zapatista schools: “We want our children to learn about freedom, dignity, and to value all human beings, both men and women” (Howard 2007). Zapatista education has the explicit purpose of building human relationships that will be different from existing relationships.
The characters in Parable of the Sower are ‘in movement’ up the coast of California, and it is in learning to build new relationships with each other that they learn what kind of ‘place’ they might be approaching. Olamina does not imagine that they will be walking forever, but that they will eventually reach a place in which they can build a more permanent home for Earthseed, at that point, she says, the people of Earthseed might be able to sustain themselves and grow. “We might be able to do it—grow our own food, grow ourselves and our neighbors into something brand new, into Earthseed” (Butler 1993). She imagines the members of Earthseed ‘growing’ themselves in the context of imagining teaching people to read, teaching the child, Dominic, to think for himself, and learning from his questions. It is this process of creating a community capable of providing for itself and valuing the life and minds of all of its members that is the pedagogical process in Parable of the Sower. Any particular school within that process (for illiterate adults, for children) is important, but only as it fits into the broader process of learning to be Earthseed: “The life that perceives itself/ Changing” (Butler 1993). Caldart writes, “The pedagogical process is not contained by the school, because neither the Movement nor human development is contained by it. But the school is part of the movement and its pedagogy...” (Caldart 2002). For the characters in Parable, as much as the members of MST, the school is one small part of the pedagogical process of learning for oneself and with others to relate in a new way.

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Education in movement is fundamentally contradictory, in that the movement as the human capacity to modify social organization and the school as institutionalization must coexist and support each other. There is a contradiction to be resolved again and again between flexibility and structure; the movement must retain “the capacity to move itself,” in spite of and in coordination with the institutionalization of schools and institutionalization of learning processes (Zibechi 2012). Structure of the learning process is crucial to the movement because without it social relations devolve into the status quo; there is no support for the “climate of self-emancipation,” which “...does not fall from the sky but will have been created by the collective activity of the social movements” (Zibechi 2012). On the other hand, the movement must always be prepared to change its methods in response to changing situations or evaluations and reevaluations of work. Therefore, education in movement must strive to create structure without institutionalizing specific structures beyond the possibility of change. “This contradiction can only be resolved within the movement, understood not as an institution but with the logic of the movement in motion mentioned above... To create an education in movement implies that schools and movements must co-exist, despite their differences. This means the school must be part of an ‘integral’ pedagogical subject, becoming part of the climate and the learning process of the social movement. Doing this presents a huge challenge...” (Zibechi 2012). Addressing the contradiction between
structure and movement involves “placing reflection and ongoing evaluation of what is happening at the forefront of activities” (Zibechi 2012). Reflection and evaluation themselves become pedagogical spaces that bridge the disconnect between structures and change, allowing structures to change themselves when necessary.

Caldart explains that the MST does not follow a specific pedagogical theory or a single theorist, but draws on various sources to create the pedagogical form that meets the needs of the people in each specific MST settlement. It is the participants of the pedagogical process themselves who decide what theories are suited to their needs and who evaluate what kinds of educational practices have worked and what about the educational process should change (Caldart 2002). This is the process of reflection on education that is the crux of the pedagogical process, and the bridge between structure and change: “Thus, ‘the landless people of the MST are not only the subjects of an educational experience and human development, but also challenge themselves to become the subjects of theoretical reflection upon the pedagogy that they live’” (Caldart 2002). The practice of evaluation of educational practices, by those involved in the process, creates a “…permanent relationship between theory and practice” (Caldart 2002), that opens the structure of education to changes that are required by changing situations or evaluations.
Olamina learns to teach Earthseed as she teaches it. This is a major part of her own learning process: the process of learning from others’ methods of instruction and assessing and changing her own methods. She is extremely “careful” in the way that she tells others about Earthseed, and then careful in the way that she communicates different aspects of it. Of the first person with whom she shares her writing, Harry, Olamina says, “I would have given him money to read and digest some of the Earthseed portions of my journal. But he had to be eased into them. If he read the wrong thing, it would just increase the distance between us” (Butler 1993). Though she intends to make Earthseed a resource for everyone and to let them change and contribute to the analysis, the structure with which she shares is extremely important. The structure changes in different contexts: at times she can be more open in sharing what she has written, at times more receptive to others’ suggestions. She practices learning to teach without preaching. Never abandoning the ‘care’ with which she teaches, she allows her pedagogical methods to change to suit the moment and situation.

Education in movement involves learning how to both create and endure movement. That is, education in movement forces participants to face the experience of uncertainty and helps them to tolerate the experience, as they create a new way of life that is necessarily uncertain because untried. Zibechi writes,

...‘to transform oneself by transforming’—an education in movement—does not guarantee the results that will be achieved. We can assume that individuals in collectives,
in line with the movement for social change in which they were formed, will arise and that the result will broaden and strengthen the movement. But perhaps it will not be so, and hopefully one of the ‘lessons learned’ will be learning how to live with uncertainty (Zibechi 2012).

In the MST, the contradiction between movement and institution is one of the ‘uncertainties’ that participants withstand; in the process of education members of the MST learn to “perceive the contradictions, and not be overwhelmed by them, but to work with them pedagogically” (Caldart 2002). Uncertainty itself is a ‘teacher’.

Characters in Parable of the Sower also work with uncertainties pedagogically. For Olamina, uncertainty or change is ‘God.’ The difference between education in movement and previous forms of education, between Earthseed and Christianity, is Earthseed’s willingness to address and participate in change. When the Book of Earthseed asserts that “your teachers/Are all around you… All that you love or hate,/need or fear/Will teach you—/If you will learn,” it also states, “God is your first/And your last teacher./God is your harshest teacher:/Subtle/Demanding./Learn or die” (Butler 1993).

For Olamina, Earthseed is not a mere religious invention, but is the result of analyzing life to determine its basic truths. ‘Change’ is ‘God’ precisely because change is the most constant truth of life; Olamina observes that even though everyone knows that change is fundamental to life, the society that she inhabits has not “even begun to deal with it” (Butler 1993). Instead of providing ways to work through change, contemporary ways of life put up barriers to change in the form of heroes: “We give lip service to acceptance, as
though acceptance were enough. Then we go on to create super-people—super-parents, super-kings and queens, super-cops—to be our gods and to look after us—to stand between us and God” (Butler 1993). Earthseed will be the ‘religion’ that teaches people to ‘deal with’ change, and to be involved in shaping it themselves. Describing Earthseed, Olamina writes, “We are flesh—self-aware, questing, problem-solving flesh. We are that aspect of Earthlife best able to shape God knowingly. We are Earthlife maturing, Earthlife preparing to fall away from the parent world” (Butler 1993). Participation in Earthseed requires taking responsibility for thinking through and responding to change.

Earthseed, like other forms of education in movement, is also supportive of its members as they face uncertainty. Olamina writes, “Kindness eases change” (Butler 1993). Caldart echoes that collectivity is necessary to support the individual facing uncertainty:

People do not learn to be human by themselves. Without the bonds of their participation in collectives they cannot go forward to a fully human condition. Uprooted people are dehumanized people, who do not recognize themselves in any past and have no project for the future. To educate is to help root people in strong collectives; it is to potentialize social, human harmony in the construction of identities, values, knowledge, feelings (Caldart 2002).

As one part of the “climate of self-emancipation” discussed above, collective education in movement provides support in the emotional process of participating in change. An “atmosphere of community fraternity” contributes to the forming of the movement as a
pedagogical subject, capable of supporting people in learning to create and endure change (Zibechi 2012).

Finally, as might be deduced from all of the above, education in movement is different in different contexts. The crucial aspect of the alternative system of education developed by each group is the self-organization of the community in determining its educational needs and solutions to those needs, articulated precisely in the question: “…what would our education look like?” (Howard 2007).

5.4 Education in Movement in the US

In the US this year and in recent years, there is evidence of broad dissatisfaction with the function of school reform, and the goals of the “school system” that is coming into being: the profit of private companies in designing and directing testing and curriculum, the displacement of communities and privatization of public schools in an upward transfer of real estate wealth and private usurpation of public wealth, and the militarization and carceralization of remaining schools. It is in the context of this widespread frustration with existing institutions that I propose education in movement as a model of what could be done.

Protests have emerged in large US cities against the privatization and closure of schools. This year in Chicago, Philadelphia, Seattle, New York and Detroit, teachers, students and community members have protested school “reform” policies that include
the closure of public schools, the mass firing of educators and policies that favor charter schools over traditional public schools (Dean 2013). Expressing their own analysis that the school closures have more to do with the development and sale of real estate than the education budget, the Chicago Teacher’s Union has organized multiple strikes and most recently a 3-day march in May to protest the closure of 54 of the city’s public schools. March organizers estimate that over 7,000 Chicago residents participated in the 3-day march (Resnikoff 2013). Protests against funding cuts to Philadelphia’s public schools have included a public fast, and student walkouts in which thousands of students have participated (Cersonsky 2013; Shamlin 2013). In June, thousands of members of the New York State United Teachers union and other organizations rallied to protest the influence of private test-design companies on state educational policy (Litvinov 2013). These are just a few examples of a national trend: the growing rejection of schools as they are and as politicians and financial interests want them to be.

In spite of the numbers that these actions have drawn, those participating in the protests, marches, walkouts and strikes in many instances express doubt regarding their effectiveness. There is the sense that policy-makers are not accountable to city residents or the communities that inhabit the schools. In Chicago for example, the mass school

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9 The protestors concur with Sam Smith’s conclusion, that school reform is about “class” and not “classrooms,” as discussed in Chapter 3 (Smith 2010).
closure took place in spite of the opposition of 6 out of 10 voters (Caskey 2013). In the words of Chicago teacher and activist Xian Barrett,

...what we’re coming to realize here in Chicago is that the people running our city, and especially the school district, which is unelected... is not really interested in the voices of the parents, students, or educators. And until we escalate to a point that we can force them to stop what they’re doing, no reasoning or pleading is going to stop their push to undermine the public schools... (Noor 2013b).

Politicians’ responses (or lack of response) to community concerns support the protesters’ analysis, that education reform has nothing to do with the improvement of schools as a resource for the people inhabiting the school. Thus, the successes of protests in Philadelphia and Seattle have not significantly altered national trends of closure and charter expansion.10

Recognizing the inefficacy of making demands of politicians, some parents and educators express a need for a return to an earlier strategy of educational activism: community control. In an interview with The Real News, school council member and parent Avanette Temple describes what she sees as a connection between current protests against school closures and past movements of people of color in Chicago and other cities for community control of schools. To Rahm Emanuel she directs the message, “You’re sending us back into the ‘60s” (Noor 2013a). “…blacks have been

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10 In Philadelphia, Philadelphia residents put forward 38 alternative plans for the school district in response to the plan for the closure of 37 public schools; the school district superintendent announced a reduction of the number of schools to be closed from 37 to 29 (DeNardo and Duncan 2013). Protestors also successfully won a district promise of no further charter expansion in 2014 (Gym 2013).
marching for the longest. We’re still marching. Hispanics have been marching for the longest. They are still marching” (Noor 2013a). Lois Weiner, a professor of education, draws the same connection, and suggests that protestors shift in tactic to occupying their schools: “…we need to occupy the schools and make them sites of educational liberation, so that we show that it is we who control education, not these elites who have hack politicians who do their work” (Noor 2013a).

It is my argument that the possibility of community control in the current moment, in which schools not only discipline students but have the explicit role of robbing and destroying community, would have to be created through something like education in movement. Education in movement, as a rough model for educational autonomy in the current moment, creates collective self-determination beyond the site of the school. In a period of school privatization, carcelerization and closure, in which the closure of schools consistently serves to displace and dissolve neighborhood community, it seems that collective autonomy in sites of learning will not be possible without collective autonomy in other aspects of life (especially, the collective freedom to not be displaced, to be discussed below). What is needed is a form of education that combines the goal of self-liberation in education with the goal of the creation of collective autonomy.
The characteristics of education in movement that Zibechi highlights in the form of education invented by the Zapatistas and the MST, and imagined in the novels of Octavia Butler and Samuel Delany provide a way of being in the world that is different from education as discipline or education as theft and containment. It has the goal of creating a way of living based in non-dominating relationships, in which knowledge is used for collective and individual growth instead of discipline or theft and containment.

5.5 Conclusion: As-If

It is difficult to imagine the possibility of education in movement occurring in the US; it is so distant from the kinds of activism that are prevalent in the US in the current historical moment. However, the long history of autonomous education among communities of color—leading up to and following emancipation, and in the 1960s—provides a base from which to imagine the possibility, as Butler and Delany have done.

Also, the creation of education in movement in the examples of Latin American movements and in the novels entails a decision to act that is founded not in what is “possible” from the perspective of dominant knowledge systems (not in pragmatism), but as both Bifo and Badiou propose, in a politics that operates “as if” a form of organization that would replace capitalist and other exploitative systems of valorization might be possible. In societal conditions that limit our capacity to know by controlling the circulation of knowledge, we cannot “know,” but must act as if we know. In doing
so, these two philosophers suggest, the individual or group preserves the concept of revolution by acting “as if” it in fact *might be possible*. Badiou writes, “That is what I propose to call the communist hypothesis. It is in fact mainly negative, as it is safer and more important to say that the existing world is not necessary than it is to say, when we have nothing to go on, that another world is possible” (Badiou 2010). Bifo likewise writes that although all possibilities seem curtailed, and all forms of organization seem impossible when ‘the soul’ or relationships themselves are productive for capital, it is still important to attempt organization because it is in acting “as if” that the “consciousness and sensibility of social solidarity, of human empathy, of gratuitous activity…” are preserved (Berardi 2011). The preservation of sensibilities, of a hypothesis, might be the way to opening the possibility of possibilities, but we don’t know. So we have to act as if, “just in case, right?” (Berardi 2011).

Another Argentinian collective “of political thought and action,” Grupo Acontecimiento, takes up the use of the term “as if” in order to explain its position vis-à-vis political organization, however, the group moves one step further in proposing that we not only act as if other political realities might be possible, but as if they already exist.

If the fate of all invention — to risk an unprecedented hypothesis — is that it retroactively confirms the effects it produces, then the only way to practice this invention is to act *as if* its existence is already accomplished by its mere enunciation. That is, it is necessary to sustain invention with a deed or action consistent with its declaration (Grupo Acontecimiento 2012; Reyes 2012a).
In its exploration of the problems involved in this kind of political action, which must remain detached from all options presented from constituent power, the group also writes that in their own practice they have found it necessary to move between two positions. They write that power as it exists, democracy coupled with global capitalism, offers three possibilities for acting on the political present: one must either “choose among the options [offered by Democracy Inc.], reject them altogether, or reject these options while proposing and doing other things” (Grupo Acontecimiento 2012). The group writes that it sees itself as currently moving from “the second” to “the third” possibility (Grupo Acontecimiento 2012). Acontecimiento draws inspiration in this regard from the Zapatistas, who, in the creation of the Other Campaign, rejected the political class as a whole, refusing to distinguish between the “progressive” and “conservative” political parties. It was essential for the Zapatistas to refuse to ally with any party in their creation of the Other Campaign; Acontecimiento writes,

This rupture is embodied in the Sixth Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle and the implementation of the Other Campaign, which attempted to spread Zapatismo throughout the entire Mexican territory, and to create, in the middle of the electoral campaign, a distinctly other campaign, in order to repudiate the ‘progressive’ candidate but also to question the entire political and institutional system of Mexico (Grupo Acontecimiento 2012).

In the current moment, in which political and financial actors in the US dedicate billions of private and public money to the reform of the institution of education in the interest of preserving the existing power structure for a while longer, we might choose
to take the “leap” proposed by Jappe and disinvest from those institutions entirely.

Following Grupo Acontecimiento and groups that have created the examples of education in movement that Zibechi describes, we might do this by acting as if an alternative already exists: creating education in movement by participating in it.
6. Conclusion: Building Schools

This year, the Zapatistas extended invitations to allies worldwide to visit their territory in Chiapas, transforming the territory of their movement into a “little school” for the purpose of instruction in political organization. The *escuelita* began with a “first grade” level course in “Freedom According to the Zapatistas.” The “teachers” were all of the members of the Zapatista communities, and each guest who attended the little school learned in all aspects of the visit: lodging with a family, communicating directly with a votán, or guardian, visiting sites of collective work and attending classes in four subjects: autonomous government, womens’ government, resistance and democracy.

More than 1,500 people traveled to Chiapas to attend the first *escuelita*, and many more participated via videoconference from countries across the world.

The central lesson of the *escuelita* was that those interested in creating a more dignified and egalitarian way of living should begin to do so, by organizing alternative ways of living in their own lives and locations. The purpose of the education was not for the Zapatistas to tell people what to do or how to do it, but to share what they had done in order for guests to leave thinking about what kinds of organization would be effective in their own contexts. Gustavo Esteva explains,

> They didn’t invite us in order to educate us in a doctrine, much less to feed us a line. They shared with us a lived experience, whose common substance can only exist in diversity. The challenge does not consist in limiting all of that to more or less technical formal discourse, but in reproducing this form of contagion in the specific manner of each one” (Esteva 2013).
For this reason, the school is “little;” it is not dominating. The instructors have no intention of imposing their model on others, but simultaneously insist on the dignity of their accomplishments and the value of sharing what they have learned through their work. As Reyes writes in his introduction a special issue of *South Atlantic Quarterly*, “…it is not so much that these projects of separation in Latin America present themselves as a solution, but rather, their importance seems to lie in the fact that they have created the necessary space in which to be able to conceive of the actual enormity of the obstacles that seem to lie ahead for us all” (Reyes 2012b).

This is education in movement taken to a new level, only to be practiced by those who have already managed to create an alternative form: making that form instructive for others who are struggling to create their own. Zibechi attests to the ‘newness’ of the little school as a pedagogical form: “It’s the first time that a revolutionary movement has carried out an experiment of this kind. Until now instruction between revolutionaries has reproduced the models of the academy, with a stratified and frozen above and below. This is something else” (Zibechi 2013c). The *escuelita* is thus the first example of education in movement of education in movement, sharing all the qualities of education in movement outlined in Chapter 4, but for the purpose of instructing others in how to create a form of education that shares those qualities in conjunction with their own needs and situations.
The lessons of education in movement communicated by the little school: organize alternatives, are needed in the context of the US, if the goal is to create a form of education that will differ from education for the reproduction of domination.

In the US, education has always been for the reproduction of a relation of domination—first industrial, then neoliberal. Currently, as I have argued above, the school system in the US has three major functions: the ongoing production of wealth in a period of capitalist crisis, the upward transfer of existing wealth especially in the transfer of public money and real estate into private ownership, and the containment of an unemployable ‘surplus’ population that might otherwise create alternative ways of living that would disrupt the existing organization of power.

As Anselm Jappe and others assert, attempts to reform existing institutions cannot adequately address the reality of the crisis of the global system, which can at this point neither engage nor provide for the majority of the world’s population (Jappe 2013). Institutions meant to temporarily contain the problem cannot succeed indefinitely. An effective response to this global situation would be the creation of alternatives, rather than denial or patience.1 The institution of education in the US is only an example of this larger situation and need. If the ways of living that currently exist are meant to rob from

1 Or a Superman, in the sense of Davis Guggenheim’s 2010 documentary Waiting for Superman, which associates charter school reform with salvation by a superhero.
and contain the majority of people in the world, than the only adequate response is the creation of other institutions: in the field of education and beyond.

Existing education in movement is a “little school” for the creation of alternatives, as is the history of the autonomous tradition in the US, as is the literary work of writers in the genre of speculative fiction, who have maintained the ‘hypothesis’ of that tradition. The vision maintained in all of these sources of inspiration for my dissertational work is of a more egalitarian way of life, and of the form of education that will best support that life. If we are “willing to learn” from these teachers, the Zapatistas and other movements in Latin America demonstrate that it is possible to create alternative ways of life even in the most oppressive contexts, and that humans are capable of living in a way that is different from what exists, and more equal, though of course not without its own problems. The history of the autonomous tradition teaches us that it is not impossible to create alternatives in the context of the US, and that people in the US can refer to their own inherited knowledge of the struggle for autonomy to inform their creativity. The novels of Octavia Butler and Samuel Delany teach that this tradition is still alive in the collective imagination of people in the US, even in a moment in which social movements themselves are nonexistent or miniscule.

My purpose in writing this dissertation has been to attempt to synthesize these “lessons” in order to contribute to a discussion of what kind of activism around
education makes sense in the current context, and in order to contribute to the collective work of El Kilombo Intergaláctico to understand education as it exists and create new forms of education.

Leftist activist discourse on what should be done to improve primary and secondary education in the US is often, at least in the current moment, detached from a sufficient analysis of capitalism. It seems to me that activist work in education would benefit greatly from an understanding of how the institution of education has changed in conjunction with changes in capitalist society, not just as an institution for the reproduction of industrial capitalism, but as having different functions in the context of capitalist crisis and neoliberal bulwark against the formation of new relations of power. The opposition to privatization, to the closure of schools and to the militarization of remaining public schools makes sense on its own, and makes more sense when informed by an analysis of how these tendencies developed. Therefore, a secondary purpose of my dissertation has been to connect these conversations: the objection to processes that are destructive for students, teachers and communities with an analysis of the global system that gave rise to these processes.

In Chapters 1 and 3, I pointed to ways in which the creation of autonomous schools has been thwarted or circumvented in the past. An attempt to create autonomous institutions of learning in the contemporary context would refer to these
“failures” in order to avoid them. After all, as Badiou reminds us in his “Preamble” to The Communist Hypothesis, “What is Called Failure?”: “The bad thing of failure turns into the combative excellence of knowledge… Join us, you, the defeated, the legendary defeated, with the fabulous sequel to your non-acceptances!” (Badiou 2010).

It is my hope that this dissertational work will contribute in some small way to the renewal of struggles for autonomous education in the US, the fabulous sequel of a tradition that precedes the US school system as we know it: education for self-government.
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Biography

Elisabeth Bell was born in New York, New York on August 31, 1984. She graduated with a bachelor’s degree from the University of Michigan in April, 2006, receiving “highest honors” in Comparative Literature for her undergraduate thesis on the relationship between silence and political resistance in the novels of JM Coetzee. She is a member of the Phi Beta Kappa Honor Society, and received a Duke Endowment Fellowship from 2007-2011.