Studenting: An Historical and Sociological Study

by

Simona Goldin

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Doctoral Committee:

Professor David K. Cohen, Chair
Professor Jeffrey E. Mirel
Professor Annemarie Sullivan Palincsar
Associate Professor Carla O'Connor

Dedication

To Ethan, my love.

To Ella, Max, and Sula, my inspiration.

Acknowledgements

The word acknowledge seems off-pitch given the deep-felt gratitude and respect that I have for all of the people who have supported me and guided me in this journey. I am grateful to those I thank here, and to the many more friends, family and colleagues whose advice and support has sustained me.

I am very lucky to have had the wise and insightful Prof. David K. Cohen as an advisor. At our first meeting, I told David that I was interested in what students do. I had a hunch. Somehow David trusted me and nourished me – he pushed me to explore that hunch over many years and across too many literatures and thinkers to list here. When the road got rough – and it was very rough at times – he was kind and empathetic. My work could always get better—there was always another implication, another unasked question – but he asked and encouraged in such a way that I would discover, for myself. As John Dewey would have wished, David was guide, holder of the map, but it was my job to (re)create. There simply is no way that I could have done this work without his guidance. I have learned more from David than I ever imagined I had to learn, and I am ever grateful.

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intelligent guidance. I took a course with Jeff early in my tenure here at the University of Michigan, which informed and helped refine my topic. But Jeff's mentorship really accelerated after I wrote the first – of many – dissertation proposals. Jeff shot that first proposal down, but he did so with such depth of knowledge and with so many fabulous suggestions – as well as with a promise to help – that I somehow recovered and saw that he had actually given me a great gift. He helped me to see what needed to be done and how to make my work better. Best of all was our time together in ED118. He was willing to indulge my interest in talking about each pedagogical decision we made.

I am in debt to my two other committee members – Prof. Annemarie Palincsar and Prof. Carla O'Connor – they each challenged and supported my work in ways that extended it tremendously. I have also been very lucky to work with three colleagues and friends – Karen Gates, Josh Glazer and Don Peurach – for more years than any of us would like to admit. Every time that I arrived at a major crossroads, made a presentation, or defended any aspect of my work I have thought of Josh's charisma, his humor and his intelligence, and I have tried my very best to mimic Josh. It will take many more years before I get even close. Don's integrity, thoughtfulness and intellect are unparalleled; that he is also so kind is what has made him a friend. I am so lucky that Don and Josh went before me and (actually) finished; they showed me that it was possible, even as each of them set an unbelievably high bar with the quality of their work. Orrin Murray's stability and insight have also guided me along the way. I only hope that we have

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appreciate a touch more). I could not have begun, much less finished, this work without him.

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Abstract

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Chair: David K. Cohen

I seek to comprehend how thinkers have understood students' work and the practices they thought were associated with different versions of studenting. In my work, studenting is comprised of the activities and tasks that students must engage in to learn; studenting is understood to be the *means* to learning outcomes. A central question runs through this analysis: how have educators, theorists, researchers and sociologists understood studenting?

I analyze three important and historically rooted arguments about the nature of studenting, all of which continue today. The first occurred at the inception of public education in the U.S**.** during the Common School era, the second at the turn of the 20th century when school enrollment continued to swell and urbanization and industrialization increased, and a third in the mid-1900s when the school system was maturing. This is a study of those ideas and

arguments, with attention to the historical context of those ideas. This analysis is framed by the following elements: what students bring to their work; the politics of studenting, which here means how students respond to learning under conditions of compulsion; and, the nature of the work that students were to do.

While the three sets of thinkers that I consider wrote at different times and with different theoretical frames, I find a continuing refrain: enabling effective studenting came down to managing a key problem: securing student engagement – which was conceived by all of the thinkers as necessary for learning – when students might not be interested in what teachers believe they should be learning.

Chapter One

Introduction

My analysis in this dissertation is focused on studenting. By studenting I mean what students are thought to do to learn as well as students' work negotiating and managing being in schools. It is productive to attend to students' work in schools because students' work leads to a key goal of schooling – learning outcomes. This analysis is important precisely because learning outcomes and studenting are distinct. Learning outcomes are the products, the knowledge that students construct or assimilate as a result of their own practices, and the interests, knowledge and experiences they bring to their work. Studenting, meanwhile, comprises the processes, activities and actions that students take to construct or assimilate that learning. Studenting has not been considered much. Instead, more attention has been paid to what teachers do and to learning outcomes.

David K. Cohen, Stephen Raudenbush and Deborah Ball's illustration of "instruction as interaction" provides a particularly rich opportunity to illustrate the attention that I bring to studenting.[1] I focus on the component of the teaching and

[1] Cohen, David K., Stephen W. Raudenbush, and Deborah Lowenberg Ball. Summer, 2003. *Resources, Instruction, and Research*. Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis 25 (2):119-142.

learning process that concerns what students do. Cohen, Raudenbush and Ball wrote:

> What we casually call teaching is not what teachers do, say, or think, though that is what many researchers have studied and many innovators have tried to change. Teaching is what teachers do, say, and think with learners, concerning content, in particular organizations and other environments, in time. Teaching is a collection of practices, including pedagogy, learning, instructional design, and managing organization.[2]

In this study I look at the student corner of the teaching/learning triangle that Cohen, Raudenbush and Ball developed, the portion of their representation that concerns what students do or are meant to do.

I seek to disentangle what behavior is thought to be involved in studenting – i.e., what various educational thinkers wrote students are to do to learn. My analysis centers on those student activities educators envisioned as crucial for learning achievement and/or navigating schools.[3] A central question runs through my analysis: how have educators, theorists, researchers and sociologists understood studenting? I examine what these thinkers believed teachers and

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[2] Cohen, Raudenbush and Ball, p. 124.

[3] The term "learning" can signify two distinct phenomena: either the tasks of learning or learning outcomes and achievement. Fenstermacher wrote of this: "we make the term 'learning' do double duty, sometimes using it to refer to what the student actually acquires from instruction (achievement), and other times using it to refer to the process the student uses to acquire content (task)…the term 'learning' functions in both a task and achievement sense." In order to draw a clear distinction between these two meanings of the term "learning," "tasks" or "actions" are used to clarify the first definition, and "achievement," or "outcomes" are used to signify the second. Fenstermacher, Gary. 1986. Philosophy of Research on Teaching: Three Aspects. In *Handbook of Research on Teaching*, edited by M. C. Wittrock. New York: Macmillan Library Reference USA, Simon and Schuster Macmillan, p. 39.

students were responsible for, whether and when these responsibilities shift in the teaching/learning relationship, and the actions associated with these responsibilities. I investigate studenting by analyzing three important and historically rooted arguments about the nature of studenting, all of which continue today: what students bring to their work; the politics of studenting, which here means how students respond to learning under conditions of compulsion; and, the nature of the work that students were to do. This is a study of those ideas and arguments, with attention to the historical context of those ideas. I illuminate the main lines of thought pertaining to studenting, and how these changed and persisted as society and schools transformed. I investigate the boundaries of students' roles in classrooms, and seek to understand the differences between and the similarities amongst these views.

Investigating studenting is compelling because students' actions and work in schools leads to one of the key goals of schooling: learning outcomes. Students do the work of learning, but educational researchers have not paid much attention to that work. It is worth attending to what thinkers have assumed students would have to do to learn in order to better understand the implications of their schemes for teaching and learning. The texts I consider have not been brought together for sustained analysis of the implications of their understanding of studenting – these thinkers' ideas about studenting have not received much attention or analysis. By bringing this frame and my central question about studenting, I uncover key differences but also striking continuity over time, as well

as important nuance common to the thinkers considered here. Though the three sets of thinkers that I study wrote at different times and with different theoretical frames, I find that enabling effective studenting comes down to managing a fundamental problem: how to secure engagement when it is necessary for learning, but when students might not be interested in that which teachers believe they should learn. Thus, one of my seminal findings is the endurance of this key problem over nearly a century and a half of extended educational debate.

Focusing on studenting allows us to see and understand these thinkers in a new way, with more nuance. Thus, for example, I find that there were important consistencies – not just inconsistencies – between and among the thinkers that I consider, even while they have often been seen as divergent. For instance, the heated debate between Horace Mann and the Boston Masters in the mid-1840s has long been understood as a dialogue between opposing sides, near polar opposites. But here, I uncover some important similarities among the five responsive texts the Masters and Mann authored. For instance, though Mann and the Masters proposed different means for enabling students' engagement, neither saw studenting as something that was done *to* students but rather *by* students; both wrote that students would have to self-discipline and engage in teacher constructed tasks. Therefore, looking through this lens refocuses and recasts previous understandings of historical debates and thinkers.

Taken together, the answers to my question represent how students' work has been understood, and the relationships between students' work and learning and teaching in schools. The result will better inform our understanding of how thinkers have thought that the student role is enacted and what they have argued that schools and teachers do to support studenting. Bringing these questions to these texts enables an analysis trained on better understanding the way that thinkers have seen student work in U.S. classrooms. By asking my questions of the texts included in this analysis, I uncover differences and similarities, and come to better understand the thinkers' views. My analysis distils and uncovers thinkers' assumptions and expectations for students' work, and what thinkers thought students would have to do in schools to create learning.

Gadamer wrote of the possibility of dialectical analysis expanding what he referred to as the "horizon of expectations."[4] My work "opens up" new understanding of students' work, expanding both what is asked as well as what is seen when considering studenting. Larry Cuban, an historian, made a similar point about teachers in his book *How Teachers Taught: Constancy and Change in American Classrooms*:

> Few historians know what happened in those classrooms. Much is known about school – who went to school, how schools were operated, who was in charge, who taught, and what was taught – yet little is known of what teachers did in their classrooms.[5]

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[4] Gadamer, p. 269.

[5] Cuban, Larry. 1993. How *Teachers Taught: Constancy and Change in American Classrooms 1880-1990*. New York: Teachers College Press, p. 24.

Cuban sought to find out how *teachers* taught – what their work in classrooms was. I seek to find out how thinkers conceived of *student's* work. My focus on students is important; my work will help us better understand what student work thinkers assumed was necessary – what studenting was thought to lead to learning outcomes. However, in my study I do not deal with learning outcomes, if that term is taken to refer to what students actually did; of all those considered only the Boston Visiting Committee and the sociologists considered in Chapter Four actually focused on learning outcomes. I do, however, explicitly take up what students were expected or intended to learn, in part because ideas about what students were intended to do were inseparable from what they were expected to learn. In large part this is because one cannot deal with studenting without explaining what students were expected to learn.

How has the term "studenting" been used?

The term "studenting" was coined and first elaborated by Gary D. Fenstermacher in his essay "Philosophy of Research on Teaching: Three Aspects." David Ericson and Frederick Ellett Jr. wrote:

> The inelegant, but descriptively accurate, term 'studenting' was originally introduced by Gary D Fenstermacher in 'Philosophy of Research on Teaching.' It refers to those activities of the student often necessary for student achievement.[6]

[6] Ericson, David P., and Frederick S. Ellett Jr. July 2, 2002. "The Question of the Student in Educational Reform." *Education Policy Analysis Archives* 10 (31), p. 21.

While I might argue that the term is no more inelegant than the term "teaching," a more serious disagreement concerns Ericson and Ellett's contention that Fenstermacher constrained his definition of studenting to only those activities and practices which would lead to learning achievement. Fenstermacher did dedicate much of his work in his 1986 piece to what I call this first category of studenting practices. He wrote:

> There are a range of activities connected with studenting that complement the activities of teaching. For example, teachers explain, describe, define, refer correct, and encourage. Students recite, practice, seek assistance, review, check, locate sources, and access material…[7]

Ericson and Ellett wrote that a student whose work was defined by these studenting practices could be considered an "ideal student." As such, they wrote that this would mean that the student's work would include:

> practicing, mastering, and engaging in exactly those activities Fenstermacher speaks of in 'studenting:' attending to instructions and explanations carefully, reading closely, critically discussing thoroughly, investigating thoughtfully, questioning eagerly, practicing with an eye to proficiency, appraising carefully, etc.[8]

But while these constructive or effective student practices comprised the key first category of studenting, Fenstermacher also included a second set of studenting practices that have to do with students' work managing being in schools. John Wallace and Helen Wildy wrote:

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[7] Fenstermacher, 1986, p. 39.
[8] Ericson and Ellett, p. 5.

> The notion of studenting was first introduced by Fenstermacher, who used the term to describe the various tasks that a student performs in order to learn. Fenstermacher acknowledged that studenting involves … getting along with teachers, peers and parents, and handling the non-academic aspects of school life.[9]

In his 1986 piece, Fenstermacher balanced these two categories of studenting. He argued that each was included in his definition of studenting, and that the teachers' role – in fact, the teacher's main responsibility – was enabling effective studenting, studenting that would lead to learning achievement. Teachers' work was to center on supporting students' practices, for: "learning [achievement] is an upshot of studenting, not an effect that follows from teaching as a cause."[10] At this time, then, Fenstermacher's definition of studenting encompassed students' work and practices that would lead to learning achievement, but also their work managing and negotiating their role in schools.

But, in a paper Fenstermacher presented at AERA in 1994 (which he subsequently revised in 1997), his focus was almost exclusively on the make-work, managing aspects of studenting. Fenstermacher's view seems to have shifted; the effects of what he termed the "systemics" of schools seem to have convinced him that, more often than not, studenting in U.S. schools was characterized by the second category of studenting activities: "To the student,

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[9] Wallace, John, and Helen Wildy. April 2004. Old Questions for New Schools: What are the Students Doing? *Teachers College Record* 106 (4):635-650, p. 646.

[10] Fenstermacher, 1986, p. 39.

school is a game constituted entirely by its rules."[11] Fenstermacher argued that the systemics of U.S. schools "detracts from the actual learning of the disciplines or mastery of the performing arts,"[12] such that:

> the student becomes proficient in doing the kinds of things that students do, such as 'psyching out' teachers, figuring out how to get certain grades, 'beating the system,' dealing with boredom so that it is not obvious to teachers, negotiating the best deals on reading and writing assignments, threading the right line between curricular and extra-curricular activities, and determining what is likely to be on the test and what is not.[13]

In this 1997 piece, Fenstermacher did not argue that students' work was solely characterized by the practices included in this second category of studenting, but he did write that effective student practices "may be quite subsidiary to learning this content in the context of the systemics of schooling."[14] Ericson and Ellett joined Fenstermacher in their recommendations, that the only way to "diminish the impact of the systemics of schooling on the performances of students"[15] would be "transforming the educational system."[16] As I detail in Chapter Four of this dissertation, this is precisely the conclusion that Willard Waller reached in 1932 in *The Sociology of Teaching*.

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[11] Fenstermacher, Gary D. April 5, 1994, revised 1997. On the Distinction Between Being a Student and Being a Learner. Paper read at Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, at New Orleans, LA, p. 2. Fenstermacher defined the "systemics" of schooling as "the institutional dynamics of the setting," p. 1.

[12] Fenstermacher, 1997, p. 5.

[13] Fenstermacher, p. 1.

[14] Fenstermacher, p. 4.

[15] Fenstermacher, p. 6.

[16] Ericson and Ellett, p. 21.

Nearly two decades after Fenstermacher coined the term, Wallace and Wildy also used the term studenting in their examination of school reform. Wallace and Wildy had studied a school, Waverley, for nearly a decade, and concluded that it was a "good school to be working in – open to scrutiny and welcoming of outsiders such as ourselves. We felt that this was about as good as it gets in a school."[17] Asking themselves "if our eyes were becoming a little tired," they searched for a "different angle," and made the "arbitrary decision that one of us should shadow a student, to attempt to see the school through a different set of eyes."[18] This "arbitrary" decision yielded surprising results. What Wallace and Wildy found was student work that was not nearly as engaging as they had expected given the teaching practices and reform efforts they had observed and written about. They were "surprise[d]" because they "expected that Jake's learning would be more continuous, more exciting, and more engaging." Informed and grounded by a new focus on studenting, what these researchers reported was very different than when they had looked "at these earlier lessons through the eyes of the teacher."[19] In the first case, they reported that they found

> evidence of teachers experimenting with their practice and negotiating the curriculum, of students taking responsibility for their work and of the use of alternative forms of assessment… But this time, as I tried to put myself in the shoes of an individual student, I told Helen that I had a different kind of feeling about the classroom experience.[20]

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[17] Wallace and Wildy, p. 637.
[18] Wallace and Wildy, p. 637.
[19] Wallace and Wildy, p. 639.
[20] Wallace and Wildy, p. 641.

Bringing this new lens, or frame, to their longitudinal observation of what they had deemed a successful school allowed Wallace and Wildy to see many things they had not seen before. Focusing on studenting, they saw that the hard work of school change might have resulted in new teaching practices, but that students' practices did not follow suit. Thus, just as bringing my questions to historical texts allows me to understand these scholars in a new way, so did focusing on studenting allow Wallace and Wildy to see important things they had not seen before.

This seems to validate Fenstermacher's 1986 claim that "…research should be based on a notion of teaching that has as its point the performance of certain kinds of tasks and activities by students."[21] It is precisely this "notion" that I bring to my analysis of how thinkers have understood studenting. For my purposes, I use Fenstermacher's broader definition of studenting – I look at these texts and examine the thinkers' views of studenting practices – both those that were thought effective for learning achievement, and those that were seen as defenses or reactions to formal schooling in the U.S. In this way I can examine what thinkers thought students would have to do to create learning, as well as what practices they were designing against.

[21] Fenstermacher, 1986, p. 41.

Analytic frame

All three sets of thinkers that I consider wrote about the management of a set of common problems: how to mobilize student engagement when school is compelled; how – or whether – to utilize student interests and knowledge when these do not consistently reinforce what teachers see as necessary work; and how to enable students to transfer their work in schools to their lives out of them. When I bring my central question to analysis of the texts, the answers fall within three key elements: the knowledge that students were thought to bring to their work; the politics of studenting, which here connotes how students' responses to learning under conditions of state compulsion are understood by the thinkers; and the nature of the work that students were thought to have to do. These elements structure and frame my analysis of the texts.

The first element – the knowledge that students were thought to bring to their work, relates to this problem: how—or whether – to utilize student knowledge and interests when these do not consistently reinforce what teachers see as necessary work. The component implies the problem – whether and how to use and enable students to use, the knowledge, experiences and interests that they bring to their work. The second component – the politics of studenting, relates to this problem: how to compel engaged student work. And, the third building element, the nature of the work that students were thought to do, relates

to the final problem the thinkers tried to solve – how to enable students to transfer or relate their work in schools to their lives out of them. For the texts seem to answer the question – what does the thinker see as the nature of the work that students were to do? - by relating the nature of students' work in schools to their work outside of them. Thus, some thought that tasks needed to be "authentic" or grounded in "real" problem-solving for students to learn in school and in order for students to relate their work in school to their work out of school, while others, like William T. Harris, felt that the humanist curriculum was inherently meaningful and that its relation to work out of schools was intrinsic to the material itself.

In seeking to better understand ideas about studenting, I bring a central question to my study. French historian Marc Bloch wrote of the importance of first questions, or direction:

> research supposes that the inquiry has a direction at the very first step. In the beginning, there must be the guiding spirit. Mere passive observation, even supposing such a thing were possible, has never contributed anything productive to any science.[22]

The process of developing my analytic frame was iterative and inductive. After intensive work with the texts for my preliminary analysis, I developed the frame from my analysis of the texts. Thus, the three building elements of my frame – the knowledge that students bring to their work, the politics of studenting, and the nature of the work that students are to do – were generated from my analysis of

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[22] Bloch, Marc. 1953. *The Historian's Craft*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., p. 66.

the texts, and structure my work in that they comprise the key questions I ask of all of the texts I consider. Gadamer wrote: "what decides a question is the preponderance of reasons for the one against the other possibility."[23] The three elements of my frame can be seen as a set of common problems all the thinkers set out the answer, and their answers add up to an answer to the overarching question that guides my research – how was studenting understood?

Overview of the conversations

In order to answer the question above I examine three conversations on students' work; the first occurred at the inception of public education in the U.S**.** during the Common School era, the second at the turn of the 20th century when school enrollment continued to swell and urbanization and industrialization increased, and the third in the early to mid 1900s when the school system was maturing. My analysis turns on the three key components detailed above. Across these categories, I investigate both the key agreements and disagreements between these thinkers' understandings of studenting. In the first group I analyze works by Horace Mann, Warren Colburn, the Boston Masters and the Boston Grammar School Visiting Committee. In the second group I focus on texts by John Dewey and William Torrey Harris. In the third group I focus on studies by

[23] Gadamer, p. 328.

Helen and Robert Lynd, August Hollingshead, Willard Waller, and W. Lloyd Warner, Robert Havighurst, and Martin Loeb.

I recognize that there is a raft of secondary sources and scholars who have considered the primary texts I analyze. I use secondary sources for two things: to "place" the primary authors and the texts I have included, for providing historical understandings of these authors' positions; and, to investigate how, or if, they considered studenting.[24] Where I found evidence that they did – which was rare – I note that. In my search for these secondary sources, I was advised by Professor David K. Cohen and Professor Jeffrey Mirel. Since most of the secondary works on the primary texts that I examine have little to do with studenting, they each counseled me that it would have been inappropriate to survey the entire body of literature. Instead, they recommended the inclusion of secondary sources that would most likely yield evidence regarding studenting.

In Chapter Two, I consider thinkers whose work spans the Common School era – from 1825-1850.[25] This was the first time in U.S. history when problems of democratic politics began to interact with problems of instruction – a development that has continued ever since. On the one hand, schools and

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[24] Thus, for example, the secondary material that is included in Part I – by Hogan, Messerli, Ravitch, Cremin, Hayes, Katz, Welter and others – is useful for contextualizing Mann, Colburn, The Boston Masters and the Boston Visiting Committee's views, for providing historical understandings of these authors' roles and positions, as well as for elucidating how Mann, Colburn and the Boston Visiting Committee were part of a larger trend that was influenced by Pestalozzian thought and new views on authority and discipline. As another example, I elucidate how David Cohen's analysis of Willard Waller's *Sociology of Teaching* begins to explore Waller's views on students' work.

[25] Kaestle, Carl F. 1983. Pillars of the Republic. New York: Hill and Wang.

school systems were being built, with the hope of social makeover and saving democracy, but on the other hand the inherited ideas about instruction were mostly conventional, often Calvinist in tone if not content. Some reformers were so focused on problems of inequality that they seemed to ignore pedagogy – the methods or principles of instruction; equal schools for all were their priority.[26] Some others, including the Boston Masters, sought to preserve authority and tradition against what they saw as permissive politics and education, even as they alternately pushed for improvements in both teaching and learning outcomes in common schools. Others, including Horace Mann, were concerned that inherited approaches to instruction would be at cross purposes with the political agenda, and sought to adapt, adopt, or fashion instruction that would encourage rather than discourage democratic virtues. Others were concerned with more effective instruction, and like Warren Colburn, who wrote an early math textbook, designed instructional resources to improve on teaching and learning tasks and outcomes. In these, pedagogy, equality, tradition, authority, and democratic virtues combine; I investigate both the similarities and differences in these thinkers' conceptions of studenting, and associated ideas about the nature of learning and success in school. Together, analysis of these thinkers' views helps construct a better understanding of ideas on teaching and learning as an

[26] See, for example: The Working Men's Party. Aug. 16, 1828, reprinted 1958. In *A Documentary History of American Industrial Society*, edited by J. R. Commons, U. B. Phillips, E. A. Gilmore, H. L. Sumner and J. B. Andrews. New York: Russell & Russell. Original edition, Mechanic's Free Press.

accomplishment of instruction at the inception of public education in the U.S., and more specifically, of studenting.

The thinkers included in Chapter Two, from the Common School era, illustrate a schism between proponents of authority, tradition, and political stability on one hand, and initiative, "natural" learning, and political and social reform on the other. Nevertheless, this story is not one of stark dichotomies, but instead more nuanced differences and similarities in conceptions of studenting. As I look across these thinkers' views, I observe different ideas of what activities students should engage in to learn, and what teachers were to do to support learning, but also important overlap. There is analytic leverage from the differences between as well as the similarities amongst these thinkers' views.

Following the common school era, at the dawn of the 20th century, school enrollment increased at the same time as worry about the corrosive effects of industrialism and urbanization on democratic values. In Chapter Three I consider works by William T. Harris and John Dewey, which were written between 1879 and 1916. According to William C. Bagley, this time was marked by a "vast upward expansion of mass-education on a scale unprecedented in history and unparalleled elsewhere in the contemporary world."[27] Expansion of the schools occurred alongside of massive growth in the population of U.S. cities, successive waves of immigration, and industrialization. Educational philosophers and researchers focused on how to manage these changes, which were often seen

[27] Bagley, William C. 1939. The Significance of the Essentialist Movement in Educational Theory. *The Classical Journal* 34 (6):326-344. P. 330.

as hostile to community and democracy. Some, including Dewey, envisioned schools in which community, problem-solving and teamwork would ground students' work. Others, including Harris, wanted to ground schools with what Bagley called the "stable curriculum"[28] which they argued had been usurped by faddist attention to activity and integration in schools, further degrading students' capabilities and inhibiting their ability to engage in the democratic process. Others sought to streamline schools' work, and worked to determine what the most effective teaching would be.[29] In these, changes to both society and schools seemed to threaten and challenge democracy but also schools; what are the consequences of attention to these for understandings of students' work? Here, again, pedagogy, equality, tradition, authority, and democratic virtues combine; thus, in Chapter Three I investigate similarities and differences in the conceptions of studenting among texts by Harris and Dewey, and associated ideas about the nature of learning in school.

The thinkers included in Chapter Four brought a different perspective to their work. This set – all sociologists – were interested in schools' roles in the social order, and in how schools as organizations worked, and why they worked that way. These sociologists looked at schools as they were versus schools as they *could* or *should* be. In these studies, there is a strikingly different view of what was thought to be possible – to this group schools seemed to be the

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[28] Bagley, p. 327.

[29] Thorndike, Edward L. 1916. *The Principles of Teaching: Based on Psychology*. New York: A. G. Seiler.

problem not the solution. Each of these thinkers wrestled, to varying extents, with the question: is authentic learning possible in mass-attended schools? I examine what teachers and students were seen to be responsible for, whether and when these responsibilities shift in the teaching/learning relationship, and the actions associated with these responsibilities.

Methods

I analyze three important arguments about the nature of studenting, all of which continue today; my work is a study of those ideas and arguments, with attention to the historical context of those ideas. My main analytic approach is interpretive. Wetherell, Taylor, and Yates write:

> In many (though not all) areas of social science, a typical piece of research now involves the analysis of text or interviews. This research is usually intensive rather than extensive and involves interpretation as the main analytic activity.[30]

Some of the texts which are included in this analysis pay explicit attention to the work that students do to learn, and only implicitly on the work that students do alongside of teachers. In my analysis I pay careful attention to the thinkers' views of both students' and teachers' practices and behavior, and the thinkers' definitions and constructions of student work.

Hayden White wrote of the challenges of textual analysis and interpretation:

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[30] Wetherell, Margaret, Stephanie Taylor, and Simeon Yates. 2001. *Discourse as Data: A Guide for Analysis*. London: Sage, p. 2.

> Although an interpretation typically wishes to speak the literal truth about its objects of interest, it is generated by a fundamental sense of the inadequacy of any convention of literalness to the representation of those objects. This is why all genuinely interpretative discourse must always appear as both a play of possible figurations of its objects of interest and an allegorization of the act of interpreting itself.[31]

I have sought to engage texts so as to work out common understandings, to illuminate the ways that these thinkers understood students' work. Gadamer wrote of this approach as dialectical, and he saw "dialectic as the art of conducting a conversation [which] is also the art of seeing things in the unity of an aspect (*sunoran eis hen eidos*) i.e. it is the art of the formation of concepts as the working out of the common meaning."[32] Throughout my analysis, I will be "primarily interested in making them [texts] speak so that he [I] may understand them."[33] In this section I detail my methodological approach. But, "making" literary texts speak is not, as Gadamer wrote, the same as engaging a living person: "It is true that a text does not speak to us in the same way as does another person. We… must ourselves make it speak."[34]

To begin, the researcher asks questions. Gadamer wrote that asking questions is an important acknowledgement of not knowing, of seeking knowledge and understanding: "The logical form of the question, and the negativity that is part of it, find their fulfillment in a radical negativity: the

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[31] White, Hayden. 1988. The Rhetoric of Interpretation. *Poetics Today* 9 (2): 25-274, p. 255.

[32] Gadamer, p. 331.

[33] Bloch, p. 90.

[34] Gadamer, p. 340.

knowledge of not knowing,"[35] further: "In order to be able to ask, one must want to know, which involves knowing that one does not know."[36] This acknowledgement is vitally important, for any question brings with it context, meaning and structure. Knowing that one does not know is key to the construction of open questions. Gadamer wrote that objectivity is unattainable. Given that, openness was proposed as one key salve. But, there is a relationship between what is asked and what is answered; the question is related to what can be comprised in the answer. Thus, "the question has to be asked. The asking of it implies openness, but also limitation. It implies the explicit establishing of presuppositions, in terms of which can be seen what still remains open."[37] Managing this tension between inherent presuppositions and the "openness" of research questions is a key challenge of this work.

Thus, two important components of successful research of this kind are recognizing these presuppositions even while constructing open questions. Throughout I strive to recognize the possibility of prejudice that comes from my "horizon," the potential for presuppositions resulting from the way that these texts have been understood and interpreted. Potential prejudices or suppositions about these texts could have included any of the following, for example: Harris as conservative and non-progressive,[38] the Boston Masters as little more than punitive, Dewey as unintelligible or "child centered" and not interested in the

[35] Gadamer, p. 325.
[36] Gadamer, p. 326.
[37] Gadamer, p. 327.
[38] Thus, for example, Null and Ravitch wrote that Harris was "painted" as "behind the times, out of touch and 'traditional,'" p. 307-8.

curriculum.[39] Another type of presupposition would be to bring a contemporary horizon onto the thinkers' texts – so, for example, to read Warner's and the others' support of tracking as simply regressive. In part this process was assisted by the uniqueness of the questions themselves, for these texts have not been engaged in a concerted analysis about students' work before; the line of questioning is new, even if many of the texts have been interrogated before.

Historian Marc Bloch did not use the terminology of "openness" but instead he wrote of the importance of "elasticity" in the process of questioning: "the method of cross-examination must be very elastic, so that it may change its direction or improvise freely for any contingency, yet be able, from the outset, to act as a magnet drawing findings out of the document."[40] Open questions or elastic questioning will be especially key for recognizing what the sociologists saw as students' work. The Chapter Four sociologists noticed and paid attention to different aspects of students' work, in actual schools. If my questions only acknowledge or allow consideration of one part of students' work – their work with academic content, for example – I might not be able to see the authenticity that they wrote existed in students' work in extra-curriculars and in vocational classes. Thus, keeping my analysis trained on what student work consisted of is

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[39] Ravitch in *Left Back* and Null and Ravitch in *Forgotten Heroes* aimed specifically to dispel misunderstandings and prejudices about educators that they saw as "dissidents" and to re-introduce educators to "significant educators" who were "almost completely ignored" (Null and Ravitch, p. xi). In this way they tried to challenge readers to bring a "Beginners' mind" to these authors' works. Further, they argued that because "they [the dissident educators] lost the arguments, their role as leaders and thinkers was almost completely ignored by historians of education" (p. xi).

[40] Bloch, p. 65.

key to ensuring the “openness” of my questions, and will allow me to see the shift in the definition of students’ work in the sociologists’ work.

While some of these texts have been extensively analyzed, they have not been brought together before for analysis of their implications for students’ work. I bring to this study a commitment to better understanding views of studenting; to exploring the main lines of thought pertaining to conceptions of studenting, and how these changed and persisted as society and schools themselves transformed. In this research I investigate the boundaries of students’ roles in classrooms, and seek to better understand the differences between and the similarities amongst these views, and how they changed and remained constant over time.

Chapter Two

Conceptions of studenting in the Common School Era (1825-1850)

Introduction

My work investigating understandings of studenting begins here, with consideration of how students' work – studenting – was understood at the inception of public education in the United States, during the Common School era.[41] My analysis explores the contested nature of ideas about what students need to do to learn, as I seek to disentangle what behavior was thought to be involved in studenting, as well as *who* was understood to have agency for *what*, *when*. Ideas about students' work and life in schools have not been homogenous; instead, researchers' and other commentators' ideas about what students do and should do in classrooms have been widely debated.

Disagreement about studenting hinges in large part on conceptions of what students must do to learn, and what teachers are thought to have to do to enable students' work. In some instances students bring their knowledge and experience to their work with teachers and academic problems, while in others

[41] Historian Carl Kaestle places the Common School Era between 1825-1850. Kaestle, Carl F. 1983. *Pillars of the Republic*. New York: Hill and Wang.

they apply themselves to incorporating authoritative knowledge from teachers.[42] Underlying these views are divergent understandings of what comprises important student work, where agency lies, and the work that students do to create learning outcomes. The thinkers considered here developed these threads, and these ideas continue in ongoing discussions of how to enable student engagement in U.S. classrooms.[43]

In this analysis studenting is understood to be comprised of the activities and tasks that students must engage in because they are thought to lead to learning outcomes. Studenting is understood to be the *means* to learning outcomes. Therefore, my analysis centers on the student work that is envisioned as crucial for learning outcomes to be met. A central set of questions regarding understandings of studenting runs through my analysis. How was studenting understood at the inception of public education in the U.S? What did educators see as the nature of students' tasks? And, where did they locate agency for teaching and learning? In this analysis, agency has to do with both teachers' and

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[42] Bagley wrote about this tension: "the freedom of the immature to choose what they shall learn is of small consequence compared with their later freedom from the want, fear, fraud, superstition, and error which may fetter the ignorant as cruelly as the chains of the slave-driver – and the price of this freedom is systematic and sustained effort often devoted to the mastery of materials the significance of which must at the time be taken on faith" (p. 340). Bagley, William C. 1939. The Significance of the Essentialist Movement in Educational Theory. *The Classical Journal* 34 (6):326-344.

[43] For example, Ravitch linked Mann's condemnation of the "alphabet method" and his support of the "word method" to Progressive-era thinkers: "Mann believed that children's earliest books should teach whole words, skipping the alphabet and the sound of the letters. Other reformers agreed… Progressive educators recoiled against any sort of linguistic or phonetic analysis in the classroom. The word method appealed to them because it seemed to be a 'natural' way of learning, a way of avoiding the tedious drill required to teach the sounds of letters." Ravitch, Diane. 2000. *Left Back: A Century of Failed School Reforms*. New York: Simon & Schuster, p. 357.

students' responsibilities and actions in learning and teaching. Thus, I examine what teachers and students were seen to be responsible for during the Common school era, whether and when responsibilities shift in the teaching/learning relationship, and the nature of the actions associated with these responsibilities. This investigation is important, for taken together, the answers will represent how students' work was understood during this time frame, and understandings of the relationships between students' work and learning outcomes and teaching in schools. Given that student learning achievement is a key purpose of schooling, constructing better understandings of views of studenting, or the means to learning outcomes, is crucial.

In this chapter I examine the work of Horace Mann, the Boston Masters, Warren Colburn, and the Boston Visiting Committee.[44] These individuals and

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[44] Mann, Horace. 1844. *Reply to the "Remarks" of Thirty-one Boston Schoolmasters on the Seventh Annual Report of the Secretary of the Massachusetts Board of Education*. Boston: Wm. B. Fowle and Nahum Capen; Mann, Horace. 1845. *Answer to the "Rejoinder" of Twenty-Nine Boston Schoolmasters, Part of the"Thirty-One" who published "Remarks" on the Seventh Annual Report of the Secretary of the Massachusetts Board of Education*. Boston: Wm. B. Fowle and Nahum Capen; Mann, Horace. 1846. *Report of an educational tour in Germany, and parts of Great Britain and Ireland, being part of the seventh annual report of Horace Mann, esq., Secretary of the Board of education*. London: Simpkin, Marshall, and company;Colburn, Warren. 1821, reprinted 1863. *Warren Colburn's First Lessons: Intellectual arithmetic upon the inductive method of instruction*. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company; Colburn, Warren. 1825. *First Lessons in Arithmetic: On the Plan of Pestalozzi, with Some Improvements*. Boston: Harvard University; Colburn, Warren. 1847. *Intellectual Arithmetic, Upon the Inductive Method of Instruction*. Boston: William J. Reynolds & Co; Schools, Association of Masters of the Boston Public. 1844. *Remarks on the Seventh Annual Report of the Hon. Horace Mann*. Boston: Charles C. Little and James Brown; Schools, Association of the Masters of the Boston Public. 1845. *Rejoinder to the "Reply" of the Hon. Horace Mann, Secretary of the Massachusetts Board of Education, to the "Remarks" of the Association of Boston Masters, Upon his Seventh Annual Report*. Boston: Charles C. Little and James Brown. For the remainder of this analysis I refer to the writings of the Association of Masters of the Boston Public Schools as the "Boston Masters." It should be noted, however, that Mann refused to call them this: "I cannot call them the 'Boston teachers,' because they do not constitute one seventh part of that body. I cannot call them the 'Grammar and Writing masters,' because the names of all those masters do not appear. Being

groups were involved in education in various ways – reform, practice, oversight, and, in one case – Colburn – a textbook author. Analysis of these thinkers' views helps construct a better understanding of studenting at the inception of public education in the U.S. My analysis is not one of utter polarities – instead, this story highlights more nuanced differences and similarities in understandings of studenting. While there were varying understandings of studenting that would lead to learning outcomes and what teachers were to do to support students' work, there were also important commonalities.

Horace Mann, the Boston Masters, Warren Colburn, and the Boston Visiting Committee were deeply involved in U.S. education between the 1820s and 1840s. Mann, who was Secretary of the Board of Education of Massachusetts from 1837-1848, wrote twelve Annual Reports which were widely circulated, and in which he laid out the case for Common Schools, reported on the state of the schools in and out of his state and the country, and advocated for educational reforms. The Boston Masters were a group of schoolteachers in Boston's Grammar schools; they wrote in reply to Mann's *Seventh Annual Report*. They defended their teaching practices and argued against Mann's suggested reforms as practitioners. The Boston Visiting Committee had been a

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thirty-one in number, I cannot well call a roll of their several names" (Mann, Reply, p. 11). He settled upon calling them "the Thirty-one," as "they are like thirty-one Vulgar Fractions multiplied into themselves, - yielding a most contemptible product" (*Reply*, p. 12); Young, Alexander, Aurelius D. Parker, Winslow Lewis, Samuel G. Howe, and Ezra Palmer. 1845. *Reports of the Annual Visiting Committees of the Public Schools of the City of Boston*. Boston: J. H. Eastburn, City Printer.

long-standing group that, according to historian Jonathan Messerli, had "previously" been "more ceremonial than evaluative."[45] Given the acrimonious interchange between the Boston Masters and Mann, some of Mann's allies were elected to the Boston School Board with the express intent of supporting Mann. They overhauled the evaluation of the Boston schools to substantively assess teaching and learning outcomes in these schools. They reported on their findings, and explored the relationship between instruction and the learning outcomes they documented.

Warren Colburn wrote a series of mathematics textbooks which were big sellers in the early and mid-1800s: The first edition of his *First Lessons in Intellectual Arithmetic*, published in 1821, sold more than two million copies worldwide.[46] Colburn was representative of a larger trend that was growing at this time that sought to build upon Pestalozzi's ideas about teaching and learning.[47] In fact, an early edition of his *First Lesson*s was titled: *First Lessons in Arithmetic: On the Plan of Pestalozzi, with some Improvements*, which, according to historian David Hogan, was considered "the first Pestalozzian textbook in the United States."[48] In introductions to his texts Colburn wrote of the

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[45] Messerli, Jonathan. 1972. *Horace Mann: A Biography*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, p. 418.

[46] Colburn published two subsequent editions of *First Lessons*, in 1825 and 1836.

[47] Pestalozzi's *How Gertrude Teaches her Children* is particularly useful for its rich discussion and consideration of students' roles in learning and effective studenting activities. Pestalozzi, Johann Heinrich. 1801, reprinted 1859. How Gertrude Teaches Her Children. In *Pestalozzi and Pestalozzianism: life, educational principles, and methods, of John Henry Pestalozzi, with biographical sketches of several of his assistants and disciples*, edited by H. Barnard: American Journal of Education. Original edition, 1801.

[48] Hogan, David. November, 1990. Modes of Discipline: Affective Individualism and Pedagogical Reform in New England, 1820-1850. *American Journal of Education* 99 (1): p. 16.

importance of building upon student interest and knowledge, and of the value of what he portrayed as a more "natural approach" to learning actions or tasks and teaching. While historical analyses make reference to the existence of these Colburn texts in U.S. schools at the time, there is little analysis of the implications of Colburn's understandings for students' work.[49]

My answer to the question – How was studenting understood at the inception of public education in the U.S.? – turns on three key elements. They are: the knowledge that students bring to their work, the politics of studenting, and the nature of the work that students were thought to have to do. Across the three categories, I attend to both the key agreements and disagreements between these thinkers' understandings of studenting.

All of the thinkers I consider granted that students' knowledge was important, but they disagreed about why, and how to deal with it. Their views on students' knowledge had implications for how they conceived of students' work. Some saw students' knowledge, which included their interests and capabilities, as important starting points for instruction and students' work. Here, pleasure and joy in students' work was important; students would build upon what they already knew, and their work would progress from practical to abstract problem-solving. Others saw attention to students' interests and knowledge as diversion from important work on subject matter. Here, students' work was referred to as

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[49] For example, Messerli wrote that "A town like Cambridge offered an impressive list [of textbooks], including the following: Colburn's First Lessons in Arithmetic…" followed by the names of more than a dozen texts, p. 287.

"toil;" studenting involved memorization and recall, attentive listening and integration of codified knowledge. For some thinkers, students' knowledge was a key point of access for productive teaching, while for others studenting would focus on tasks that centered on academic subject matter. But there are important similarities across these thinkers' views, as well. They all worried about student passivity, and constructed student activities that they thought would lead to learning achievement. Further, to varying extents they all argued against conceptions of students' work as simple transmission; across all of the thinkers considered here, students' actions were key means to learning outcomes.

These views of student knowledge – one built upon students' interests and capabilities and the other on codified subject matter – were reinforced by these thinkers' political and social aims. Some saw stability and respect for law and governance as key goals. In this view, studenting would be marked by obedience to the teachers' guidance and will. On the other hand, the goals were to build common values and common linkages.[50] In this view, studenting would

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[50] Robert L. Church and Michael W. Sedlak, historians who wrote *Education in the United States: An Interpretive History*, provide a particularly rich example of how students' work in schools could establish a common experience, and was thought to build a common citizenry. They wrote of the importance of the spelling-bee, and how Noah Webster's 1782 "blue-backed speller" furthered the common cause of U.S. schools: "Spelling was intimately related to the American people's conceptions of their liberty and their national unity. In the early nineteenth century in England and in the United States the way a man spoke and spelled identified his regional and class background…they [Americans] felt a special concern for eliminating the linguistic evidence of class distinction. If all Americans could read, write, speak, and spell in the same way, it would demonstrate beyond doubt how equal in station they were. The ability to spell words from Webster's speller was a symbol that one held equal rank with everyone else in America." To the common school reformers, spelling and spelling bees were powerful tools for constructing shared

not be marked by obedience but by student initiative and problem solving. One vital similarity was the belief that students' work in schools was salient enough to structure and define citizenship; students' work in schools could define their engagement in their communities. Further, all of these thinkers wrestled with a similar problem – how to secure student engagement – even if they answered this question differently. Teachers' absolute authority was thought salient enough to secure students' obedience on one hand, while a more benevolent approach to teacher guidance, fortified with attention to student interests, was thought to lead to students' self-discipline on the other hand. Though different means for enabling students' self-discipline were proposed, studenting was not seen, by any of these thinkers, as something that was done *to* students but *by* students; students would have to self-discipline and engage in teacher constructed tasks in all of these cases.

Obedience on one hand and student initiative on the other mapped well onto views on the nature of the work that students were to do. Some saw knowledge as codified in books and in teachers' minds. The prime resources for studenting were teachers' recitations and drills, and text study. Studenting would be focused on obedient and faithful work on texts, and attention to recitation and

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experiences across SES and social divisions; U.S. schools, and students' practices in them, were key means for constructing a common citizenry. Church, Robert L., and Michael W. Sedlak. 1976. *Education in the United States: An Interpretive History*. New York: The Free Press, p. 17.

drill. Students' work in recitation and drill involved important investigation and assimilation of codified knowledge. Others wrote that effective studenting occurred when students solved real problems in real situations – practical problem solving that mimicked "natural" learning. Views on the nature of the work that students were to do resulted in different approaches to studenting, one that was more traditional or didactic, and another that was seen as authentic, or in the words of these thinkers, "natural." Despite these differences, in neither case was student work passive; to some thinkers studenting involved active investigation and analysis of codified knowledge, while to others studenting involved solving what were seen as authentic problems. Though students would make use of different instruments and classroom resources, and though student work was situated differently, across these thinkers' views there is important convergence. Students' work investigating, synthesizing and assimilating extant knowledge was the bedrock of each approach.

Together, these three categories were at the heart of these thinkers' conceptions of students' work. But though educators agreed on that, they often disagreed about the categories' educational and political content. Throughout my analysis, which I have organized around these three categories, I detail instances of similarity or agreement in addition to instances of contrast.

What students bring to their work

In order to answer the question proposed here – how was studenting understood at the inception of U.S. schooling? – I begin with an analysis of the thinkers' views on the salience of what students bring to their work. I argue that these thinkers viewed the knowledge that students bring to their work in different ways, and that these differences implied divergent things for students' and teachers' responsibilities and for the actions they were to take. Despite the differences, there were key similarities as well; across the understandings, students were responsible for making use of instructional resources – students' work synthesizing in recitation, and engaging and investigating knowledge in texts was important means to learning outcomes just as students' work problem-solving and building upon their interests was important means to learning outcomes.

The Boston Masters wrote as if knowledge is fixed –objective and codified and held in texts and teachers' minds, outside of students; this view is compatible with an understanding of teachers' and students' responsibilities that would be focused exclusively on the transfer of that knowledge. What students knew, were interested in, or had experienced could not be resources, because these were not knowledge. The Masters wrote that giving attention to students' interests and experiences would weaken student character, and would divert from the legitimate focus of studenting on academic subject matter. Teachers were crucial for their authority and responsibility to focus studenting on subject matter.

Studenting here was not composed of leveraging students' interests in tasks to learn new things. Instead, the Boston Masters wrote that what was needed was student knowledge that would enable transmission of academic subject matter. But there is a key tension here, and an inconsistency in their understanding and view. For, though much of what the Boston Masters wrote implies that student work was primarily transmission, they also wrote: "Education, here, with all her boasted powers must 'Learn to labor and to wait;' leaving much, in faith, for the child to work out himself, with fear and trembling."[51] Here, in this soupcon of a phrase, they implied that students' work might not be simple transmission, but instead would consist of construction or reconstruction of knowledge, and that teachers' work does not directly result in student learning outcomes.

To Mann, Colburn and the Boston Visiting Committee, students brought interest and knowledge to their work learning. The salience of what students bring to their work led to a more iterative relationship between students and teachers, marked by the students' initiative, interest, and evolving capability. Effective teaching would need to build upon and start with students' knowledge – working from their knowledge would enable students to build on what they knew, and was seen as a key point of access for productive teaching. These thinkers saw the knowledge that students brought to their work as an important foundation and starting point, but teachers' work was also seen as crucial for enabling and structuring studenting. Thus, an important similarity

[51] Boston Masters, *Remarks*, p. 118.

amongst all of these thinkers' views was that both teachers' and students' work were seen as necessary for studenting to be effective.

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Different understandings of the knowledge that students bring to their work contributed to these thinkers' views of studenting. Mann, Colburn and the Boston Visiting Committee advocated an iterative relationship; teachers were to assess and build upon student knowledge, their interests and capabilities. So, for example, Mann wrote about the importance of "conversations" between students and teachers. These conversations were means for engaging students, for maintaining their active studenting. And, importantly, they were built upon assessments of students' knowledge, interests, and capabilities. Mann, Colburn and the Boston Visiting Committee wrote that the alternate view, which started with subject-matter and did not consider interest and experience, would not be means to learning achievement.

The Boston Masters condemned Mann's "conversations," and referred to Mann's instructional approach as the "oral method." To them, Mann's "oral method" and other efforts to explicitly build upon student interest and knowledge, made too much of interest, and would result in student passivity. They did not recognize student knowledge as a key access point of teaching. Further, they worried that teachers would be doing students' work if students did not have to integrate and learn "on their own" from recitation, drill, and text. To the Boston

Masters, studenting focused on subject-matter, was seen as disciplined, while studenting which took into consideration student interests was considered passive.

Colburn and Mann's belief in the importance of building on student knowledge was built upon observation of student learning achievement constructed outside of schools. Colburn noted that children problem-solve and make mathematical computations intuitively, from the matter of their observations:

> As soon as a child begins to use his senses, nature continually presents to his eyes a variety of objects; and one of the first properties which he discovers is the relation of number. He intuitively fixes upon unity as a measure, and from this he forms the idea of more and less; which is the idea of quantity.[52]

Colburn wrote that the child's observation of more and less, *in situ*, leads to computation: "If, for example, one child has three apples, and another five, they will readily tell how many they both have; and how many one has more than the other."[53] To Colburn and Mann, then, student learning tasks that privilege common experiences and observation optimize and lead to learning outcomes.

Studenting activities in Colburn's view were constructed to build upon student knowledge. Thus, Colburn's texts were organized around the principle of the importance of attention to the concrete before the abstract. Introducing his textbook, Colburn wrote: "in most instances, immediately after the practical,

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[52] Colburn, *Warren Colburn's First Lessons*, p. 208.
[53] Colburn, *Warren Colburn's First Lessons*, p. 208.

abstract examples are placed, containing the same numbers and the same operations, that the pupil may the more easily observe the connection."[54] Further, students' capability to understand abstract concepts was thought to be constructed from what they already knew. So, for example, Colburn wrote that students would be able to better understand the question: "two and two are how many?" if a teacher first asked: "If you have two cents in one hand, and two in the other, how many have you in both?"[55] Colburn wrote that the student would be able to leverage what he already knew to learn something new, in this case how to solve a mathematical equation; this view was highlighted again by Mann and the Boston Visiting Committee. In each, the justification for working from concrete to abstract problems was related to understandings of student interest and sense-making. "In this way" the Boston Visiting Committee wrote, "the pupils' memory is not cumbered with a variety of rules and definitions, while he is unacquainted with their use and application."[56] [57]

Horace Mann echoed the belief that students bring salient knowledge to their work, and wrote: "Few children go to school who have not seen a fish, -- at least a minnow in a stream. Begin with this, and nature opposes no barrier until the wonders of the deep are exhausted. Let the schoolhouse, as I said, be the

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[54] Colburn, *Warren Colburn's First Lessons*, p. 209.
[55] These questions are taken directly from Colburn's *Intellectual Arithmetic*, pp. 14-16.
[56] Boston Visiting Committee, p. 28.
[57] Half a century later, John Dewey echoed this argument, and wrote about the "serious mistake" that is made when teachers "fail to take account of this body of practical experience." Doing so, he wrote, can be understood as "violating the principle of proceeding from the known to the unknown" (p. 17).

first lesson."[58] All students, according to Mann, bring strength, interests, and experiences to their work, and effective teaching would build upon these: "the knowledge they already possess about common things," Mann wrote, "is made the nucleus around which to collect more; and the language with which they are already familiar becomes the medium through which they communicate new ideas, and by which, whenever necessary, to explain new terms."[59] Samuel Read Hall, who founded the first teacher's seminary in the United States, and whose *Lectures on Schoolkeeping* were seen by David Hogan as "the first mature expression of the New England pedagogy,"[60] also thought that building upon students' knowledge was a crucial approach for effective teaching and studenting. He wrote: "It is of great importance, that the objects used to illustrate, should be those, with the properties of which the pupil is acquainted."[61] If students' learning outcomes would be built upon extant knowledge, then teacher-led instruction should begin with an assessment of that knowledge, and explicit relation of that knowledge to learning tasks. When teaching geography, for example: "no notions are given them which they are not perfectly able to comprehend, reproduce or express," hence, the study of geography should begin with "objects perfectly familiar to the child, -- the schoolhouse…".[62] Students

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[58] Mann, *Seventh Annual Report*, p. 144.
[59] Mann, *Seventh Annual Report*, p. 147.
[60] Hogan, David. November, 1990. Modes of Discipline: Affective Individualism and Pedagogical Reform in New England, 1820-1850. *American Journal of Education* 99 (1):1-56, p. 18.
[61] Wright, Arthur D., and George E. Gardner. 1929. *Hall's Lectures on School-Keeping*. Hanover, NH: The Dartmouth Press, pp. 116-7.
[62] Mann, *Seventh Annual Report*, p. 134.

would use what they already know to learn more – the knowledge they bring to their work was thus understood to be salient resources for studenting.

Thus, students' sense making was seen by Colburn and Mann as necessary but not sufficient for learning achievement. Colburn and Mann understood the knowledge that students would bring to their work as an important foundation and starting point, but teachers' work was also seen as crucial for supporting studenting. Colburn wrote that teachers would need to assess the quality and depth of student knowledge:

> …it will be found on trial that most children when they begin to go to school, do not know well how to count… they learn to count without counting things. This point then calls for the teacher's first attention – to lead the child to apprehend the meaning of each numerical word by using it in connection with objects.[63]

Independent sense-making is thus not infallible; students' individual problem-solving could be effective or superficial. Thus, on the one hand Mann and Colburn wrote that students can observe and problem-solve solo, that they have reservoirs of capability to do so. Nevertheless, Colburn wrote that even the fundamental skill of learning to count can be learned superficially, and is dependent upon teacher instruction. Thus, studenting is necessary, but not

[63] Colburn, *Intellectual Arithmetic*, p. vii.

sufficient for learning outcomes; both teachers' guidance and students' sense making would be necessary.[64]

The Boston Masters, meanwhile, did not see the knowledge that students brought to their work as a dependable resource or foundation for learning, or as a site for construction of studenting activities. The heterogeneity of incoming students' capabilities was seen as a challenge, not a resource for Common School teachers. They bemoaned the difficulty of working in schools populated at one and the same time with the "children of the rich and the poor, the idle and industrious, the moral and immoral"[65] and the difficulty of bringing out "the living expression from the flinty marble, and worse than flinty granite."[66] The Masters did not write of the existence of incoming strengths in each student, upon which to build. Regardless of the interests and experiences that students brought to their learning, teachers' work was to be singularly focused on covering academic subject matter. Students' work was to proceed accordingly, not linking their interests and experiences to new content, but memorizing, listening and integrating, working to assimilate subject matter. The Boston Masters responded to Mann's recommendation to appeal to and build upon interest by stating that

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[64] I began the introduction of this dissertation with a discussion of the instructional triangle developed by Cohen, Raudenbush and Ball. This point is useful illustration of the interrelated nature of teaching and learning that they developed and represented. Cohen, David K., Stephen W. Raudenbush, and Deborah Lowenberg Ball. Summer, 2003. Resources, Instruction, and Research. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* 25 (2):119-142, p. 124.

[65] Boston Masters, *Remarks*, pp. 15-16.

[66] Boston Masters, *Remarks*, p. 36.

such an approach would result in subjugating content and learning outcomes to that interest:

> And since the child cannot 'appreciate the remote benefits' of learning the alphabet, must his caprice govern those who can, and determine them to abandon, even for a time, what they know is all-important in teaching him to read? A child is sick, and cannot appreciate the remote, or immediate benefits of taking disagreeable medicine. Will a judicious parent, who is fully sensible of the child's danger, regard, for one moment, his wishes, to save him from a little temporary disquietude?[67]

The Boston Masters believed that toil inhered in studenting. They wrote that deviating from a focus on subject matter, in order to avoid that hard work, or to appeal to students' interests, was educationally unsound. The Boston Masters argued that attention to student interest and experience would result in abdicating agency to students. When the Masters wrote that students "cannot 'appreciate the remote benefits' of learning the alphabet" they were referring to students' lack of appreciation for both the learning *outcomes* and the learning *tasks* thought to enable those outcomes. They wrote that teachers should hold full responsibility for instructional choices, which should not be ceded to students. Instead, teachers should choose students' work.

The Boston Masters wrote that studenting is marked by hard work; a belief that was shared amongst all of the thinkers considered here. But, to the Boston Masters any effort to ameliorate the admitted bitterness of student work would

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[67] Boston Masters, *Remarks*, pp. 84-5.

pervert studenting and student outcomes. Discomfort was unavoidable, they wrote: "he [the student] should never be hurried over difficulties, at first concealed, yet, in his progress, unavoidable, simply to make his entrance into the temple of learning easy, and agreeable."[68] Struggle was perceived to be an inherent aspect of studenting, and ameliorating that struggle was thought an illegitimate goal of teaching. Students would have to persist on the good faith that their teachers knew better than they:

> A child has no fondness for the dry and uninteresting tables of arithmetic. Shall he, therefore, be gratified in his desire to hasten on to the solution of questions, before acquiring such indispensable pre-requisites? … the responsibilities of the teachers' profession, consist, mainly, in his being required to fashion the manners and tastes of his pupils, to promote habits of thinking and patient toil, and to give direction to their desires and aspirations, rather than to minister to the gratification of their passion for pleasure.[69]

Wrestling with "dry" and "uninteresting" learning tasks would strengthen students' capabilities, and was a defining aspect of the nature of student work in classrooms to the Boston Masters. The Boston Masters viewed memorizing arithmetic tables as sounder studenting than talking of apples or of cents in a hand. And, struggling through such difficulty was thought to be, itself, instructive. Further, students' interests were not resources but mere "passion for pleasure." But, if students' interests and experiences were not seen as resources, that does not imply that students did not bring important knowledge to their work. For, in

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[68] Boston Masters, *Remarks*, p. 56.
[69] Boston Masters, *Remarks*, pp. 84-5.

order to "toil" patiently they would need to know how to memorize these tables, and recall them. To learn from recitations they would need to know how to listen attentively and integrate knowledge. In order to learn from drill, they would need to participate thoughtfully in order to assimilate new content.

The Boston Masters believed that learning achievement could only be constructed upon a foundation. Here again there is both convergence and divergence in the thinkers' views, for Mann wrote:

> However much other knowledge a teacher may possess, it is no equivalent for a mastership in the rudiments. It is not more true in architecture, than in education, that the value of the work, in every upper layer, depends upon the solidity of all beneath it. The leading, prevailing defect in the intellectual department of our schools, is a want of thoroughness, -- a proneness to be satisfied with a verbal memory of rules, instead of a comprehension of principles.[70]

Mann agreed with the Masters about the importance of subject matter, but Mann disagreed with what he saw as the Boston Masters' means to mastering that knowledge. The Boston Masters wrote that mastery of the whole comes from study of the components. The nature of students' work should be both particular and focused – they felt that Mann's attempts to broaden students' work across disciplines might interest students but would only confuse and muddy their understanding: "an allusion to a variety of subjects" they wrote,

> in the same connection with the one to which the attention of the pupil is mainly directed, not only

[70] Mann, in Cremin, p. 45.

> precludes the possibility of his analyzing and classifying what is imparted to him, but so confuses his mind, that he receives no distinct impression of the subjects of his regular study."[71]

When instruction and study is broadened, they wrote, perhaps interest is piqued, but the studenting habits which the Boston Masters aimed to cultivate – "the habit of independent and individual effort" would be weakened, for "the variety of information presented, and the novelty of illustration, would tend rather to dissipate, than to strengthen the habit of calm and deliberate attention to a single subject."[72] Thus, studenting should build systematically, with students memorizing, reciting and focusing their work from rule to rule.

Further, the Boston Masters, in their *Rejoinder* to Mann's *Reply* did not recognize the effort of studenting in Mann's instructional model. The Boston Masters wrote that attention to students' knowledge – their interests and capabilities – resulted in an approach to instruction that detracted from academic subject-matter:

> The oral method is advocated by many, because it is said to relieve the pupil from much of the drudgery of acquisition, and to render that which is imparted more interesting, and hence more impressive. Mr. Mann has evidently approved of this system, because it is the most pleasing to the pupil, lessening the toil of study, lightening his task, and diminishing the necessity for coercion and punishment. I grant that this method is the most pleasing, both to teacher and pupil; it relieves them from much of that irksome

[71] Boston Masters, *Remarks*, p. 50.
[72] Boston Masters, *Remarks*, pp. 45-6.

> drilling which is the tedious part of elementary instruction. It is far more agreeable to lecture to pupils who are animated and eager listeners, than to compel them to severe and continuous study; and it is far more grateful to the pupils to be the passive recipients of knowledge, (if I may use the term in such connection,) rendered simple by the labored illustration of oral instruction, than to acquire it for themselves by constant and toilsome application.[73]

The Boston Masters felt that continuing attention to student interest would detract from content goals, and was tantamount to sugarcoating. They did not recognize students' active work in Mann's "oral method;" they suggested, here, that it would be possible for students to remain passive. The "oral method," and other approaches which privileged interest, in effect demanded only that students "be the passive recipients…"

On the other hand, to Mann, the new approach did not equal passivity but increased activity, nor did it equal immediate transfer of knowledge from teacher to student. Students' work was crucial means to learning outcomes in all of these thinkers' views; none of the thinkers wrote that teachers could "learn" their students. This is a key similarity. However, the thinkers disagreed about the salience of the knowledge that students brought to their work, and how student work should be situated. The Masters worried that Mann's instructional approach ceded important student work to teachers, which would delimit achievement. To the Masters, Mann's teachers' illustrations were akin to a shortcut; these

[73] Boston Masters, *Rejoinder*, pp. 50-1.

illustrations were seen as providing students with teachers' sense-making, instead of necessitating that students investigate and question, in recitation, text-study and drill, themselves. To Mann, the "oral method" built upon students' interests and enabled students to leverage what they already knew in their work assimilating new content.

Analysis of understandings of the salience of students' knowledge for studenting is important for understanding the thinkers' views on effective studenting. Beginning with student interest and experience, teachers were responsible for assessing student knowledge and constructing tasks and activities that privileged student problem-solving. Beginning with teachers' knowledge and codified knowledge, studenting would focus on tasks that centered on academic subject matter, instead of working from what students already knew and understood. Each approach was premised on the importance of students' active work for learning achievement, and was seen as antidote to student passivity.

The politics of studenting

Just as views on the starting points for learning are salient for understandings of effective studenting tasks, so are the end points. Learning outcomes included traditional academic subject matter, but also political and social aims. All of the thinkers considered here married politics and schooling

except for Colburn, whose work was largely apolitical. This union had important implications for students' activities. The different goals these thinkers proposed are important for this analysis insomuch as they informed understandings of students' work and effective studenting. Thus, my focus here is not on the thinkers' social and political goals themselves, but instead on the implications of these for students' work in schools.

The Boston Masters wrote of the importance of stability and lifelong deference to authority and government while Mann aimed for more collaborative and engaged citizenship, and stressed the importance of citizens' involvement for addressing the problems of materialism and inequality. Despite these differences, they each built upon the understandings of what students bring to their work that I developed in the previous section. In the Boston Masters' case, knowledge emanated from outside of students – from texts and teachers and not from their own experiences and interest. The Boston Masters' political goals of stability, authority, and citizens' deference to government aimed to develop respect for authority that was also outside of students – from above – and not questioning of that authority. Meanwhile, in the alternate view, what students brought to their work was seen as important; studenting was marked by the importance of students' initiative, knowledge, and interests. Student engagement was consistent with the importance of civic engagement in Mann's view. So, too was the belief that what students brought to their work was important for learning outcomes, for Mann wrote that expanded civic engagement was both important

and possible. Thus, the political content of studenting in each was consistent with the thinkers' understandings of the importance of student knowledge in studenting.

The Boston Masters, Mann, and the Boston Visiting Committee all agreed that the political and social goals that they advocated were dependent upon what happens in schools. Schools were critical for ensuring stability in one case and refinement and broadening in the other; this is a key point of similarity amongst these thinkers. To the Boston Masters, students' obedience and respect for teachers' authority were crucial for effective classroom management, but also, for teaching compliance to law and government. Mann's political goals were vastly different – he aimed for collaborative and engaged citizenship, and stressed the importance of citizens' involvement.

Each of these goals informed the thinkers' views of students' and teachers' work. In the Boston Masters' case, their view resulted in teachers having the lion's share of responsibility for instructional tasks. Students' responsibility was to follow and obey the teacher. Knowledge and tasks were not to be remade or questioned by students. But, could teachers' authority command students' engagement? Mann, meanwhile, wrote of the importance of studenting activities that were characterized by initiative and problem solving. Mann wrote that teachers' and students' work was to be characterized by harmony, and that the natural bonds of respect between them should guide schoolwork. In order to guide students without corporal punishment or coercion,

teachers would have to capitalize upon students' interests and knowledge, and provide direction and instructional expertise so that students' initiative and problem-solving could be effective. Mann saw discipline and authority as means to lifelong civic engagement, and as crucial to the U.S. system of democratic governance. But, could teachers' guidance and attention to student interests secure students' engagement, and effectively temper what Mann referred to as students' "stubborn wills"? [74] Thus, differences at the confluence of politics and schooling had real consequence for understandings of studenting, as they established the importance of student obedience in one case and student initiative in the other. Student obedience and student initiative were different answers to the same problem – how to secure student engagement.

Schools were seen by both sides as potent laboratories; the thinkers agreed that students would correlate their work in schools to their citizenship outside of schools. Mann did not question the power of schools to affect broad changes that would challenge the status quo, nor did the Boston Masters question the power of schools to stall political and social upheaval given new waves of immigration, urbanization and industrialization.

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[74] Mann, *Seventh Annual Report*, p. 81.

This discussion leads to the site of a key disagreement between Mann and his allies and the Boston Masters, at the confluence of politics and schooling. The Boston Masters, building on their Calvinist roots, believed that children were not innocent or innately good. Students' work, according to the Masters, was to be disciplined, marked by their investigation of texts and their engagement in recitation; students were to acquire knowledge by "themselves," working on teacher-constructed tasks. [75] To the Boston Masters, teachers' authority and the use of corporal punishment were seen as necessary and sufficient for compelling students' engagement, given students' penchant toward evil. In their view, corporal punishment was essential to break children's will, and was not, as Mann wrote, a reflection of teachers' capabilities:

> he [Mann] speaks of corporal punishment, as a 'relic of barbarism,' fast disappearing, and tolerated any longer upon the list of means, rather because teachers are incompetent, than because pupils are incorrigible.[76]

Corporal punishment was needed, they wrote, not "till teachers become better qualified, and society more morally refined, but while men and children continue to be human; that is, so long as schools and schoolmasters and government and laws are needed."[77] Thus, disparate views on human nature underlie the different views I analyze here. The Boston Masters held that human nature required authoritative discipline in the class to reign in and control student

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[75] Boston Masters, *Rejoinder*, pp. 50-1.
[76] Boston Masters, *Remarks*, p. 105.
[77] Boston Masters, *Remarks*, pp. 104-5.

behavior, just as human nature required authoritative government to reign in and control citizens. Here the Boston Masters were condemning Mann's view that students' nature could be molded by better qualified teachers and more refined society; they felt that neither was sufficiently potent. Human nature was seen as fixed, and the need for authority was seen as consistent from childhood through adulthood.

Students' obedience and respect for authority were understood as both means and outcomes of students' work – means for keeping control of overcrowded classrooms, for powering student effort in learning, but also outcomes, for obedience to law and government were key for the Boston Masters. They asked: "upon what shall school discipline be based?" and they answered, unequivocally:

> upon authority as a starting point. As the fear of the Lord is the beginning of divine wisdom, so is the fear of the law, the beginning of political wisdom. He who would command even, must first learn to obey.[78]

The Boston Masters' political goals for stability and respect for authority were explicitly linked to the instructional approach they thought most effective. In order to nurture law-abiding citizens, students would need to work on faith and out of respect for the authority of their teachers. The implications for teachers and students were great, as "he who guides children must have absolute control over

[78] Boston Masters, *Remarks*, p. 127.

them."[79] That control would stem not from building upon interests, or from trust, but from authority. Working on teachers' tasks, without question, and sublimating individual interests and desires were crucial components of studenting. But here is a key tension in the Boston Masters' understanding. For, the Boston Masters assumed that teacher's absolute authority would command student engagement. Would students repress their interests in response to teachers' authority, and actively engage in their work? Could authority command the internal, individual investigation of texts that the Boston Masters wrote was a crucial component of student work?

The Boston Masters were equally outraged with Mann's approach as he was with theirs. They wrote:

> it seems, Mr. M [sic] would have the teacher first amuse the child, so as to gain his good-will, at any expense, and would, then have him attend to duty as a secondary matter. This is reversing the true order of the two. Duty should come first, and pleasure should grow out of the discharge of it.[80]

On their view, Mann's dedication to interest and belief in the importance of trust between teacher and student were inefficient means to learning achievement, and were also politically deficient. The Boston Masters were fearful of the reforms Mann proposed, and stated that unlike Mann, their "desire was for improvement, and not for revolution."[81] Mann, meanwhile, soundly condemned

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[79] Boston Masters, *Rejoinder*, p. 59.
[80] Boston Masters, *Remarks*, p. 85.
[81] Boston Masters, *Remarks*, p. 6.

corporal punishment and the Boston Masters' approach to discipline. Their method, he wrote, would result in the development of the

> most odious elements of character, and to exaggerate them into moral deformities. Its tendency also is, to make children guileful, dissembling, hypocritical, and false. Distrust is nourished where confidence should be cultivated. Anger is begotten instead of love. By natural laws of association, a disgust towards books and study is excited, and thus the chance of future eminence is forfeited.[82]

According to Mann neither content nor character would flourish under the Boston Masters' method of discipline, instead, each would wither. Mann saw schools as potent sites for achievement of learning outcomes – but he wrote that schooling could enrich or it could debase.

Mann's educational vision was built upon his moralism and his social aims. Schools had a profound responsibility to develop the citizenry needed for democratic governance:

> In a country like ours, where all the citizens not only elect to office, but are themselves eligible, if education does not fit the great body of the people for the performance of these duties it is clear that we must be constantly putting valuable trusts into the hands of incompetent trustees.[83]

To Mann, authority and obedience were not the keys to civic engagement, instead Mann intended teachers to soften students' "stubborn wills," for example,

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[82] Mann, *Answer*, p. 116.
[83] Mann, *Seventh Annual Report*, pp. 192-3.

with the teaching of music.[84] More broadly Mann encouraged teachers to capitalize and make use of the reality that "a child is bound to the teacher by so many more cords, the more of his natural capacities the teacher can interest and employ."[85] Teachers' capabilities, combined with students' interests and Mann's positive view of students' nature were the key ingredients in Mann's mix of schooling and politics: "lessons on familiar objects, given by a competent teacher, never fail to command attention, and thus a habit of mind is induced of inestimable value in regard to all future study."[86] Mann wrote that this important combination – effective instructors who would build upon what students know – would lead to informed obedience.

Political and social goals had significant implications for conceptions of studenting, for they established the importance of student obedience in one case and student initiative in the other. The Boston Masters wrote that if student activities were to proceed with order and acquiescence, then classroom quiet and order would be maintained, and respect for authority would be instilled. Students' work was marked by submission to teachers' tasks, as students worked to incorporate authoritative knowledge from teachers and texts. The Boston Masters wrote of the importance of repression of students' interests, but they did not question whether teachers' absolute authority and students' responsive obedience would secure student engagement. Would students repress their non-

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[84] Mann, *Seventh Annual Report*, p. 81.
[85] Mann, *Seventh Annual Report*, p. 95.
[86] Mann, *Seventh Annual Report*, p. 102.

educative interests? Studenting was composed of two components: students' work on teacher defined tasks, which always had to manifest obedience, and teachers' authoritative recitation and drill.

On the other hand, Mann and the Boston Visiting Committee's political goals implied different student activities. They hoped that Common Schools would nurture common bonds between citizens and would help to dissipate the inequalities and materialism they disapproved of; this view also had ramifications for teacher and student responsibility, and resulted in a more responsive relationship between students and teachers.[87] Here, the teacher had responsibility for constructing instructional tasks that built upon students' initiative and capability. Thus, successful student activities were composed of two components: students' initiative and interest, and teachers' reading of students' interests and knowledge and guidance and instructional expertise. Would these two components be sufficient for students to engage in their work, and repress

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[87] Common schools were seen by reformists as potent vehicles for the establishment of common values, for preparing all children for the duties and responsibilities of democratic citizenship, and for success based on merit. James G. Carter, who wrote about popular education in the *Boston Patriot* in the mid-1820s, wrote in support of Common Schools in a way congruent with Mann's view (Hogan, p. 18). In his *Essays upon Popular Education* he wrote: "While the best schools in the land are free all the classes of society are blended. The rich and the poor meet and are educated together." The result, he wrote, was of political and social consequence, for: "if educated together, nature is so even handed in the distribution of her favors that no fear need be entertained, that a monopoly of talent, of industry and consequently of acquirements will follow a monopoly of property. The principle, upon which our free schools are established, is in itself, a stern leveler of factitious distinctions" (Carter, James G. 1826. Essays Upon Popular Edufcation, Containing a Particular Examination of the Schools of Massachusetts, and an Outline of an Institution for the Education of Teachers. Edited by L. A. Cremin, American Education: Its Men Ideas and Institutions. New York: Arno Press & The New York Times, p. 20).

their non-educative wills? These thinkers tried to solve the same problem – how to enable students to self-discipline. The solutions that these thinkers proposed differed, but their answers were dependent upon students' work and students' engagement.

The nature of the work that students are to do

There were also important differences and agreements amongst all of these thinkers' understandings of the nature of the work that students were to do. Differences were expressed in divergent approaches to studenting, one that was more traditional, and another that was seen as "natural," or authentic. In the Boston Masters' case, studenting would be focused on individual work investigating texts, and attention to synthesizing knowledge from recitation and drill. The Masters' students would have to take on faith that these activities were worthwhile; the obedience I sketched in the previous section was crucial here. Alternately, effective studenting was thought to happen when students solved what were seen as real problems in real situations. Studenting here was dependent upon the initiative I sketched in the previous section. Therefore, there is consistency between the importance of student obedience and student initiative which I detailed in my analysis above; each would be needed in order for studenting to work as the thinkers envisioned. But despite these differences and the epic verbal battle between the Boston Masters and Mann, there is also

important similarity, for in neither case was students' work marked by passivity. Though students would make use of different instruments and classroom resources – texts, recitation and drill or iterative conversations between teachers and students and work on authentic problems – these thinkers converged in their views of studenting in some important ways. All of these thinkers believed that the keystone of student work was investigating, synthesizing and assimilating knowledge.

The Boston Masters wrote that teachers and texts were the prime resources for studenting. Thus, student work would be situated in classrooms, learning from teacher recitation, drill, and from texts. But, what were students supposed to *do* with teacher recitation, drill, and with texts? The Boston Masters intimated that recitation and drill were not done *to* students; instead, students were to observe, synthesize, study and investigate with these resources. The Masters wrote that teachers were to restrain their inclinations to "explain" too much to students – doing so would ease student work, they wrote, and would result in student passivity. Studenting, then, was not viewed as passive, and students' work was not simple transmission. Instead, the Boston Masters wrote that students, themselves, "investigate" – a key term the Masters used – in their text study. [88] The Boston Masters saw knowledge as objective, received wisdom; it was codified in books, and had been mastered by teachers. In order to learn, students would have to study these representations. Students would learn from

[88] Boston Masters, Remarks, p. 53.

others' experiences, from others' work sense-making, by working to assimilate extant knowledge. The Boston Masters felt that their approach would lead to learning outcomes because they did not imagine that students themselves could construct knowledge. Though the Boston Masters did not see students constructing knowledge, they wrote of the importance of students' investigation and study. Thus, from the Masters' perspective, students – and not teachers – were responsible for assimilating codified knowledge. While students' work was not situated in "real" situations, Mann and the Boston Visiting Committee's characterization of the Boston Masters' view as senseless drill and relentless memorization does not fully capture the active investigation of texts and observation and synthesis in recitation that the Boston Masters envisioned.

Mann and the Boston Visiting Committee were joined by Colburn in thinking that student work should mimic, as much as possible, the "natural" learning processes they observed out of classrooms. Thus, as Mann wrote, whenever possible students and teachers should leave the classroom and should observe and problem-solve in the real world; for example, they should learn about the horizon by watching boats out at sea. Their ideas have implications for the nature of real knowledge and for studenting. Knowledge, to these thinkers, was dependent upon "natural" problem solving – for students to learn, they themselves would have to solve problems, observe relationships, and make sense of data and natural phenomena. To Mann, the Boston Visiting Committee and Colburn, these characteristics of student work were crucial for students to

better understand what they had learned. Studying others' answers was seen as artificial. But, studenting was not exclusively situated out of classrooms; students' work was *in situ* only when this was feasible. The thinkers did not wonder whether teacher constructed tasks, situated in classrooms and designed to *mimic* natural learning tasks would be seen by students as authentic, or whether these might suffer from the same artificiality they were designed to solve.

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The Boston Masters wrote that effective studenting would occur when students apply themselves to incorporating authoritative knowledge from teachers and texts. To the Boston Masters, effective studenting occurs when students engage texts and work, quietly; when students bend their will to teachers' wishes, based upon teachers' expertise; when what the Masters understood to be requisite building blocks of knowledge were the starting blocks of instruction and learning. They admitted that students disliked the drill and recitation, choral response and memorization that were the hallmarks of their approach, but they wrote that these – drill and recitation – would lead to learning outcomes – e.g., literacy and numeracy skills. They believed that their approach to studenting was appropriate.[89] The teachers' authority empowered him to choose tasks that the student might dislike or be disinterested in, and the

[89] Boston Masters, *Remarks*, p. 50.

students' deference necessitated compliance. They found evidence of the effectiveness of drill and attention to the building blocks of knowledge in the mastery of a performer who "can pass over rapid and difficult passages with ease and gracefulness," which they wrote was "the surest proof that he has been thoroughly drilled, on every note of those passages."[90]

In addition to drill and recitation, the Boston Masters wrote that a potent site for studenting would be students' work with texts, which was a crucial resource for student's work. On the use of texts, they wrote:

> We believe text-books to be necessary, not only as the medium of distinct and accurate information, but also to enable the pupil, (as we before said,) to acquire habits of discrimination and patient investigation; and we believe care to be necessary on the part of the teacher also, lest in his explanations and assistance to the pupil, he should render his task too easy. We would by no means deny the importance of ample explanations and illustrations from the teacher; but they should be given, after the pupil has investigated the subject attentively for himself, and has prepared himself, not only to answer, but to propose questions. And the questions and illustrations should be designed rather to call into exercise the mind of the pupil, than to afford him a full and satisfactory solution of each difficulty that he encounters.[91]

This is a key passage for understanding the nature of the work that students were to do in the Boston Masters' view, as well as who had agency for what in

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[90] Boston Masters, *Remarks*, p. 100.
[91] Boston Masters, Remarks, p. 53.

the Masters' construction. First, the Boston Masters believed that answers and knowledge were effectively represented and available in texts, and should be studied and learned there – to the Masters, text study was authentic work. Second, the Boston Masters were not just proposing that students could work in these ways with texts, but of the importance of working in this way. "This way" meant that studenting would start with students' unscaffolded examination and engagement of texts, with students' analysis of knowledge codified in texts. Students' "investigation," here, was intended to involve much more than superficial reading or memorization of disjointed facts – students' work would include scrutiny and consideration of the meaning of knowledge in texts. Studenting would not start with teachers' explanations or with teachers' work linking the content in the text to students' knowledge and experience. The prime problem students had to solve was assimilating knowledge represented in the text through their repeated reading and engagement with the text.

Teachers' work, meanwhile, was marked by restraint. First, they were to choose the text, and then stand back, and allow the student to work, unaided. Afterwards, teachers' restraint was important again; the Boston Masters warned against the teacher explaining what was to be learned from the text. Such explanations, they felt, would be tantamount to solving students' problem for them. Instead, the teachers' responsibility was to encourage the student, through questioning, to investigate text-based knowledge on their own, by the power of their own "mind." Students' problem solving, here, was focused on important

questioning and investigation of codified knowledge. The Boston Masters' view was not burdened with the other thinkers' worry that students would be uninterested in texts, as the teacher's authority was assumed to be sufficiently salient to secure student effort.

Alternately, Mann returned again and again in the pieces considered here to what he saw as overuse of textbooks. Overall, Mann wrote that the real community was a potent resource for student learning, and that practical activities were more valuable for allowing students to build upon their knowledge and interest and to problem-solve and sense-make *in situ*. But, given high quality texts, Mann asserted that more advanced students could make intelligent use of textbooks, once their capabilities were sufficiently developed: "the more mature the mind," he wrote, "the better is any one prepared to investigate for himself, and to profit by such investigation."[92] No matter the quality, textbooks themselves would not create learning achievement. Mann believed that learning was constructed in interactions, and thus the capability that students brought to their use of textbooks was portrayed as crucial. While the Boston Masters stressed the fundamental importance of text study and of the possibility of substantive interactions between students and texts, Mann suggested that the value of texts to studenting was variable, and dependent upon students' use of them. Variability in students' capability and the need for teachers to attend to this variability when assigning text study were not a part of the Boston Masters'

[92] Mann, *Answer*, p. 56.

analysis. Instead, the Masters assumed that students would bring sufficient capability to their work, and that they could be compelled to actively engage, question and investigate the meaning of knowledge codified in texts.

Like Mann, the Boston Visiting Committee did not think that the Boston Masters' approach to studenting improved learning outcomes. The Boston Visiting Committee wrote that their charge was to "judge of the real and comparative merits of the whole School."[93] Summarizing their findings, they wrote that they were incredulous about the "many errors in spelling, in grammar, and in punctuation" they discovered in schools dominated by the Masters' approach. [94] To the Boston Visiting Committee, students' activities in classrooms were at least partly responsible for these findings, for they found too much reliance upon recitation, a preponderance of superficial use of text-books, and insufficient attention to meaning, with "too much teaching by rote."[95] The fault, they wrote was "a narrow and merely technical instruction."[96] The method in the majority of schools, they found:

> is to drill into the memory of the pupil all the definitions and rules of the text-book, before he has learned their power and application… Thus, the memory is burthened [sic] with unintelligible rules, and the mind fettered with a cumbrous machinery.[97]

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[93] Boston Visiting Committee, p. 6.
[94] Boston Visiting Committee, p. 9.
[95] Boston Visiting Committee, p. 15.
[96] Boston Visiting Committee, p. 24.
[97] Boston Visiting Committee, p. 27.

This sentiment echoes Colburn's arguments against what he called the "usual way," and is repeated again in Mann's assessment. All these thinkers felt that studenting in this –"the usual way" – was superficial, because students were working on tasks that were understood to be inauthentic. The practices they observed – rote teaching and learning, technical and narrow instruction, the superficial use of texts, etc. – were not grounded in real problems. Instead, they wrote that the "usual way" privileged learning rules and studying texts divorced from real experience. Without a genuine link to what they called the "power and application" of the rule, they wrote that the Boston Masters' approach to studenting would not lead to improved learning outcomes. But the Boston Visiting Committee's portrayal does not accurately capture the Boston Masters' view of student work with texts, the activity of the mind and investigation that the Masters wrote were the bedrock of student work with texts.[98] The Masters did not wish students' interactions with texts to be superficial, marked only by memorization. The Boston Visiting Committee related the poor learning achievement that they observed to the instructional approach the Boston Masters proposed even as they attended to a different source of the educational problems in Boston, namely problems of teacher capability in these schools. Could more capable teachers better enable students to work in the ways the Masters envisioned?

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[98] Boston Masters, Remarks, p. 53.

The Boston Visiting Committee noted that in some schools they did find depth of learning and breadth of knowledge among students: "in this respect there is a most striking difference in our schools." That difference, they wrote, hinged on depth of student understanding: "in some the pupils seem to understand what they have studied, and to know how to apply it to the cases which may arise." But this learning achievement and depth of understanding was contrasted with the opposite case: "in others they can repeat rules with great fluency and accuracy… and, in fact, recite all their set lessons… in a manner which would seem to do them credit." But when "these landmarks are thrown aside," when "requested to answer questions not found in the book… they come to a dead stand."[99] The different results were traced, in large part, to the type and nature of studenting activities the pupils engaged in. "The powers of the pupils are taxed to their greatest effort in those branches of study in which they are most likely to make a show" the Boston Visiting Committee wrote. Thus, "if the memory suffices to recall the sound, why should it fail to recall the meaning?"[100] Students' capabilities were not the fault for these learning outcomes, but instead, the Boston Visiting Committee wrote that the fault lay with studenting activities constructed to be means to learning outcomes.

[99] Boston Visiting Committee, pp. 164-5.
[100] Boston Visiting Committee, p.14.

Instead of the rule-bound, drill-heavy approach which they condemned, the Boston Visiting Committee applauded learning tasks that privileged authentic problems:

> We doubt not it may have been explained, and well explained, but what is one, or five theoretical explanations of the spheroidity of the earth, compared to the daily and hourly evidence of their maps. The best practical teaching of the fact would be to lead a class to a neighboring height… and to point out to them the sails of a ship as they appear above the horizon before its hull.[101]

Here, the Boston Visiting Committee asserted that explanations, regardless of their quality, pale in utility to the student when compared with "practical teaching," which would occur in and from real situations with real problems. Because student work was not situated in real experiences, the Boston Visiting Committee saw it as inauthentic. The Boston Visiting Committee wrote that when students are immersed in the practical, their studenting involves observation and important sense-making that is not detached from the practical; their interest and initiative drives their studenting, and would be means for learning achievement.

In important ways, Mann's critique of the Boston Masters' understandings of and propositions for studenting mirror those of the Boston Visiting Committee's. Mann argued against the value of the Boston Masters' quiet classrooms, where he reported a preponderance of "inattentive" students:

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[101] Boston Visiting Committee, p.25.

> …many members of the reciting classes are drowsy, and listless, and evidently following some train of thought… whose scene lies beyond the walls of the schoolhouse, rather than applying their minds to the subject-matter of the lesson.[102]

Here, even pupils' daydreams are fodder for Mann's argument regarding the problems of inauthentic tasks. In this example, students' interest in the real world, which Mann thought a potent resource for learning, was squandered and actually detracted from their classroom engagement.

Mann found that modal instruction in the Massachusetts schools was divorced from students' interest, strengths and knowledge. Beginning with abstract concepts was one defining aspect of the approach Mann condemned:

> I am satisfied that our greatest error in teaching children to read, lies in beginning with the alphabet; in giving them what are called the 'Names of the Letters,' a, b, c, &c… how can such a child be expected to turn with delight from all these to the stiff and lifeless column of the alphabet? How can one who as yet is utterly incapable of appreciating the remote benefits, which in after-life reward the acquisition of knowledge, derive any pleasure from an exercise which presents neither beauty to his eye, nor music to his ear, nor sense to his understanding?[103]

Mann wrote that students' work in the traditional approach began with studying the alphabet, which, not knowing how to read, posed little interest to the pupil. Mann pushed further, and wrote that this approach would extend the process:

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[102] Mann, *Seventh Annual Report*, pp. 68-9.
[103] Mann, *Seventh Annual Report*, p. 103.

> it has taken children, on average, at least six months to master the alphabet, on this plan… when the same child would have learned the names of twenty-six playmates, or of twenty-six interesting objects of any kind, in one or two days.[104]

Not situated in real, authentic problem-solving, Mann thought that studenting would be plodding and slow. Further, Mann wrote that the Boston Masters' approach would actually delimit what pupils could learn, as "the child was taught *not to think*;" studenting would not be means to learning outcomes. [105]

Mann's proposed reasoning also mirrored the Boston Visiting Committee; they wrote of the stultifying aspects of working only on "words, words, words! Husks without grain!"[106] Similarly, Mann found that in the majority of the schools he visited "the life, the zest, the eagerness with which all children, except natural-born idiots, seek for real objects, ask their names, or catch them without asking, never enlivened this process."[107] Here we can see what Mann deplored about the Boston Masters' approach, but also what studenting he thought should be nurtured: students seeking and asking, enlivened and engaged, doing authentic work. He did not believe that studenting would include these actions when recitation and drill were the primary modes of instruction, and where textbooks were the primary resources for content.[108]

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[104] Mann, *Reply*, p. 101.
[105] Mann, *Reply*, p. 101, italics in original.
[106] Boston Visiting Committee, p. 24.
[107] Mann, *Reply*, p.101.
[108] Again, it is important to remember that Mann was clear that he was not condemning all schools and all classrooms, but those where these approaches to instruction existed.

In each view students learn, and in each teachers' work was crucial for enabling students' work; these are key similarities across the views. But despite these areas of agreement, the divisions were deep, and both claimed that they could not see how the other approach to studenting would be effective means to learning outcomes. On one hand, studenting was to be "natural," not marked by what the thinkers saw as artifice in the Boston Masters' traditional approach to instruction and student work. On the other hand, knowledge embedded in texts and teachers' expertise were to be the sites and resources for student work. The Boston Masters wrote that they could not see how teachers could keep both student interest and subject matter goals in mind. Yet the critics of the Boston Masters could not imagine effective studenting without what they saw as students' active engagement, situated in authentic tasks. Each approach seems clear cut until investigation reveals just how dependent upon studenting learning outcomes were understood to be – dependence each of these thinkers conceded. Thus, in each case, there were key differences, but also important similarities. Across these thinkers' views, students' work was active; in the Boston Masters' case, students were responsible for investigating and synthesizing knowledge from codified texts, to the other thinkers, students were responsible for problem solving in what were seen as authentic or real situations. Students' work was situated differently, but the actions they were to take investigating, synthesizing and assimilating were not passive.

Conclusion

The individuals and groups considered here were engaged in an extended debate on schooling that was occurring at the time. The Boston Masters, Colburn, Mann, and the Boston Visiting Committee held competing views of student work which diverged in large part based upon assumptions about what students would need to do in classrooms, and what teachers would have to do to support students' work. This analysis has turned on three key building elements – the knowledge that students bring to their work, the politics of studenting, and the nature of the work that students are to do – and the substantive connections between the three.

In the Boston Masters' case, their view of studenting was related to their political aims of stability and obedience to law and government; deference to authority was key, and was thought sufficient for securing students' engagement in their work. Further, their view that real knowledge is amassed and codified in texts fit nicely with their view that student work with and on subject-matter was effective means to learning achievement.[109] Alternately, the other thinkers' understandings of the salience of what students bring to their work, and of the importance of student interest and initiative were crucial components of their view on effective studenting. They wrote that students should work on authentic tasks,

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[109] Historian David Hogan saw this more traditional approach to teaching and studenting, represented here by the Boston Masters, as relying on "either corporal punishment or impersonal bureaucratic authority" (Hogan, p. 3). Or, as Michael Katz explained, the Boston Masters reflected "an older, idealized society, in which roles and relationships were fixed." Katz, Michael. *The Irony of Early School Reform*. Boston: Beacon, 1968. Pp. 142-3.

that they should solve practical problems in real situations, and that only then would their studenting be means to learning outcomes and would students develop the essential capabilities for broad civic engagement.[110] Though these three categories were at the heart of conceptions of studenting across the views, there were important similarities and disagreements about the content of each of these categories.

Understandings of the nature of real knowledge, of what it takes for studenting to be means to learning outcomes, of the role of schools as engines of change or stability, and of authority and discipline substantively affected views on effective studenting. But, these thinkers wrote at the beginning of conversations on a number of seminal topics in education, and in some cases there are tensions, in others there are unasked questions, and overall there is great optimism that these approaches would work as sketched. Here there is the

[110] Hogan wrote that the "apostles of the 'New England' pedagogy," included more than a handful of theorists who "selectively combined Lockean and Pestalozzian pedagogical principles with a Protestant and republican suspicion of commerce" (Hogan, p. 2. Hogan included the following authors in this list of reformists: Timothy Dwight, Albert and John Picket, John Griscom, James Carter, Samuel Read Hall, William Russell, William Woodbridge, Francis Wayland, Jacob Abbott, Catherine Beecher, Horace Mann, David Page, George B. Emerson, Alonzo Potter, and Henry Barnard, among others). These theorists, whose views are represented here by Mann, the Boston Visiting Committee and Colburn, were marked by a dedication to the principle that "affectionate authority, not coercive authority, was by far a much more efficient means of enveloping children in a web of disciplinary power. Children were governed far more easily by affection, reason, moral principle, and the uniform, fair, and impartial application of school rules than by the 'whip and ferule" (Hogan, p. 18). Further, Samuel Reed Hall, in his *Lectures on Schoolkeeping* captured three distinctly important characteristics of Mann, Colburn and the Boston Visiting Committee's views on teaching and studenting, in addition to their view on authority and discipline. First, that students' work should start with, and build upon student knowledge: "if you can seize on something that he can see," he wrote, "or something with which he is familiar, and then make a just comparison by which the idea is brought distinctly to his view, he derives not only lasting benefit, but present pleasure." (Hall, reprinted in Wright and Gardner, p. 117). Second, that the nature of students' work should be pleasant. Last, that teaching and studenting should "follow the order of nature;" studenting was to be natural, not marked by what they saw as artifice in traditional instruction (Hall, reprinted in Wright and Gardner, p. 112).

sense of a new venture, whose full challenges have not been uncovered, for these thinkers all wrote at the inception of public education, "at the beginning of an enterprise, and so the ratio of hope to experience was a much larger number than later, with more experience."[111]

There is a similar tension in each of the views on the salience of what students bring to their work. Overall the Boston Masters wrote about studenting as assimilation. However, they admitted in a lonesome sentence that the student would have to "work [it, learning] out himself," and that in these instances teachers would have to have faith in students.[112] This is the closest they came to writing about student construction. This is an important similarity between the Masters' view and the others'; while there were differences between the two views there were also important similarities. The Boston Masters did not push this point; they did not wonder whether this brief allusion to student construction challenged their assimilationist view. Wondering this would have begged the questions: would students be able to construct knowledge when their studenting was premised on assimilation? If learning achievement is dependent, even a bit, on student construction, would their view of studenting be a means to learning outcomes? And, how could students construct the knowledge that has taken so many generations of learned thinkers to make sense of, produce, organize and codify? The Boston Masters did not face these questions directly; they did not seem to see these questions.

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[111] Cohen, David K. 2009. March 1, 2009. Personal communication.
[112] Boston Masters, *Remarks*, p. 118.

Mann, Colburn and the Boston Visiting Committee wrote about the importance of what students bring to their work. Their observation that some learning outcomes are created out of school where learning tasks were seen "natural" was a cornerstone of their belief in the importance of authentic work. However, the extent to which they pushed past the view of knowledge as assimilation is unclear. Did they see student work as assimilation, yet still recognize studenting with authentic problems as potent means for learning outcomes? That is likely. These thinkers suggested that authentic problems would work, it seems, to illuminate for students the use and application of knowledge that they were to assimilate.[113] But, could beginning with authentic work infuse students' work with the meaning they wrote was so important? Further, these questions are related to other important questions on their view of the importance of natural, authentic learning tasks. For example, is there any case where real and practical problem solving would not be practical for teaching in schools? So, for example, were Colburn's texts, which had teachers pose practical questions before abstract questions sufficiently authentic? The thinkers do not distinguish between the two – mimicking natural learning tasks and problem solving in real situations.

Further, the thinkers' political and social aims were reflected in understandings of studenting. At the inception of public schooling in the U.S.,

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[113] For example, the Boston Visiting Committee wrote, "the pupils' memory is not cumbered with a variety of rules and definitions, while he is unacquainted with their use and application." Boston Visiting Committee, p. 28.

political goals informed and inhered in instructional approaches, as problems of democratic politics began to interact with problems of instruction. To some educational reformers, common schools were potent means to new political and social ends. James G. Carter, who wrote about popular education in the *Boston Patriot* in the mid-1820s, summed up well their hope for Common Schools:

> Every generation, while the system is executed according to the true spirit of it, as conceived by our ancestors, will bring its quota of new men to fill the public places of distinction, -- men who owe nothing to the fortunes or the crimes of their fathers, but all, under the blessing of God, to their own industry and the common schools.[114]

While some hoped to reform and broaden access and civic engagement, others sought instead to maintain and strengthen tradition; these views had important ramifications for studenting, prioritizing obedience on one hand and initiative on the other.

Despite the differences in schooling goals, Mann and the Boston Masters agreed that schools were sufficiently potent for developing what were seen as the necessary capabilities amongst their students; this is another important similarity between the thinkers' views. Not only were schools to teach students academic content, but they were to develop citizens who could either maintain the status quo and stability or broaden engagement and deepen linkages, all in the face of mounting immigration, urbanization and industrialization. These expansive

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[114] Carter, James G. 1826. *Essays Upon Popular Education, Containing a Particular Examination of the Schools of Massachusetts, and an Outline of an Institution for the Education of Teachers*. Edited by L. A. Cremin, *American Education: Its Men Ideas and Institutions*. New York: Arno Press & The New York Times. Carter, p. 20.

outcomes seem a tall order, especially given the resource constraints that Mann, the Boston Masters and the Boston Visiting Committee all agreed upon, and the newness of the venture. Could schools really be potent sites for political improvement or stability in the face of mounting change? Could schools be laboratories that would map so effectively on adult behavior and engagement?

Political aims informed and resulted in different views on the place of authority in classrooms, which were important for the nature of studenting. All of the thinkers included here tried to solve the problem of student engagement. Regarding the importance of discipline and authority, the Boston Masters wrote:

> implicit obedience to rightful authority must be inculcated and enforced upon children, as the very germ of all good order in future society, no one, who thinks soundly and follows out principles to their necessary results, will presume to deny.[115]

In the Boston Masters' understanding, teachers' absolute authority, and students' acquiescence, were vital as both means and ends of learning, and were linked explicitly to their political goals. The Boston Masters' students would take on faith the activities that teachers prescribed, and in so doing the Masters wrote that students would engage in their work and self-discipline.

Mann and the Boston Visiting Committee raised some disquieting, and unanswered questions about the possible effects of the Boston Masters' approach to absolute authority. For example: how could the Masters be so sure that even students who seemed to be engaged– who could parrot back and who

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[115] Boston Masters, *Remarks*, p. 128.

sat quietly during recitation –were working so as to produce learning outcomes?[116] How could they be sure to not confuse obedient daydreaming with obedient learning?[117] And, how could they be sure that the harshness of corporal punishment would encourage students to apply themselves instead of disavowing their work in schools?[118] Even if discomfort in studenting is unavoidable, would there be no ill effects of the added discomfort of suppression of interest, and of corporal punishment? In their replies to Mann, the Boston Masters did not directly address these questions. Instead, they repeated their belief in the power of teachers' authority to train and discipline student work. The Boston Masters assumed that teachers could hold students' attention and power students' work with discipline and authority, a belief they held to steadfastly.

By comparison, duty and affection between students and teachers were understood to be most effective for securing students' engagement in their work and in the development of engaged citizens. Mann wrote

> 'School Discipline,' is a comprehensive phrase, signifying the vast range of means and motives by which the bad passions of children may be overcome, and by which, also, their character, so far as school influences are capable of doing it, may be cultivated and trained into symmetry, loveliness, strength, honor, veracity, justice, reverence, and immortal blessedness…[119]

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[116] Mann, *Seventh Annual Report*, p. 103.
[117] Mann, *Seventh Annual Report*, pp. 68-9.
[118] Mann, *Answer*, p. 116.
[119] Mann, *Seventh Annual Report*, p. 124.

Broadly defined learning outcomes were seen as dependent upon a teacher/student relationship characterized by "pleasure." This view was important for other educational reformers at the time, and was representative of a larger trend gaining currency at the time. Samuel Read Hall, founder of the first teacher's seminary in the U.S., wrote of the importance of pleasure and joy in learning in schools: "endeavour to adopt such a course as shall render the school pleasant to those who compose it" in one breath, and broadened social gains in the next: "Here the object is not to excel, not to succeed in a competition for superiority, but to make a progress, to advance towards an end, at which they all aim with equal integrity and sincerity of intention."[120]

But there are more questions regarding these noble visions of harmony and respect. Mann wrote evocatively of the European schools he observed which he felt ran on harmony and respect. He held them up as examples of what could be. But he recognized the challenges of the Massachusetts schools, and wrote:

> I say then, that I am not yet ready to renounce the use of corporal punishment, by all teachers, in all schools, and with regard to all scholars. The man who can keep school for years, without corporal punishment, and also without the expulsion of scholars, or the use of direct emulation between them… the man who can do this, is a truly great man... As yet, we have but a few such teachers… In the mean time, our school system must be continued; and order and subordination must be preserved in the schools.[121]

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[120] Wright and Gardner, p. 109, 119. Italics in original.
[121] Mann, Reply to Remarks, p. 155.

Thus, though Mann wrote passionately of the potential of his view, he nevertheless touched upon serious concerns about the possibility of implementing his approach to studenting and teaching in extant schools. Could pleasure and harmony really be effective for nurturing thoughtful, patient studenting, given the problems of teacher capability that Mann saw? Could schools really be run on interest and bonds – could teachers guide students, and generate the respect and order needed for students to work together, in often overcrowded schools? Would harmony and respect be sowed effectively so that classroom discipline would be maintained and effective studenting could occur? Would greater teacher capability – itself an improvement of formidable proportions – be sufficient for this approach to work? Was the lack of teacher capability the only missing link?

Mann and the Boston Visiting Committee wrote of weak teacher capabilities in the schools they observed and assessed, which stand in stark contrast to the capabilities that would be necessary for teachers to support students' work broadly, as well as to halt the use of corporal punishment. Their views seem to rely upon significant teacher capability, for they envisioned teachers: possessed of tremendous content knowledge, which they were to "hold in their heads;" capable of assessing students' developing capabilities and understandings; and able to adapt their instruction accordingly. It is easier to understand the ambition of these thinkers' visions given the problems of teacher capability that Mann and the Boston Visiting Committee found in some, but not

all, schools. Mann wrote of this difficulty: "very few teachers amongst us have the requisite capacity; and hence the idleness and the disorder that reign in so many of our schools, -- excepting in cases where the debasing motive of fear puts the children in irons."[122] The ambition of the reforms they proposed is accentuated by the lack of extant capability they found amongst the teachers who would be implementing them. However, Mann, the Boston Visiting Committee and Colburn did not consider the possibility that students themselves might not be capable of assuming the agency for their work that they envisioned, given the teacher support needed.

[122] Mann, *Seventh Annual Report*, p. 93. Colburn, meanwhile, did not see this problem, and wrote of the power of his text: "the questions are asked in such a manner [in his textbook], that, if the instructor pursues the method explained in the Key, it will be almost impossible for the pupil to perform any example without understanding the reason of it." *Intellectual Arithmetic*, vi.

Chapter Three

Understands of studenting at the turn of the 20th Century: The case of William Torrey Harris and John Dewey

Introduction

In this chapter I focus on works by William Torrey Harris and John Dewey, which were written between 1879 and 1916.[123] A central set of questions runs through my analysis. How did Harris and Dewey understand studenting? What did they see as the nature of students' tasks? I examine what teachers and students were seen to be responsible for, whether and when these

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[123] Harris, William Torrey. 1879. *The Science of Education*. Edited by J. W. Null and D. Ravitch, *Forgotten Heroes of American Education: The Great Tradition of Teaching Teachers*. Greenwich, Connecticut: Information Age Publishing; Harris, William Torrey. 1896. *Educational Values*. Edited by J. W. Null and D. Ravitch, *Forgotten Heroes of American Education: The Great Tradition of Teaching Teachers*. Greenwich, Connecticut: Information Age Publishing; Harris, William Torrey. 1897. *The Relation of School Discipline to Moral Education*. Edited by J. W. Null and D. Ravitch, *Forgotten Heroes of American Education: The Great Tradition of Teaching Teachers*. Greenwich, Connecticut: Information Age Publishing; Harris, William Torrey. 1899. *The Future of the Normal School*. Edited by J. W. Null and D. Ravitch, *Forgotten Heroes of American Education: The Great Tradition of Teaching Teachers*. Greenwich, Connecticut: Information Age Publishing; Harris, William Torrey. 1899. *A Brief for Latin*. Edited by J. W. Null and D. Ravitch, *Forgotten Heroes of American Education: The Great Tradition of Teaching Teachers*. Greenwich, Connecticut: Information Age Publishing; Dewey, John. 1899, reprinted 1980. *The School and Society*. Edited by J. A. Boydston. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press; Dewey, John. 1902, reprinted 2001. *The Child and the Curriculum*. Mineola: Dover Publications, Inc. Original edition, 1902; Dewey, John. 1904. The Relation of Theory to Practice in Education. Paper read at The Third Yearbook of the National Society for the Scientific Study of Education. Part I: The Relation of Theory to Practice in the Education of Teachers, at Atlanta, GA; Dewey, John. 1913. *Interest and Effort in Education*. Boston, New York: Houghton Mifflin Company; Dewey, John. 1916. *Democracy and Education*. New York: The Free Press.

responsibilities shift in the teaching/learning relationship, and the nature of the actions associated with these responsibilities.

W.T. Harris was an elementary teacher, the "highly regarded superintendent of schools in St. Louis between 1869 and 1880,"[124] and the longest running U.S. Commissioner of Education – appointed in 1889, he served until 1906.[125] Null and Ravitch credit him with building "the St. Louis, Missouri, public school system into one of the most successful in the nation" during his tenure as Superintendent.[126] In addition, he was a "prolific writer on philosophy and education," as a "bibliography of his works, if compiled, would stretch to nearly 500 titles."[127] But, according to Ravitch, he has been long forgotten and uncelebrated because of the treatment he was given by Progressive historians: "For most of the twentieth century," Ravitch wrote, "generations of students of education learned nothing of Harris's ideas or contributions, because he scorned fashionable pedagogical bandwagons of his time."[128] Harris brought a deep and abiding commitment to the traditional curriculum, to what he called the "five windows of the soul."[129] He worked to safeguard that curriculum from "the cant of progress and reform" he heard "on the tongues" of reformist who argued with "a

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[124] Kliebard, Herbert M. 2004. *The Struggle for the American Curriculum*. Third ed. New York and London: RoutledgeFalmer, p. 24.

[125] Ravitch, Diane. 2000. *Left Back: A Century of Failed School Reforms*. New York: Simon & Schuster, p. 32.

[126] Null, J. Wesley, and Diane Ravitch, eds. 2006. *Forgotten Heroes of American Education: The Great Tradition of Teaching Teachers*. Greenwich, Connecticut: Information Age Publishing, p. 307.

[127] Null & Ravitch, p. 308.

[128] Ravitch. *Left Back*. pp. 32-3.

[129] Harris, *Educational Values*, p. 345.

polemical flourish" and challenged "whatever they can not justify on immediate, simple, and therefore shallow grounds."[130] Herbert Kliebard wrote that the social, economic and industrial changes during his time "made it even more imperative [to Harris] that the school become a haven for the tried and true virtues he so deeply cherished."[131]

Null and Ravitch wrote: "after the death of Horace Mann and until the ascendancy of John Dewey, Harris was the nation's leading thinker on education, teaching, and curriculum."[132] Given this, it is interesting that Harris' encouragement provided important support for Dewey's early career – Kliebard wrote:

> perhaps the most immediate spur to his [Dewey's] interest in philosophy as a career came from the editor of the Journal of Speculative Philosophy, William Torrey Harris, who not only accepted an article that Dewey had written while a high school teacher, but urged him to continue his philosophical pursuits.[133]

While Harris and Dewey were connected in this way, their understandings of studenting and the activities that students should engage in were quite different; thus, bringing them together here provides a fruitful dialectic. Dewey's philosophy was expansive; David K. Cohen wrote that his focus on schools was guided by his belief that they were effective means for repairing society: "The reform that Dewey proposed was neither better pedagogy nor instruction centered on

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[130] Harris, *Educational Values*, p. 339.
[131] Kliebard, p. 15.
[132] Null & Ravitch, p. 307.
[133] Kliebard, p. 28.

children's interests but a reformation of schools to repair the damage done by the Industrial Revolution."[134] Dewey has also bequeathed us numerous texts – his collected works contains thirty-seven volumes.[135] But despite this prolific legacy, he also left a legacy of misunderstanding. Lawrence A. Cremin wrote: "educational discussion is filled with the shoddiest misconceptions of what he said; and disciples and critics alike have purveyed the grossest caricatures of his work."[136] My analysis provides an opportunity to consider his views on students' work.

In addition to Dewey and Harris, I include here analysis of the text by Katherine Camp Mayhew and Anna Camp Edwards.[137] These two teachers detailed their work teaching at Dewey's Laboratory School at the University of Chicago, which Dewey oversaw between 1896 and 1904.[138] John Dewey contributed a chapter to their text, entitled "The Theory of the Chicago Experiment." There, Dewey supported Mayhew and Edwards' portrayal of the trials of translating his educational philosophies into practice. Dewey wrote: "there was little prior experience or knowledge to go upon in undertaking the experiment."[139] Even more, he confirmed that this translation was particularly

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[134] Cohen, David K. 1998. Dewey's Problem. *The Elementary School Journal* 98 (5): p. 432.

[135] Boydston, Jo Ann, ed. 1991. *John Dewey: The Collected Works, 1882-1953*. 37 vols. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.

[136] Lawrence A. Cremin, Foreword. Dworkin, Martin S., ed. 1959. *Dewey on Education: Selections*. New York: Teachers College, Columbia University.

[137] Mayhew, Katherine Camp, and Anna Camp Edwards. 1936. *The Dewey School: The Laboratory School of the University of Chicago 1896-1903*. New York: D. Appleton-Century Company.

[138] Kliebard, p. 27.

[139] Dewey, in Mayhew and Edwards, p. 467.

difficult, for "In leaving behind the traditional method of imposition from above, it was not easy for teachers to hit at once upon proper methods of leadership in cooperative activities."[140] Further, in Jane Dewey's biography of her father, she quoted her father as saying: "Mayhew and Edwards, who were teachers in the school, give a full and authoritative account of its work."[141] Mayhew and Edwards explored their understandings of Dewey's views, and the difficulties and successes they experienced in the practical application of his philosophy.[142]

In order to answer the question – how was studenting understood by W.T. Harris and John Dewey? – I examine three key building elements: the knowledge that students were thought to bring to their work; the politics of studenting, which here connotes how students' responses to learning under conditions of compulsion are understood by the thinkers; and the nature of the work that students were thought to have to do. Across the three categories, I attend to both the key similarities and the important disagreements between Harris' and Dewey's understandings of studenting.

Both Harris and Dewey saw students as immature beings; they came to school with much to learn. Despite this immaturity, Dewey wrote that students brought important interests, experiences and knowledge to their work. Dewey drew a distinction between students' fleeting, personal interests and a set of

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[140] Dewey, in Mayhew and Edwards, p. 468.

[141] Dewey, Jane M., ed., "Biography of John Dewey," in P.A. Schilpp, ed., The Philosophy of John Dewey. New York, 1951, p. 28.

[142] To my knowledge there is no late nineteenth century equivalent of Mayhew and Edwards' piece exploring or reporting on how Harris' ideas were or were not carried into practice.

fundamental, common interests that were linked to content. Dewey saw these interests as important leverage for learning, key instruments for studenting, and relevant barometers for teachers' work. Conversely, Harris wrote that students' interests were unrelated to the content they were to learn. To Harris, knowledge was fixed and codified, and studenting would focus on assimilating and synthesizing knowledge that existed outside of them. In Dewey's case, students' work was reconstructing knowledge that existed, with the guidance of their teachers. The interests that students brought or had, whether or not they knew it, were critical, for they were connected to content and ensured meaning and effort.

These different views on the salience of what students brought to their work and on student knowledge were reinforced by these thinkers' social and political goals. Dewey wrote that the industrial, economic and social changes at the time magnified problems of learning in schools, and caused economic inequality, alienation, and loss of community. In his view, students' cooperative problem-solving in schools would develop commitments and connections powerful enough for students to affect social and political change. Just as students could reconstruct knowledge, so too could they recreate society. Harris worried that social and economic changes would intrude upon the traditional curriculum – he wrote of the importance of stability amongst changes. To Harris, stability could be maintained amidst industrialization and urbanization given: students' work on the core, traditional curriculum, which Harris viewed as every student's democratic birthright; a focus on discipline and students' self-discipline;

and, teacher authority and student obedience. Thus, the authority and obedience Harris thought essential for students to assimilate and synthesize knowledge were also key for students to become law-abiding citizens and industrious workers. Harris intended for all students to study the same humanist curriculum. William J. Reese wrote that Harris was a tireless "defender of the idea of a… common curriculum for everyone, including African Americans."[143]

The nature of students' work in Harris' case was not a simple one of transmission; instead, Harris wrote that students would have to verify text-based knowledge. To Harris, what was required to learn, or synthesize amassed knowledge, was "individual industry" and "critical alertness."[144] Studenting, in Harris' view, was dependent upon the four disciplinary virtues of regularity, punctuality, silence and industry, and the authority and obedience that were important for political stability amidst large-scale social and industrial changes.[145] If studenting would lead to learning achievement, students' work would have to move past memorization, and would have to involve synthesis.

On the other hand, the cooperative work that was crucial to Dewey for remaking schools and society was an important element of the nature of his students' work. Dewey's view of the nature of effective student work hinged on

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[143] Reese reported that Harris supported racial integration throughout this long career, even while he was Superintendent of the St. Louis public school system, which was segregated *de jure* during his tenure. Reese, William J. 2005. America's Public Schools: From the Common School to
'No Child Left Behind'. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, pp. 63-64.

[144] Harris, *The Relation of School Discipline to Moral Education*, p. 361.

[145] Harris, *The Relationship of School Discipline to Moral Education*, p. 358.

his view of authenticity; he wrote that studenting must focus on cooperative problem-solving and a curriculum built around "occupations," which meant that students would "trace and follow the progress of mankind in history, getting an insight also into the materials used and the mechanical principles involved. In connection with these occupations, the historic development of man is recapitulated."[146] Where Harris wrote of synthesis of codified knowledge – by which he meant students' active analysis and verification of codified knowledge – Dewey wrote of re-creation and re-discovery through problem-solving what he saw as historically central, important and human problems; in both, students were to assimilate extant knowledge. In one, students were to learn by studying how others had problem-solved and organized knowledge, in the other, students themselves were to re-construct solutions to authentic problems.

What students bring to their work

The issue of student interest was not completely solved by either Dewey or Harris. The problems in each relate directly to a fundamental problem of studenting – if students' work is what leads to learning outcomes, and teachers' actions are necessary but indirectly linked to those outcomes, what can teachers do to enable student work and prepare the groundwork for effective studenting? Each thinker suggested, to varying extents, that student interest would or could

[146] Dewey, The School and Society, pp. 13-14.

be useful for student work, while each also suggested, to varying extents, that student interest could detract from work on content.

One problem that teachers and students have to wrestle with is students' immaturity – that students come to school with many things to learn is manifest. Another inherent problem associated with this immaturity is that of effort. Studenting is students' work, which is effortful and challenging. Given all that students have to learn – including that they should work on subject matter – what would power that work? Harris and Dewey both aimed for students to integrate knowledge that already existed – Harris wrote of the importance of student synthesis of codified knowledge, and Dewey of re-construction of extant knowledge. In each there was much that students would have to learn that was outside of them and their experiences. Harris and Dewey each dealt with the problem of student interest differently, but they each ran into problems in their solutions.

Harris wrote that students came to school with little interest or experience that would be useful in their studenting. Instead, he saw students' interests as diversion from important attention to the curriculum. Harris' work was grounded by his commitment to what he referred to as the five windows of the soul – reading and writing, arithmetic, geography, grammar, and history. The fixed nature of codified knowledge, and the goal of mastery were to singularly guide students' and teachers' work. Harris stressed the importance of teachers' authority and of students' obedience. Interest would not power their studenting;

instead, students were to work on their teachers' authority, synthesizing and analyzing codified knowledge. Nevertheless, Harris encouraged teachers to use students' experiences as illustrations whenever possible; this implies active interaction between students and content that belies Harris' view that students brought little to their work. In this way, Harris seems to have been on both sides of the issue of interest – on one hand he argued that student interests were not salient for learning, but on the other he encouraged teachers to build upon these whenever possible, as long as doing so would not jeopardize or weaken the humanist curriculum.

Dewey agreed that some of students' interests were crude and immature, and that constructing tasks trained solely on students' passing interests would not be educative. Yet Dewey distinguished between individual and fleeting interests and what he saw as more fundamental interests that were common across mankind. Describing Dewey's view on fundamental interests, David K. Cohen wrote that it was the link between these interests and the curriculum that was key:

> the curriculum could not fail to engage students because it would respond to interests that were tied psychologically to certain occupations and because students' interests would be 'constantly reinforced' by the importance that such occupations played in social life. Students' academic studies would connect them with what was deepest in their own beings, in the history of humanity, and in life all around them.[147]

[147] Cohen, David K. 1998. Dewey's Problem. *The Elementary School Journal* 98 (5): p. 436.

This was a unique and often misunderstood position, and for good reason – in my analysis, parsing between useful and fleeting interests is problematic. Dewey wrote of a vital connection between the child and the curriculum. With teachers' guidance and with authentic work on the occupations that Dewey saw as vital to humankind, Dewey wrote that students would see the value of their work. Dewey hoped that this recognition would spur students to subjugate their immature interests, and to generate internal control. The authority and obedience that Harris wrote were necessary for solving the problem of student effort were not required in Dewey's view. If Dewey was right, then it is as if he had found the elusive answer to one of the great questions in education: what was needed for students to choose to engage substantively in their challenging and effortful work, with discipline? The answer, he wrote, lay not in the imposition from without proposed by Harris, but also not from sugarcoating tasks, infusing them with artificial meaning. According to Dewey, the answer lay, instead, in recognizing the link between students and content. But Mayhew and Edwards' recollection of teaching at the Dewey school shows that Dewey's answer provided at least as many problems as it did solutions. Further, Dewey himself wrote that students' fleeting interests might derail their work, and that teachers were needed to guide, discipline, and, in some instances, control. In this way, Dewey also seems to have been on both sides of interest – on one hand he wrote that students'

fundamental interests were crucial for their work and would enable them to self-direct; on this view extrinsic control was neither necessary nor educative. But, on the other hand, he wrote that without teachers' guidance, studenting would be random and not effective.

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Both Harris and Dewey had a fundamental problem to solve. Students would need to engage in their work to learn, but students had at least some interests which did not align with the subject-matter that they wanted students to assimilate. So, for example, Harris wrote that while working on synthesizing information from texts and recitations, students': "own personal inclinations must be entirely subordinated, and the business that he is at work upon must be carried forward in accordance with its own ends and without reference to his own feelings in the matter."[148] Harris wrote that students' interests were unimportant because they were not seen as linked to their work. What they were interested in was play, not work on academic subject matter. Thus, Harris wrote that students' interests were not salient for their studenting: "it is necessary that" the student "shall acquire this indifference to his own pleasure even by employing his powers on that which does not appeal to his interest in the remotest degree."[149] The content that students were to master would often not be of interest to students.

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[148] Harris, *The Science of Education*, p. 316.
[149] Harris, The Science of Education, p. 317.

This disinterest was unimportant, for the value of subject matter was not linked to whether students wished to learn it or saw the utility of it, but, as historian Diane Ravitch wrote, because "certain academic subjects were the indispensible foundation of a liberal education."[150]

Harris' understanding of student interest is complex. Students' understanding of their world and of their experiences were to come from their work not on and from their communities, but instead by focusing on work where he "breathe[d] the atmosphere of the far-off and distant world of antiquity for several years of his life."[151] For, a seminal part of Harris' educational philosophy was built upon his belief in what he termed "self-estrangement." Harris wrote that:

> Education must involve a period of estrangement from the common and familiar. The pupil must be led out of his immediateness and separated in spirit from his naturalness, in order that he may be able to return from his self-estrangement to the world that lies nearest to him and consciously seize and master it. Without such self-alienation that which lies nearest to man and deepest in his nature does not become objective to him at all, but remains merely instinctive and implicit. [152]

Thus, studenting would be effective not when it started with what students knew – from their experiences, from their capabilities, and from their interests – but

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[150] Ravitch, Diane. 2000. *Left Back: A Century of Failed School Reforms*. New York: Simon & Schuster, p. 32.

[151] As I detail in the third section of this part of my analysis, students would inhabit the world of "antiquity" through extended text study and recitation, which were seen by Harris to be the two key sites for student work.

[152] Harris, *Educational Values*, pp. 337-8.

when it started from what they did not know, from the alien. In effect, pushing students out of their own worlds – alienating themselves from the familiar – was key to Harris. Students would get leverage from contrast, and not from similarity. This is related to Harris' view that students' experiences and interests are "narrow." To Harris, the student is "what is he is mostly through conventionality." Given these dispositions, "the object of education in the school should be to clear up the mind."[153] Students could not see their communities and their experiences with rationality, for they brought little perspective. By studying texts and participating in recitations on the "embryonic stages of English civilization," students would develop the necessary perspective to study and know themselves: "we must don the garb in which they thought and spoke in order to fully realize in ourselves the embryonic stages of our civilization."[154] Studying texts and participating in recitations was thought sufficiently real to bring these historic texts to life in students' minds.

But only a few years later, Harris wrote: "The good normal school shows the elementary teacher how to select the typical facts in each department… But everywhere the child's experience must be drawn on for illustration."[155] How do we make sense of this reference to the importance of students' experience, given Harris' extended argument against attention to interest? Ultimately, Harris can be understood as deeply committed to the humanist curriculum – to what he

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[153] Harris, *Educational Values*, pp. 340-1.
[154] Harris, *Educational Values*, p. 342.
[155] Harris, *The Future of the Normal School*, p. 376.

called the "five windows of the soul," or the "elementary branches" of knowledge.[156] [157] Harris' commitment is fundamental to understanding his educational philosophy, broadly, and his understanding of effective studenting, specifically. Thus, where that curriculum was sacred and protected, it seems he accepted the pedagogical utility of linking academic content to students' experience – for *illustration*. Harris argued that students' interests and experiences were not relevant for choosing the course of study; student experiences and interests were not to ground or determine the course of study. Instead, systematic progress towards content goals was to be the sole guide. But, if student's experiences could provide some illustration that would be useful, then Harris allowed for building upon these.

This tension is important for understanding Harris' view of learning, and the implications of his view for studenting. The first instance – the denial of salience of student interest for studenting – implies that there is little interaction between students' capabilities and the content that they study. But, the second instance suggests that studenting might in fact be comprised of an active interaction between students and content. Here, studenting would include a process of sense making between student and content, where what the student brought was useful for studenting.

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[156] Again, Harris' five windows include: reading and writing, arithmetic, geography, grammar, and history.

[157] Harris, *Educational Values*, p. 345.

Harris wrote of knowledge as if it was fixed. He wrote that a key purpose of schooling was "mastery" of the five windows of the soul that were faithfully encoded in texts and had been synthesized by teachers. On one hand, Harris wrote that students are acted upon by teachers:

> we understand by 'education' the influence of the individual upon the individual, exerted with the object of developing his powers in a conscious and methodical manner… the educator being relatively mature, and exercising authority over the relatively immature pupil.[158]

The teachers' authority was crucial for ensuring students' obedient work, but Harris did not write as if teachers, in their actions, "learned" students. For, he wrote: "if one is to describe in a word the success of the elementary teacher, he will say that he is successful in bringing typical facts before the mind of the pupil and in stimulating the pupil to analyze them and find the law or principle embodied in them."[159] Knowledge was not simply poured into students' vacant heads; Harris acknowledged the importance of students' work. Students would have to do something with the facts brought before them if studenting were to be successful means to learning achievement – here, they would have to analyze content and make sense of it. Thus, in their synthesis and assimilation, students' work for Harris involved important production or re-production of knowledge.

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[158] Harris, *The Science of Education*, p. 314.
[159] Harris, *The Future of the Normal School*, p. 380.

Dewey agreed with Harris that learning should occur in schools, and that while learning does occur in children's play and their everyday lives, that such learning was at best random:

> there is… a marked difference between the education which every one gets from living with others, as long as he really lives instead of just continuing to subsist, and the deliberate educating of the young. In the former case the education is incidental; it is natural and important, but it is not the express reason of the association.[160] [161]

Further, the two thinkers agreed that students come to school with a narrow world-view and with limited experiences. Dewey wrote, for example: "His world is a world of persons with their personal interests, rather than a realm of facts and laws."[162]

What Dewey meant by interest was complex, as well, for he wrote of two distinct kinds of interests, one which was to be suppressed, and the other which was seen as salient to studenting. When Dewey wrote of educative interests he did not mean the fleeting, passing interests of the individual child. Instead, he meant interests that were actually greater than each individual student, those that linked members of society together – what Dewey called "the rudimentary instincts of human nature."[163] Thus, Mayhew and Edwards wrote: "the typical

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[160] Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, p. 6.

[161] The point that some learning does occur out of schools and untutored is a seminal belief in the work of Colburn, Mann and The Boston Visiting Committee. Dewey adds the problem of randomness of that learning.

[162] Dewey, *The Child and the Curriculum*, p. 105.

[163] Dewey, *The School and Society*, p. 37.

occupations of society at large is a step removed from the child's egoistic, self-absorbed interest and yet deal with something personal, something which touches him, and which will therefore lure him on."[164] Encouraging the egoistic and self-absorption would not be educative. To Dewey, students' fundamental interests were important for their studenting for their link to social progress and mankind's history, represented in the study of occupations. They were "germinating seed, or opening bud"[165] –indications of possibility, and leverage for studenting.

Here lies a key to a long running misunderstanding of Dewey's work. When Dewey wrote of the educative salience and utility of interests for teaching and studenting, he did not mean to prioritize the child over the curriculum or vice versa, but instead to link the two. Thus, in *The Child and the Curriculum*, Dewey wrote: "from the side of the child, it is a question of seeing how his experience already contains within itself elements – facts and truths – of just the same sort of those entering into the formulated study." Alternately, from the "side of the studies, it is a question of interpreting them as outgrowth of forces operating in the child's life, and of discovering the steps that intervene between the child's present experience and their richer maturity."[166] It is as if teachers and students must discover the precious, delicate thread connecting students' fundamental interests and content. Neither was a stranger to the other – the pupils' experience

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[164] Mayhew and Edwards, p. 77.
[165] Dewey, *The Child and the Curriculum*, p. 112.
[166] Dewey, *The Child and the Curriculum*, p. 109.

was seen as elemental building block of the curriculum, and subject-matter represented the mature outgrowth of students' experiences.

Dewey argued that schooling should be organized around occupations which had social and historical meaning; working on occupations, students would learn "the methods of living and learning not as distinct studies," but imbued with their "social significance… as instrumentalities through which the school itself shall be made a genuine form of active community life, instead of a place set apart in which to learn lessons."[167] Historically significant, Dewey wrote: "the occupation supplies the child with a genuine motive," it would motivate and drive studenting by providing meaning and reason for students' effort in studenting. [168] When students worked on occupations, and when teachers enabled that work by constructing tasks that bridged between their experiences and capabilities and content, Dewey wrote that students would be motivated, and their effort would follow. Dewey also wrote that students would learn to restrain what he referred to as their "impulses" – the naïve interests that Dewey wrote teachers should not excite: "for the child to realize his own impulse by recognizing the facts, materials and conditions involved, and then to regulate his impulses through that recognition is educative."[169] In Dewey's case, the student had agency in, or responsibility for, the sacrifice; seeing the importance of content to be learned, Dewey wrote that students would choose to suppress their baser instincts, and

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[167] Dewey, The School and Society, p. 10.
[168] Dewey, *The School and Society*, p. 15.
[169] Dewey, *The School and Society*, p. 27.

apply themselves to work on occupations: "the function of this material in engaging activity and carrying it on consistently and continuously *is* its interest."[170]

But how would students and their teachers distinguish between students' non-educative interests and impulses and students' fundamental interests? There are some profound problems in Dewey's efforts to deal with these central problems of studenting. In *The School and Society*, for example, he wrote: "I have tried to indicate" he wrote, "how the problem works itself out – how… by supplying the proper medium" the teacher can "control their expression as… to facilitate and enrich the growth of the individual child."[171] If students were to self-discipline, why would teachers need to "control" students' expression? Dewey wished discipline to be "intrinsic to the disposition of the person," and not "external and coercive," but he nevertheless wrote of the need for teachers' control – in this instance – and more generally of teacher guidance.[172] This dichotomy appears again and again in Dewey's work, and in Mayhew and Edwards' recollection of putting his views into practice. On one hand, he wrote that because of the fundamental relationship between the child and the curriculum, because human interests inhered in all students, teachers could, as Mayhew and Edwards wrote, "leave behind the traditional method of imposition

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[170] Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, p. 127. Italics in original.
[171] Dewey, *The School and Society*, p. 37.
[172] Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, p. 39.

from above."[173] On this view, the salience of the fundamental interests that students brought to their work, coupled with the inherent motive in work on occupations, did not necessitate imposition from above. But, on the other hand, Dewey wrote: "children simply like to do things… this can be taken advantage of, can be directed into ways where it gives results of value, as well as be allowed to go on at random."[174] Thus, Dewey repeatedly wrote of the possibility of students' self-discipline, and of the problems of external control, while he also wrote of the importance and necessity of extrinsic teacher guidance. It remains unclear how the self-control and internal discipline Dewey and his teachers aimed for would or could work in practice, and how students' fundamental interests would hold sway over what were seen as their more base instincts.

Thus, both Dewey and Harris attempted to deal with a fundamental problem of studenting in different ways. They each proposed different solutions, but each solution resulted in more questions. While Dewey wrote on one hand that the curriculum of "occupations" would be so salient, and teachers' work would be so responsive that students would self-discipline, he nevertheless allowed for the need for teachers' guidance, discipline, and control. Conversely, as I noted above, Harris' students would learn to suppress their interest and work with obedience. This repression occurred not because of their interest in content, but because of command. Only once the student had learned the knowledge

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[173] Mayhew and Edwards, p. 468.
[174] Dewey, *The School and Society*, p. 29.

would he recognize the significance of the content and have interest in it. In Harris' case, students were not seen as bringing salient interests or experiences to their work – their immaturity had not yet earned them freedom from teachers' imposition, and they could not yet appreciate why they must work on content. Instead, the curriculum was supreme. In this case, teachers had that authority. Harris wrote: "Pedagogics involves the conscious exertion of influence on the part of the will of the teacher upon the will of the pupil, with a purpose in view – that of inducing the pupil to form certain prescribed habits, and adopt prescribed views and inclinations."[175] But, as I wrote above, despite this view, he nevertheless allowed for the salience of what students brought to their work, and encouraged teachers to build upon students' interests whenever possible. In Dewey's case, internal control does not seem sufficient, and in Harris' external control does not seem sufficient. Each of these insufficiencies is linked to the problem of interest; Dewey wrote of two types of student interest and of the importance of suppressing one and leveraging the other, but distinguishing between the two seems problematic and elusive. Harris, meanwhile, disavowed the importance of student interest on one hand, but encouraged teachers to leverage it on the other.

Just as control was not to be external, so too did Dewey write that learning was not transmitted from outside: "education is not an affair of 'telling' and being told, but an active and constructive process." This principle, he complained was

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[175] Harris, *The Science of Education*, p. 312.

"almost as generally violated in practice as conceded in theory."[176] Dewey wrote that even if knowledge already existed in the minds of others, it would not exist for individual students until they themselves re-produced it. He wrote: "all thinking is research, and all research is native, original with him who carries it on, even if everybody else in the world already is sure of what he is still looking for."[177] While this might seem quite different from the importance Harris placed on teachers' authority and codified knowledge, in Harris' students' synthesis and inquiry there is important re-construction and re-production – for Harris wrote that students would have to analyze and "find" the principle in the fact the teacher put before him. [178] To Dewey, what students brought to their work was the germ of knowledge, their fundamental interests; the two were seen as connected, and fluid:

> abandon the notion of subject-matter as something fixed and ready-made in itself, outside the child's experience; cease thinking of the child's experience as also something hard and fast, see it as something fluent, embryonic, vital; and we realize that the child and the curriculum are simply two limits which define a single process.

That process, he wrote, was marked by "continuous reconstruction."[179] Harris did not argue for such an emergent connection between the pupil and the curriculum; in fact, self-estrangement was a key instrument for Harris. Nevertheless, though Dewey called this student work "research" and Harris called it "synthesis" or

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[176] Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, p. 38.
[177] Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, p. 148.
[178] Harris, *The Future of the Normal School*, p. 380.
[179] Dewey, *The Child and the Curriculum*, p. 109.

"inquiry," both Harris' and Dewey's students' work was composed of reconstruction of extant knowledge. In each case knowledge was extant, and students would have to assimilate and reconstruct it. And, to varying extents, the interests and experiences students brought to their work were seen as important resources for studenting.

The continuous reconstruction that Dewey wrote of was to occur in schools, guided by teachers. This was important, at least in part because Dewey was offering an alternate way for students to assimilate extant knowledge. Dewey was not abandoning the traditional subject matter – students were to re-produce and re-discover extant knowledge in their cooperative work on occupations. Teachers' work enabling successful studenting was essential. What students brought to learning was important, and they had agency for construction, but studenting would not be effective without the guidance of their teachers. Dewey showed great disdain for what he called the "new education" where:

> The child is expected to 'develop' this or that fact or truth out of his own mind. He is told to think things out, or work things out for himself, without being supplied any of the environing conditions which are requisite to start and guide thought. Nothing can be developed from nothing; nothing but the crude can be developed out of the crude – and that is what surely happens when we throw the child back upon his achieved self as finality.[180]

[180] Dewey, *The Child and the Curriculum*, p. 113.

Students came to their work with much to learn, and teachers were necessary for enabling studenting. Mayhew and Edwards wrote of the difficulty of this type of iterative responsibility, for teachers had to alter both "materials and methods" in reaction to their students' continued development: "this meant the planning of a curriculum which was not static in character, but one which ministered constantly to the changing needs and interests of the growing child's experience."[181] Ministering to these changing needs involved, according to Dewey, crucial parsing of students' fundamental interests and their fleeting interests, work that seems problematic.

Both Harris and Dewey wrote that studenting is students' work and that teachers do not "learn" their students. Harris wrote that students would have to analyze and make sense of others' knowledge. So too did Dewey write that "in the last analysis, all that the educator can do is modify stimuli so that the response will as surely as possible result in the formation of desirable intellectual and emotional dispositions."[182] Knowledge, which already existed, was theirs to re-construct. Dewey and Harris agreed about the crucial responsibility that students held in their studenting: Harris viewed students' work as analysis and assimilation of others' learning, while Dewey viewed students' work as guided re-creation and reconstruction of knowledge. Harris' students reconstructed knowledge and reproduced as they assimilated and synthesized. Conversely,

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[181] Mayhew and Edwards, p. 20.
[182] Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, p. 180.

Dewey's students were re-constructing knowledge that existed already – Dewey's view provides an alternate means for students to assimilate extant knowledge in their cooperative work on occupations.

The politics of studenting

Both Harris' and Dewey's approaches hinged on students seeing the connections between their work in school and their work out of school: Harris' students would have to make connections between the humanist curriculum and their own community; Dewey's students would have to see the linkages between the cooperative society of the classroom and their own communities that they were to remake in this image. [183] The key problem of the politics of studenting was enabling or encouraging this work given students' active role. Harris and Dewey each tried to deal with the need for authority on the one hand and students' active engagement on the other in different ways. Both wrote of the potential problems of external authority, but they each tried to manage these problems differently – Harris wrote that teachers' authority could secure student engagement if it were benevolent; Dewey stitched into students themselves fundamental interests, thus eliminating the necessity, he wrote, for external authority. Despite these differences, each acknowledged the need, in practice, of at least some modicum of both external and internal discipline.

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[183] Dewey, in Mayhew and Edwards, p. 466.

Both Harris and Dewey wrote of the extended social, economic and industrial changes occurring at the end of the 1800s and in the early 1900s.[184] Dewey wrote that these changes exacerbated existing problems of schooling, resulted in alienation, the degradation of community, and economic inequality. In his view, students' cooperative, authentic work in schools would develop commitments and linkages salient enough for students to influence social and political change; student work structured in these ways would lead to the changes he envisioned. The changes Dewey saw in society necessitated, in his view, radical changes in both the organization and the substance of student work. Harris worried that these broad changes might dilute attention to the core curriculum. What he sought was political stability amongst changes. To Harris, students' work on the humanist curriculum, teacher authority, and student obedience were the keys to maintaining political constancy in the face of these changes. In this view, the obedience and authority necessary for students to assimilate and synthesize knowledge were also central for students to become law-abiding citizens and industrious workers. Each acknowledged that the political engagement they envisioned would take effort and growth on students' part. Dewey and Harris constructed different solutions to the problem of marrying

[184] The Harris pieces considered here were authored between 1879-1899. The Dewey texts included for analysis here were authored between 1899-1916. The changes they each wrote about were gaining momentum at the time that Harris wrote, and were accelerating during Dewey's writing. Thus, the conversations they each had with these ideas were not occurring at precisely the same time. Many of Harris' ideas came under attack in the early 1900s, as I wrote elsewhere in this analysis, and some of the reforms he fought against – such as electives and manual and vocation training – gained further support after the time of his writing.

authority external to students with students' active role, but each marriage was a difficult one.

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Despite their divergent views of the meaning of and effective responses to these changes, Harris and Dewey agreed that schools were necessary for teaching students effective citizenship. These expansions of schooling were not self-enacting. Harris and Dewey viewed students as dependent upon schooling to develop citizenship skills, and to suppress innate interests. Just as academic achievement was dependent upon studenting, so too was learning citizenship dependent upon student work. Harris and Dewey each wrote that schooling should be organized to mimic, reflect, and parallel the political and social engagements aimed for outside of schools. In Dewey's view, cooperative work on authentic tasks was key – students would problem-solve cooperatively. Harris viewed the core curriculum as each student's democratic birthright; all students' work, in the U.S. democracy, should be trained on the five windows of the soul, regardless of privilege or probable future. He fought against changes to the curriculum – curricular constancy was what social changes necessitated, not transformations of the curriculum.

The issue of authority and discipline is an enduring one, and is fundamental to studenting because of the indirect relationship between teachers

and student learning outcomes. The central problem of the politics of studenting across each of these thinkers' work was how to deal with the need for authority on one hand and the importance of students' active engagement on the other. In Dewey's case, teachers would have to distinguish between common and selfish interests and link these to what were seen as meaningful social goals. Students, in response, would have to recognize the value of their work and engage, consistently – without teacher imposition but with teacher guidance. Dewey acknowledged that students had much to learn to act cooperatively, and that their fleeting interests were not inclined to this – schools and teachers were necessary in his view. Dewey wrote passionately about the problems of external authority, and the solution he proposed centered on his view of fundamental interests. These resided in students and were linked to the curriculum. By building fundamental interests into students' beings, it was as if authority and discipline were not external but internal. Nevertheless, Dewey, Mayhew and Edwards all wrote of the importance of teachers' guidance and discipline, acknowledging the problems, in practice, of this approach. The resulting tension was left for teachers and students to solve. Teachers would thus have a key problem to solve – what was the line between guidance and control in the case of a student who did not yet self-discipline, who did not yet see the social meaning of studenting? Students would have an analogous one – they would have to choose to suppress their fleeting instincts and to work cooperatively; these were key aspects of student work if they were to be successful. Further, Dewey did

not consider whether it mattered that the social relationships students were to construct in schools no longer existed outside them. Would students still appreciate their meaning and potential? For studenting to be successful, Dewey's students would not only have to work cooperatively in schools, but to work cooperatively when they left them.

Harris' case presents a useful, albeit alternate, set of questions and difficulties. He did not consider, as Dewey suggested, that imposition or external compulsion would diminish students' engagement, or cull anger, resentment and disaffection, thus degrading citizenship. The solution that Harris proposed to the central problem of the politics of studenting – external authority on the one hand and student engagement on the other – was a combination of the core curriculum, coupled with teachers' authority and students' obedience. But while there is a tension in Dewey's view, there is one in Harris' view as well. For, Harris disavowed the corporal punishment that the Boston Masters felt was crucial for establishing teachers' authority because he thought it would delimit "genuine" results. [185] He did not consider whether this central problem emanated from the external nature of the compulsion, as Dewey wrote. Instead, he supposed that it was the extreme nature of corporal punishment that was problematic; without this, external compulsion could be effective for securing student engagement. Harris wrote that through students' study of Latin, for example, they would learn effective civil and political relations because it was

[185] Harris, *The Relation of School Discipline to Moral Education*, p. 365.

embryonic of Western Civilization.[186] Thus, student learning was dependent upon students' work making the connections between their work on the traditional curriculum – ancient Rome, in this example – and the current civic and political system. How could the teacher be sure that external compliance would be sufficient to secure not only student obedience, but student engagement? This engagement was necessary, for example, for the student to see himself in history. Harris and Dewey both tried to solve the same problem – how to combine external authority with students' active role. The solutions they proposed differed, but each resulted in new or continuing problems.

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Political and social learning outcomes were of primary importance to both Dewey and Harris. Just as Harris wrote that self-discipline and moral training were crucial school goals, so too did Dewey see the development of cooperation and common linkages as important alongside academic achievement. Each thinker imagined schools and work in schools to be sufficiently salient to structure civic engagement, however dissimilar the goals they professed. In Harris' case, schools and teachers acted on students, which he wrote would result in self-discipline. Nevertheless, in Harris' case students' work was necessary; studenting was the means to social and political learning despite Harris' contention that teachers acted on students. In Dewey's case, teachers guided

[186] Harris, *Educational Values*, p. 342.

students, constructing meaningful tasks, but it was students' fundamental interests that were to power self-discipline. Thus, Harris and Dewey dealt with the politics of studenting in different ways. Harris placed a premium on external authority, it was a key ingredient for securing student engagement in his view; he wrote of the necessity of teacher authority on the one hand and student obedience on the other. As long as external compulsion did not include corporal punishment, Harris wrote that students' engagement could be secured externally, without the problems he noted when corporal punishment was utilized. Nevertheless, self-discipline was still important in his view, if studenting were to lead to learning outcomes. Dewey, worrying about the problems of external authority, argued that the fundamental interests that inhered in students and that were connected to the curriculum could stand in for external compulsion. Despite this, his approach depended upon teachers' guidance.

The importance of authority and obedience that I sketched in the previous section were equally important here – the student, Harris wrote, "must be obedient to the word of command."[187] The teachers' authority was crucial for teaching "respect for law very thoroughly."[188] Students had to work to repress their interests: "without authority on the one hand and obedience on the other, education would lack its ethical basis – a neglect of the will-training could not be compensated for by any amount of knowledge or smartness."[189] Self-discipline

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[187] Harris, *The Relation of School Discipline to Moral Education,* p. 357.
[188] Harris, *The Relation of School Discipline to Moral Education*, p. 365.
[189] Harris, *The Science of Education*, pp. 314-5.

was understood to be equal in value to academic goals, but Harris wrote that students would not self-discipline without authority and obedience. For, students' interests were understood to be at odds with what was educative; teachers' authority was necessary for ensuring that students' actions were characterized by the four virtues of regularity, punctuality, silence and industry.

However, Harris wrote that teachers could summon this authority without the use of corporal punishment: "it is now easy to find the school admirably disciplined and its pupils enthusiastic and law-abiding – governed entirely without the use of corporal punishment." Thus, while both Harris and the Boston Masters agreed on the importance of authority, of discipline, and of command,[190] Harris wrote that discipline could be accomplished without the use of corporal punishment. He agreed with Mann[191] that the use of corporal punishment makes it "next to impossible to retain genuine respect for law." [192] Harris asserted that imposition could be accomplished without corporal punishment; and, if it were, genuine respect would result. But, is it plausible to believe that authority could create self-discipline? Harris disavowed corporal punishment because he did not believe that it would result in "genuine" outcomes, but was the only problem with corporal punishment the *physical* manifestation of authority? Harris did not consider whether the external nature of imposition itself was problematic. Harris wished not only for studenting to result in external compliance, but internal

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[190] Boston Masters, *Remarks*, p. 105.
[191] Mann, *Answer*, p. 116.
[192] Harris, *The Relation of School Discipline to Moral Education*, p. 365.

compliance; that is, he wrote that student work must be marked by regularity, punctuality, silence and industry. Would it not be possible for students to exhibit these characteristics while daydreaming? This was a worry of Mann's that Harris did not share; Mann argued against the value of the Boston Masters' quiet classrooms, where he reported a preponderance of "inattentive" students:

> …many members of the reciting classes are drowsy, and listless, and evidently following some train of thought… whose scene lies beyond the walls of the schoolhouse, rather than applying their minds to the subject-matter of the lesson.[193]

How could Harris be sure that authority and discipline would result in substantive, and not superficial, compliance? In student engagement?

Harris believed that schools could, at one and the same time, uphold political stability and respond effectively to changes in industrialization and urbanization. In his view, there were three keys to stability amongst changes: first, student work focused exclusively on the core academic curriculum; second, disciplinary virtues which were seen to inculcate student self-discipline; and third, the combination of teacher authority and student obedience. On the pressing social and economic changes, Harris wrote: "man is conquering nature by means of machinery, and the citizen cannot enter into the fruits of this victory unless he adapts himself, through regularity and punctuality, to the demands of this new form of civilization."[194] Harris did not worry about these developments as Dewey

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[193] Mann, *Seventh Annual Report*, pp. 68-9.
[194] Harris, *The Relationship of School Discipline to Moral Education*, p. 358.

did. Nor did he believe that they required manual or vocational training, as many reformists at the time suggested.[195] Instead, he wrote that these changes necessitated what he referred to as the four virtues of regularity, punctuality, silence and industry; to be effective, studenting would have to be characterized by each of these. Together, the four virtues would equip students with the dispositions to adapt while still inculcating respect for law and authority. To Harris these were learning outcomes as well as important means to those outcomes: "Having enumerated these four cardinal duties in the schoolroom… let us now note their higher significance reaching beyond the schoolroom into the building of character for life."[196] Children came to school self-interested; inhibition of their baser instincts was seen as crucial for them to work effectively in school and in society. Thus, Harris accepted that these are all "in a certain sense negative virtues," they all necessitated "inhibitory act[s] of the will,"[197] or self-discipline. If studenting was not marked by these virtues, students would not grow to be law-abiding citizens, nor would they be able to succeed in industrialized society. Student work that was characterized by these was seen as key for maintaining stability amongst unavoidable changes. Harris asserted that securing students' self-discipline was reliant on teachers' authority. But, he did not question whether students would obey without also engaging internally.

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[195] Kliebard wrote that Harris denied "the intellectual value of manual training that its major proponents persistently claimed" but that the "'great conservator' was increasingly a lonely one, especially on that subject."Kliebard, Herbert M. 2004. *The Struggle for the American Curriculum*. Third ed. New York and London: RoutledgeFalmer, p. 113.

[196] Harris, *The Relationship of School Discipline to Moral Education, p. 362.*

[197] Harris, *The Relationship of School Discipline to Moral Education*, p. 358.

These virtues were also necessary for control and discipline in the classroom. They helped solve some of the problems that Harris wrote inhered in learning in groups:

> The first thing the child learns when he comes to school is to act according to certain forms – certain forms that are necessary in order to make possible the instruction of the schooling classes or groups. The school is a social whole. The pupil must learn to act in such a way as not to interfere with the studies of his fellows. He must act so as to reinforce the action of the other pupils and not embarrass it. This concerted action into which the pupil is trained may be called the rhythm of the school. The child must become rhythmical, must be penetrated by the spirit of the school order. Order is heaven's first law.[198]

In Harris' understanding there is a mutually reinforcing relationship between the social and political goals of order and the necessity for order that result from working in classrooms; in both classrooms and society, Harris wrote that students' and citizens' actions would be externally compelled. In this passage we can see how Harris viewed student/student interactions. Harris wrote as if students should get out of each others' way – student interaction was interference, obstacle. Building community was not the goal; instead the goals were developing law-abiding, self-restrained citizens. Harris wrote that the "deep significance of the school virtue of silence," is that

> it makes accessible the depths of thought and reflection… each one can detach his industry from the industry of the whole and pursue original study and

[198] Harris, *The Relation of School Discipline to Moral Education*, p. 356.

> investigation by himself although surrounded by a multitude. This individual industry is prevented by anything on the part of his fellows which tends to distract him.[199]

Learning together was seen as problematic, and these four virtues were means for managing these problems, and goals themselves. In this passage, the active engagement of students in their work, and the link between that work and learning is highlighted. Students' thought and reflection were key, Harris wrote, if studenting were to lead to learning outcomes. Harris' view was dependent upon teachers' authority to power that effort. But, would students' obedience, and the four regulatory disciplines, enable students to work in these ways? Despite Harris' contention that authority was external, students would still have to discipline themselves in order to work with deep reflection and thought as their work manifested the outward signs of obedience.

Dewey, meanwhile, wrote that external compulsion was toxic to student engagement, and that students would respond with external compliance and obedience, but that their internal work and their active engagement would not be secured in this way. Dewey wrote that social, industrial and economic changes exacerbated problems of schooling, but that schools could effectively respond to these challenges and, through students, remake society. In contrast to Harris, Dewey wrote that the changes that he saw entailed changes in schooling, in community, and in political engagement. They also, importantly, entailed

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[199] Harris, *The Relation of School Discipline to Moral Education*, p. 359.

changes in students' work from traditional views of studenting. In the Mayhew and Edwards book, Dewey wrote:

> In the earlier days of our country these defects of school materials were largely made good by the life of the young out of school. But the increase of urban conditions and mass production has cut many persons off from these supplementary resources.[200]

Prior to urbanization and industrialization, Dewey wrote that authenticity was found in students' experiences in their communities. Harris' argument for continued adherence to the traditional academic curriculum was doubly troubling for Dewey, then, as large scale changes limited these meaningful out of school learning opportunities, and thus made authentic work in schools all the more important. Authenticity was a crucial component of Dewey's educational philosophy, and was integrally linked to students' work on occupations. Dewey wrote that his curriculum was authentic because students would be solving problems that were both socially and historically relevant. This curriculum was inherently linked to students' fundamental interests; together they comprised Dewey's answer to the problems of external authority. In Dewey's view, his approach contrasted with the inauthenticity he saw in traditional schools, where student work focused on compartmentalized, academic learning that was disjointed from its use and application.

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[200] Dewey, in Mayhew and Edwards, p. 469.

The answer to the social and economic problems that Dewey worried about was to infuse students' work with authenticity and to construct classrooms where students solved problems together, worked cooperatively, and where teachers acted as guides. Dewey wrote that just as schools could change society so too could they deepen the rifts he worried about. He argued that schools were so salient that they could either heal or splinter society. The external compulsion and authority that Harris advocated might result in obedience, but would not result in citizens who understood their linkages to each other and would work to remake society:

> While the theory of effort is always holding up to us a strong, vigorous character as the outcome of its method of education, practically we do not get such a character. We get either the narrow, bigoted man who is obstinate and irresponsible save in the line of his own preconceived aims and beliefs; or else a character dull, mechanical, unalert because the vital juice of spontaneous interest has been squeezed out.[201]

Just as fundamental interests inhered in students and would motivate studenting, so too were these greater interests tied to community. If students worked together on authentic tasks, they would see the utility of their work; Dewey insisted that self-discipline would come from within, with the benefit of teachers' guidance. This is the solution to the problem of external compulsion that Dewey proposed. Implementing this, Mayhew and Edwards wrote: "'discipline,' so called, was not from above, but was evolved as a result of the participation by

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[201] Dewey, *Interest and Effort in Education*, p. 3.

both teacher and children in a group activity, and a school spirit developed which fostered social sensitivity and conscience."[202] The authority that was so crucial in Harris' case was seen as degrading in Dewey's.

But just as I posed questions about the plausibility of Harris' construction, so too do I see analogous problems regarding the plausibility of Dewey's assertions. Though Dewey wrote, on one hand, that discipline would come from within, he sketched two key ingredients for securing that self-discipline. Despite Dewey's disdain for external compulsion, student engagement in his construction seems to have been at least partly compelled externally; for, Dewey's approach leaned heavily on what he saw as the inherent salience of students' authentic work on occupations and on teachers' guidance and authority. Dewey assumed that teachers' guidance would not result in the same narrow and bigoted outcomes as teacher compulsion in part because of the curriculum, but teachers' guidance was still external. Dewey, then, can be seen as trying to manage what he saw as the problem of external compulsion; he provided an alternate approach to external compulsion which he argued would not suffer from the same fatal flaws, because his solution centered on the salience of students' fundamental interests, which he wrote were internal. But, would students really understand teachers' guidance as sufficiently distinct from teachers' control?

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[202] Mayhew and Edwards, p. 71.

The curriculum was a key ingredient for students' self-discipline because of its link to students' fundamental interests. However, to Dewey working cooperatively on occupations in schools was important, in part, because these occupations no longer existed in industrialized, urbanized society. How, then, would students find meaning in occupations and cooperative work, if they did not see either of these in their communities? Was their historical relevance sufficient? Given that the curriculum was one important part of Dewey's answer to the problems of external compulsion that he saw, was this another potential problem with his solution? For studenting to work, students would not only have to work cooperatively, but they would have to carry this commitment and these new capabilities into society, and would have to remake society accordingly. [203] Students' work, then, occurred in the classroom, but would continue in society. Dewey wrote that all this was possible in schools, with teachers, and by students whose experiences were all of and in the society they were to change. The weight and pressure of change was very heavy in this case, and it rested on students' work in the self-same flawed society they were to eventually remake.

Dewey envisioned common linkages and cooperation, he aimed for meaning in work and to ease economic inequities, and he imagined that students would learn to work for these changes in schools: "the primary business of school is to train children in cooperative and mutually helpful living; to foster in them the

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[203] Dewey, in Mayhew and Edwards, wrote of the possibility of establishing "small scale" cooperative societies in schools, p. 466.

consciousness of mutual interdependence; and to help them practically in making the adjustments that will carry this spirit into overt deeds."[204] Both Harris and Dewey valued social and political outcomes alongside of academic achievement. Just as Dewey wrote that the development of cooperation and community were key goals of schooling, so too did Harris see moral training and self-discipline as central, alongside of academic goals. Despite the differences in Harris and Dewey's political and social goals, they each wrote that students' work in schools would be sufficiently relevant to organize civic engagement.

Thus, both Dewey and Harris dealt with the need for authority on one and hand students' active engagement on the other in different ways. Despite Harris' contentions that authority could power student engagement and Dewey's that his construction avoided the need for teachers' authority or control, in neither case is authority completely external or internal. Despite the differences in the views and the ways that each of these authors managed the problems of the politics of studenting, for studenting to be effective both Harris' and Dewey's students would have to self-discipline, and teachers would have to direct.

The nature of the work that students are to do

Dewey and Harris tried to solve the problem: how could students work to assimilate extant knowledge such that it would become their own? The student

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[204] Dewey, *The School and Society*, p. 81.

work that was required by Harris and Dewey was different. In Harris' case, student work in recitation was to observe and analyze other students' work, and in text study their work was to synthesize and verify the problem solving of others. In Dewey's case, student work focused on solving authentic problems. In one, studenting focused on examining how others had problem-solved and how they had organized knowledge. In the other, students were to problem-solve themselves, though they did not have to begin from scratch, their work would benefit from the "map" of amassed knowledge.[205] In each, students' work was defined in such a way as to solve the problems of authority and discipline. Harris wrote that teachers' authority and student obedience would power student engagement, that the humanist curriculum was relevant, and that the structure and codification of texts was a resource for student work. Dewey wrote that teachers' guidance and the coupling of students' fundamental interests and work on occupations could secure their engagement. But each of these divergent solutions bumped up against new problems.

The four virtues of regularity, punctuality, silence and industry, and the authority and obedience that were all important for political and social reasons were also central aspects of the nature of students' work in Harris' view. Harris wrote that knowledge exists in codified texts, and that "the industry of the school is essentially study of the book."[206] Students' work synthesizing, the key term

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[205] Dewey, *The Child and the Curriculum*, p. 115.
[206] Harris, *The Relation of School Discipline to Moral Education*, pp. 359-360.

Harris used, was active. Thus, when Harris used it in reference to students' work with texts, he meant that students would actively analyze and verify content. In this way, he wrote, they would make knowledge their own. The nature of students' work in Harris' case is not a simple one of transmission. Harris did not see students as creators of knowledge, though he wrote that students' work would have to push past memorization, and studenting would have to involve this active synthesis. The nature of student work in Dewey's case was also not one of transmission. To Dewey, students would reconstruct extant knowledge in their work on occupations. The cooperative work that was so important for remaking schools and society was a crucial component of the nature of student work in Dewey's view. Students were to work on problems in occupations, not on discrete subject-matter, and in this work they would find that they would need to master academic disciplines; Dewey wrote that as students worked on problem-solving in occupations that they would find that they needed math, science, reading, and more. There is an important similarity across these views; teachers in each case were crucial for setting the constructive groundwork, but their work was not direct means to student learning outcomes. Thus a key problem for educators to solve is how to enable and support that inward work, whether it is synthesis or reconstruction; that work is effortful and challenging, and it is students'.

Much was entailed of both students and teachers in each. Neither presented a simple answer to studenting, but in both views students' work was

integral. The different views of the nature of students' work – recitation and text-based in one, cooperative and authentic problem-solving in the other – did not obviate the reality that students in each would have to incorporate and integrate knowledge, and go through a fundamental transformation. This is a key problem for each Dewey and Harris. But there are unanswered questions in both understandings. In Harris' case, text-based student work was considered key to learning because of the relevance Harris saw in the core curriculum, which was composed of the building blocks of civilization. But students' success seeing this relevance was dependent upon very important transfer and understanding; students would have to make and see the connections between the knowledge they studied and worked on in books and in recitation and the world around them. Dewey, meanwhile, found this traditional approach fundamentally problematic. He argued that student work on texts and codified knowledge was inauthentic because students would be working on learning others' answers to problems, and these answers were disconnected from the actual problem-solving. This approach was troubling, Dewey wrote, because while students might learn facts, they would not understand them – they would not see the applicability and use of knowledge in their communities and their society.

Dewey thus tried to devise student work that would be means to reconstruction of extant knowledge that did not suffer from the problems that he wrote plagued mainstream approaches to studenting. Dewey's answer to the question: how could student work be framed so that students would assimilate

extant knowledge? Was that students would problem solve in their work on occupations. But his solution opens up a new set of problems. Dewey's students would retrace the problem solving of human history in schools, not in communities. The tasks they were to work on were constructed by teachers, they did not occur organically, in communities for students to solve, even if they had, historically. Dewey argued that this work was authentic because students would be solving human, enduring problems, and because their solutions – knowledge – would be vitally linked to the problems. Nevertheless, students' work would occur in schools, using the "maps" of extant knowledge. In this way, Dewey's solution to the inauthenticity of learning he saw in traditional formations was also problematic: students would still, in his construction, have to see the relevance of the knowledge they reconstructed in schools out of schools.

If students' work is a means to learning outcomes, then what sort of authority and control could teachers have over students' mind-work? While Harris stressed the vital importance of the authority of the teacher, the limits of that authority were tested by Harris' view of knowledge. First, Harris wrote that it was students' silent industry that would lead to learning; but, could teachers command the work that goes on in the mind? While the teachers' authority and students' obedience might enable Harris' four disciplines of regularity, punctuality, silence and (outward) industry, and how these were useful for the outward signs of studenting, could these guarantee the inward industry, the observation and analysis of others' sense making that Harris wrote were crucial

for studenting to be effective? While the teacher might have control over the four disciplines, Harris wrote that synthesis occurred in students' mind, in their individual industry. Was the combination of the relevant core curriculum and teachers' authority and students' obedience sufficient to avoid this potential problem? Harris' teachers were to monitor these potential problems in recitation. But, it would be more difficult for teachers to monitor inward industry, which Harris wrote was crucial in students' text study.

The issues of authority and discipline were to be managed in different ways in Dewey's case. Teachers were not to compel but to guide, and the authenticity of student work on occupations was to bolster student effort and motivation. But students' work was still theirs, and it was still internal. Dewey's students, like Harris', would have to make these connections. Would the curriculum really be salient enough such that it could power student effort? Would students' work be industrious and effortful when it was to be cooperative? Where Harris leaned on teachers' authority and students' obedience, Dewey leaned on teachers' guidance and what he saw as the inherent relevance of his curriculum. In each case, there are at least as many questions as there are solutions. Each approach is dependent upon a conception of student work that represents an effort to solve some fundamental problems of studenting: how could teachers enable student work learning extant knowledge, when learning was not transmission? How would students see the utility and the value of that knowledge, when it already existed? Harris' solution relied upon the salience he

saw in the traditional curriculum and on teachers' authority and students' obedience. Dewey's solution was constructed to address what he saw as essential flaws in the traditional approach, but despite the authenticity he believed inhered in the curriculum of occupations, and despite his assurance that students would be solving problems, student tasks were still constructed by teachers and student work was still solved in schools.

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Both Harris and Dewey stressed the importance of teachers for enabling student work, but in each it was students who assimilated extant knowledge. The means to learning goals – students' work – were quite different in each construction. Those differences are linked to views of knowledge and of learning. Harris and Dewey disagreed about what student work would lead to learning subject-matter, but the activity of studenting in Harris' view exceeded Dewey's concept of traditional demands of studenting, for Dewey wrote: "inherited conditions impel the elementary school to a certain triviality and poverty of subject-matter, calling for mechanical drill, rather than thought-activity."[207] Harris insisted upon what he referred to as "critical awareness" during recitation and "individual industry" during text study. In each of these, he wrote that students' work would not be passive: "the real knowing," Harris wrote, "begins beyond the process of memorizing; it begins with reflection upon the data given and with the

[207] Dewey, *Relation of Theory to Practice in Education*, p. 25.

discovery of inter-relations and the process of derivation from higher sources."[208] In each construction, student work would make use of different instruments – recitation and text study on one hand, authentic work on occupations on the other – and was composed of different practices. But these different practices were each thought to lead to assimilation of amassed knowledge. In both cases, studenting was the means to learning outcomes.

Harris' commitment to the humanist curriculum, or what Harris referred to as the five windows of the soul, was related to the relevance he saw in the material. Recitation was one useful instrument for student work assimilating what Harris viewed as the building blocks of knowledge and of Western Civilization. Effective student work was consistently portrayed by Harris as interaction between students and content, with interactions between students and interactions between students and teachers not about co-construction of knowledge, but focused instead on students' synthesis of codified knowledge. Student work would involve observation of peers' work with content, in recitation:

> In the class the pupil learns much more than he could learn by himself… The pupil in learning his lesson understands some phases of it and fails to see what is essential in others, but the failures are not all alike; a given pupil succeeds where he fails and fails where he succeeds. In the recitation each pupil is surprised to find that some of his fellows are more successful than himself in seeing the true significance. The pupil can, through the properly conducted recitation, seize the subject of his lesson through many minds. He

[208] Harris, *The Future of the Normal School*, p. 377.

> learns to add to his power of insight the various insights of his fellow pupils.[209]

Studenting, here, was comprised of active observation and analysis of other students' sense making. Harris' students would observe each others' successes and failures mastering content. Thus, while students were quiet, they were not passive. Instead, their attention in recitation was marked by what Harris referred to as "critical awareness."[210] If studenting were to be the means to assimilation, students' work would have to include observation and apprehension of other students' mistakes and successes, and use of these observations in integration of subject matter. Together, the four disciplines were to characterize studenting focused on synthesis of the humanist curriculum.

While recitation was an important instrument for students' work, Harris insisted that "the industry of the school is essentially study of the book."[211] Students' work with texts was key, with recitation seen as an important complement. In text study:

> The pupil is to add to his own feeble and undeveloped powers of thought and observation these faculties as exhibited in the strongest of his race… The pupil shall learn by mastering his textbook how to master all books – how to use that greatest of all instruments of culture, the library. In the case of oral instruction the pupil must wait upon the leisure of the teacher, trusting to his memory or writing down the words and pondering them on some future occasion… The book

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[209] Harris, *The Relation of School Discipline to Moral Education*, p. 358.
[210] Harris, *The Relation of School Discipline to Moral Education*, p. 361.
[211] Harris, *The Relation of School Discipline to Moral Education*, pp. 359-360.

> waits upon his leisure. The book contains the most systematic presentation of its author's ideas.[212]

There are many key points in this passage. First, knowledge codified in texts represented the very best learning of mankind; it was not expected that students, with the feeble and undeveloped powers they brought to their work, could create knowledge. What was of crucial importance was studenting focused on mining the great learners' work, to learn what sages had learned by studying texts where their knowledge was codified. Second, Harris wrote that students would learn to examine and analyze texts by examining and analyzing texts; thus, studenting was both means and outcome. This was introverted work – Harris stressed the importance of silence and of individual industry. This introverted work is an important corollary to students' extroverted work of observation and analysis of their peers' work in recitation. Third, Harris believed that texts were vitally important because they represented a direct link between great thinkers and the student.

Harris' portrayal of text study provides a particularly rich and detailed description of his view of effective studenting. The nature of student work with texts was solitary synthesis, as the student was to "hold himself in utter indifference to these [classroom] outside events." Working with text, studenting involved analysis and verification of others' work. Specifically, Harris wrote that the pupil:

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[212] Harris, *The Relation of School Discipline to Moral Education*, pp. 359-360.

> …critically questions the meaning of his author, and applies himself to the work by verifying by his own observation and reflection what is compiled for him by the author. He is learning by this private industry how to reinforce himself by the work of his fellow men… memorizing the text of the book, committing to memory what has been told one – this is not self-help until the internal work of verification has been accomplished.[213]

Again, the teacher – or the text – does not "learn" the student. While knowledge was assembled and constructed by expert others, student work assimilating that knowledge was not transmission. Students' work was crucial for learning outcomes; studenting would lead to learning achievement even when knowledge was seen as codified, amassed by experts throughout time, for students would have to synthesize others' learning in order to incorporate it. Memorization was not seen as sufficient, because it does not involve synthesis – the key term Harris used.[214] This work verifying and assimilating would occur in individual text study: students were to learn what others had learned by studying their work.

Students' work in Harris' construction necessitated important, substantive, and active sense making. Though Harris' students' problem-solving was not situated in the contexts in which it was to be used, it nevertheless was characterized by problem solving. He wrote that students' method was not rote memorization, and the outcome would not be disjointed facts. Harris did not worry, as Dewey did, that students would not see the links between what they

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[213] Harris, *The Relation of School Discipline to Moral Education*, p. 361.
[214] Harris, *The Future of the Normal School*, p. 381.

had learned in these ways and the use of that knowledge, he wrote that students would and could assimilate the knowledge they studied in texts and make it their own, that they would be able to use it and see its connections to their world as they synthesized and verified it. But, this is a key problem he did not mention – which begs the question: what did Harris assume that allowed him to avoid the question? Much of what Harris seems to have assumed has to do with students' work. Harris envisioned systematic conversations between students and the knowledge represented in texts. Enacting these conversations would necessitate active engagement. Here again is Harris' assumption that students' engagement could be secured through external compulsion. Further, while Harris wrote that students brought little interest to their work, he nevertheless assumed that they brought important capabilities – specifically the capability to initiate and sustain these substantive conversations. Also, Harris seems to have assumed that students brought the necessary capability to see texts not just as a collection of facts but instead, to see the meaning of those facts and how they were answers to fundamental problems. In this he seems to have assumed that students did not need experiential activities in order to make these connections. Further, Harris did not see codified knowledge as disjointed; instead, he assumed that the organization and structure of texts was transparent and accessible to students, and thus a key aspect of their utility.

Dewey made different assumptions. He disputed the utility of text study for studenting, and wrote that "studies must be assimilated not as mere items of

information, but as organic parts of present needs and aims, which in turn are social."[215] Student work memorizing, analyzing or synthesizing others' learning in texts and in recitation was seen as disjointed from need or meaning: "it is the characteristic use to which the thing is put, because of its specific qualities, which supplies the meaning with which it is identified."[216] Student work that focused on codified text would not have meaning to students. Disconnected from their experiences, students' work in Harris' approach to studenting was seen by Dewey as inauthentic; in his view, students studying texts that represented how problems had been solved was distinct from students solving problems. That distinction, to Dewey, was crucial. Dewey questioned the student work of verification that Harris insisted would occur in students' minds: "the failure" of the traditional approach, Dewey wrote,

> arises in supposing that relationships can become perceptible *without experience* – without that conjoint trying and undergoing… It is assumed that 'mind' can grasp them if it will only give attention, and that this attention may be given at will irrespective of the situation.[217]

Here, Dewey was making a distinction between what he considered, or counted as, educative experience and what did not. Dewey believed that it was in the solving of problems that studenting would be the means to learning outcomes; while understanding others' work might be a problem it was not an authentic problem, it was a problem that had its place in schools but not out of them. Harris

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[215] Dewey, in Mayhew and Edwards, p. 470.
[216] Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, p. 29.
[217] Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, p. 144, *italics inserted*.

insisted that students could verify and analyze others' knowledge in recitation and text-based experiences, and that in so doing they would synthesize knowledge. This work, he wrote, was educative experience. Thus, the two thinkers disagreed about what counts as experience.

Dewey wrote that students were to work out problems "experimentally" they would see the "necessity" of knowledge.[218] Students must work, in schools, on problems that are his; not the problems that are "his only as a pupil," but his "as a human being."[219] Further, students' work must not be constrained by traditional ordering of subject matter, not presented according to what Dewey viewed as the artificial classification of knowledge. On this Dewey wrote, in *The Child and the Curriculum*:

> … in school, each of these subjects is classified. Facts are torn away from their original place in experience and rearranged with reference to some general principle. Classification is a matter of child experience; things do not come to the individual pigeonholed.[220]

The classification and codification of knowledge in text was an advantage to Harris' students – he wrote that these directly linked students and the creators of knowledge, and were resources for students to understand how thinkers had solved problem and how they had arranged solutions.

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[218] Dewey, *The School and Society*, p. 14.
[219] Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, p. 157.
[220] Dewey, *The Child and the Curriculum*, pp. 105-6.

But as important as problem solving and experimentation were, Dewey wrote of student re-construction and re-discovery, not of student construction of knowledge. Students were not alone in their work, and they were to benefit from amassed knowledge and from guidance from their teachers. What others had learned was a key guide to students' work. Amassed knowledge was, Dewey wrote: "a map, a summary, an arranged and orderly view of previous experiences." The "logically formulated material" was integral, for it "gives direction, it facilitates control; it economizes effort, preventing useless wandering, and pointing out the paths which lead most quickly and most certainly to a desired result."[221] Dewey was not eschewing amassed knowledge, nor did he suppose that students were going to discover new knowledge. For, teachers and students could not ignore established knowledge – with it as guides "children are able to traverse in a short lifetime what the race has needed slow, tortured ages to attain. The dice have been loaded by all the successes which have preceded [sic],"[222] but solving authentic problems was the key to effective studenting. Harris can be understood as striking an analogous balance – it was the students' responsibility to verify, to analyze, and to synthesize, in his own private industry with texts. Making sense of codified knowledge was both Harris' and Dewey's students' problems, but,learning outcomes were dependent upon different student work.

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[221] Dewey, *The Child and the Curriculum*, p. 115.
[222] Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, p. 37.

To Dewey, then, authentic student work would be guided by amassed knowledge, but would not be the study of that knowledge in text. To Dewey, studenting focused on occupations was seen to lead to academic learning: students would come to need math, physics, biology, reading, and more; in his problem-solving each of these would be crucial to solve students' questions. This is what Dewey meant when he wrote: "nature study, geography, and history are to be treated as extensions of the child's own activity."[223] This view also underscores Dewey's view on text study. Mayhew and Edwards wrote: "books and the ability to read are, therefore, regarded strictly as tools."[224] Mayhew and Edwards described "all the activities which filled" the students' day as including: "spinning, weaving, cooking, shop work, modeling, dramatic plays, conversation, story-telling, or discussion." The student would be "vitally interested and constantly absorbed" in each of these.[225] It would be a huge mistake to conceive of these – spinning, weaving, cooking, etc. – as Dewey's learning goals. Instead, students' work on these would necessitate re-learning the academic disciplines; these were practical sites for students' reconstruction of knowledge. Dewey wrote that when students asked questions – in this instance about how clothing is manufactured – that they have to problem solve in an authentic way – in this instance, by learning how to grow cotton, how to harvest it, spin it, etc.

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[223] Dewey, in Mayhew and Edwards, p. 475,

[224] Mayhew and Edwards, p. 26. This stands in stark contrast with Harris view that "the industry of the school is essentially study of the book."

[225] Mayhew and Edwards, p. 93.

Therefore, Harris and Dewey proposed divergent solutions to the question: what student work would lead to assimilation of extant knowledge? Dewey wrote of the importance of authentic work on occupations, and Harris wrote of the salience of recitation and text study. While each aimed for students to assimilate extant knowledge, the work that they wrote would lead to that assimilation was different. These differences hinged on variant views of what would constitute experience, as well as how they each viewed knowledge and learning. Dewey wrote of the importance of authentic problem solving in a curriculum focused on occupations. Work with texts, to Dewey, was disjointed and unrelated to meaning. Harris, meanwhile, argued for substantive conversations between students and texts. In each construction, studenting was active. Harris' portrayal of his approach was to be more active than the drill and memorization that Dewey wrote characterized traditional approaches to studenting, as Harris wrote of the importance of "individual industry" in text study and "critical alertness" in recitation.

Conclusion

W.T. Harris and John Dewey both tried to solve the problem: how could students work in schools to assimilate extant knowledge such that it would become their own? Each conceived of and defined student work differently. But despite these different views, each had to manage the same problems – how to

compel or guide student work when student engagement was seen as necessary, how to utilize the interests and the experiences of students when these do not consistently reinforce what teachers see as necessary student work, how to enable students to transfer and correlate their work in schools to their lives out of them. Attending to these problems is a fundamental aspect of supporting and enabling effective studenting.

Despite differences in the ways that Harris and Dewey understood studenting, the solutions that they each proposed to these problems resulted in either new or continuing challenges. Harris wrote of the importance and utility of external compulsion, but nevertheless encouraged teachers to build upon students' experiences. Conversely, Dewey condemned external imposition. By writing fundamental interests into students' beings, his approach sought to avoid what he saw as the toxic nature of external compulsion. But, he – and Mayhew and Edwards – nevertheless conceded the importance of guidance and even control for the suppression of students' fleeting or passing interests. Each method was constructed to secure student engagement, but neither seems unequivocal in practice, for Harris and Dewey each came down on both sides of the problem of student interests. Further, despite their arguments for authority on one hand and guidance on the other, neither external compulsion nor internal self-discipline seemed, on its own, sufficient. The fixes that Harris and Dewey proposed for these central problems of studenting illuminate how solving these problems seems more a matter of managing key tensions.

Following the common school era, at the dawn of the 20th century, school enrollment increased exponentially at the same time as worry about the corrosive effects of industrialism and urbanization on democratic values. One question that emerges from analysis of Harris and Dewey's works concerns the effects that these social changes seem to have had on conceptions of studenting. This was a central worry that motivated Dewey's work.[226] Lagemann wrote that:

> Dewey and his colleagues were deeply concerned about growing social divisions in American society. As demonstrated by the emphasis he placed on occupations and community life, they believed these could perhaps be lessened and conflict avoided through acceptance of 'producerist' ideals, which valued skill in work more than accumulation of wealth.[227]

Dewey's students were to work together at the occupations he found fundamental to mankind. Students' work was to be rooted in understanding and in necessity. Students were to problem-solve, to work as teams, to work cooperatively in order to learn each of these things.

The solutions these thinkers proposed regarding problems of politics and pedagogy also opened up new problems. Despite their divergent political and social goals, both Harris and Dewey wrote that student work in schools was sufficiently salient to structure and determine citizenship. Each view was dependent upon students' work to see the connections between the school

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[226] This understanding was foundational in Curti's *The Social Ideas of American Educators* (1935), in which he wrote that democracy itself was threatened by capitalism. Curti, Merle Eugene. 1935. *The Social Ideas of American Educators*. New York: Scribner's sons.

[227] Lagemann, p. 48.

curriculum and their broader community. Harris assumed that once students had mastered the core curriculum they would see the embryonic connections between the material they worked on in schools and the political and social structures out of schools. Even though the teachers' authority was seen as necessary, making these connections was students' responsibility and their work. But, would students make the connections between their work on the humanist curriculum and contemporary politics and governance?

Dewey's construction was aimed at what he saw as significant weaknesses in the traditional approach. To him, students would not own solutions that they had not solved authentically. Nevertheless, his solutions also led to problems. Dewey assumed that students would be able to remake society because they had had cooperative experiences in schools. But, in *Democracy and Education,* Dewey acknowledged: "the schools cannot escape from the ideals set by prior social conditions. But it should contribute through the type of intellectual and emotional disposition which it forms to the improvement of those conditions."[228] How could schools, which were of society, be tools for remaking society? Would students see their cooperative experiences in schools as authentic when these relationships no longer existed out of schools? Would students see the possibility of a remade society in their cooperative classrooms? These were central questions that Dewey's theories bumped up against. They bear on his view of studenting because the student work that he proposed was

[228] Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, p. 136.

dependent upon the links between students' fundamental interests and their work on occupations – it was that link that was to deliver student engagement and motivation. Though Harris' and Dewey's political and social goals differed, they each depended upon students' work to see their classroom practices in their broader communities; in each case, students would have to make those connections, and see the linkages between their work in schools and their lives outside of them.

Mayhew and Edwards directly addressed the delicacy and the challenges of Dewey's balancing act. They wrote: "In leaving behind the traditional method of imposition from above, it was not easy for teachers to hit at once upon proper methods of leadership in cooperative activities."[229] By all accounts the teachers at the school were tremendously talented and hardworking – Lagemann described Ella Flagg Young, who both taught at the school and was the supervisor of instruction, as "tough, savvy, articulate, and deeply intellectual, Young had a great deal of hands-on experience to offer Dewey."[230] Further, the students themselves were privileged, coming mostly from "professional families who expected them to continue on to college."[231] Despite these advantages, teachers' and students' inherited practices and beliefs about what it is to work, learn and teach in schools would have to be substantively transformed if they were to remake their work together in schools. Further, Dewey, Mayhew and

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[229] Mayhew and Edwards, p. 468.
[230] Lagemann, p. 48.
[231] Lagemann, p. 115.

Edwards admitted how much teacher capability was needed, and how teachers' responsibilities were to differ from traditional approaches. What would it take to create these changes in teaching and learning? Dewey's teachers would have many new problems to solve, problems which had not confronted teachers in U.S. classrooms before. They would have to solve those problems with the inherited knowledge of students who had grown up and learned in traditional classrooms, and professionals who had been educated to be traditional pedagogues. Would this transformation only take changes in teaching? Would students be able to adjust their inherited conceptions of the nature of their work, given only these herculean changes to teacher capability?

Peter Dow, in *Schoolhouse Politics* wrote: "few of the school systems that set out to implement these [Dewey's] ideas were able to sustain his intellectual and pedagogical vision." Further, Dow wrote that Dewey became disillusioned himself, as he found that "many middle-class communities… interpreted Progressivism as a justification for tailoring teaching to the individual interests of students, while in a number of blue-collar communities he saw progressive methods used to prepare students for specific jobs in industry."[232] Ravitch's assessment parallels this: "Many of Dewey's disciples drew the wrong lessons from the Dewey schools. They seemed to think that the liberation of children from formal instruction was an end in itself. Dewey did not agree."[233] Here,

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[232] Dow, Peter B. 1991. *Schoolhouse Politics: Lessons from the Sputnik Era*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, p. 14.

[233] Ravitch, p. 172.

Ravitch and Dow, both contemporary historians of education, elucidate how Dewey's definitions of studenting and of effective student work were misunderstood. As Ravitch wrote, Dewey's aim was not the "liberation of children from formal instruction;" the aim was to recast student work such that students could assimilate extant knowledge and so that teachers could guide students without the problems of external coercion. Students' work was not to be random, or "child led," determined by the individual and fleeting caprice of individual students. Ravitch and Dow noted some of the problems in practice of Dewey's ideas: how could students' and teachers' inherited ideas about student work in schools be recast? Meanwhile, Harris did not write that students' work was simple transmission or passive. Instead, substantive conversations between students and texts, and sophisticated verification and analysis were keystones of his view of student work. Thus, while Dewey's view of studenting could be misunderstood as effort to focus teachers' and students' work on individual student interests, Harris' could be misunderstood as comprised primarily of memorization, and parroting of facts as evidence of "mastery" of texts instead of the active synthesis he wrote of.

There is analytic leverage from the differences between as well as the similarities amongst the two views. Harris and Dewey each proposed solutions to fundamental problems of studenting. These problems were not their own, but emanated from a dilemma – how could students work to assimilate extant knowledge, given the importance of their engagement. Dewey wrote of re-

creation and re-construction of knowledge, and Harris of synthesis of codified knowledge, but in each case students were portrayed as active, and their work involved problem solving. Though Harris and Dewey understood student work differently, had different views on salient instruments for studenting and even the types of experiences that would count as educative, new or continuing tensions arose from the solutions they each proposed.

Chapter Four

Schools and Community at Mid-Century

Introduction

In this chapter I examine the work of sociologists who wrote about U.S. schools. Robert and Helen Lynd, August Hollingshead, Willard Waller, and W. Lloyd Waller, Robert Havighurst and Martin Loeb investigated learning and teaching in mass attended schools, and the schools' role in the social order.[234] Swelling enrollments in schools separated students from what earlier thinkers regarded as authentic work – i.e. work grounded in "real" problem-solving or "real" experience. These mid-century researchers found little evidence of authentic academic student work in schools. The sociologists considered here paid attention to different things than the thinkers in the previous two chapters; the 19th century and pre WWI thinkers attended to what they saw or thought they saw in schools, but their main focus was on what they thought should happen in schools. In this sense, their writing was normative. The sociologists in this

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[234] Lynd, Robert S., and Helen Merrell Lynd. 1929. *Middletown: A Study in American Culture*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company; Hollingshead, August B. 1949. *Elmtown's Youth: The Impact of Social Classes on Adolescents*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.; Waller, Willard. 1932, reprinted 1965. *The Sociology of Teaching*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.; Warner, W. Lloyd, Robert J. Havighurst, and Martin B. Loeb. 1944. *Who Shall be Educated? The Challenge of Unequal Opportunities*. New York and London: Harper & Brothers Publishers.

chapter brought their disciplinary frame to the study of students' work in schools. The story these sociologists told was of communities and schools that were strongly anti-intellectual.

Robert and Helen Lynd and August Hollingshead wrote groundbreaking works, and portrayed schools in which students' social interests pushed out academic work and reinforced students' alienation from adults and community. Herbert Kliebard, in *The Struggle for the American Curriculum*, referred to the Lynd study of Muncie, Indiana, which they called Middletown, as a "classic study."[235] Theodore Caplow, a researcher who studied Muncie on behalf of the Center for Middletown studies established at Ball State University in 1980, "replicated some of their… surveys."[236] Caplow published two subsequent studies, referred to as Middletown III and Middletown IV,[237] and wrote that the Lynds' work was appreciated from the moment it was published:

> The Middletown books are not outdated. Indeed, they have never been out of print. Middletown went through six printings the year it was published, and its paperback editions are still finding new readers."[238]

Further, Caplow wrote: "every schoolboy – or at least every graduate student" should be so well versed in the Lynds' analytic frame that they "should know" that

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[235] Kliebard, Herbert M. 2004. *The Struggle for the American Curriculum*. Third ed. New York and London: RoutledgeFalmer, p. 192.

[236] Caplow, Theodore. 1980. Review: Middletown Fifty Years After. *Contemporary Sociology* 9 (1):46-50, p. 46.

[237] Caplow, Theodore, and Howard M. Bahr. 1983. *All Faithful People: Change and Continuity in Middletown's Religion*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press; Caplow, Theodore. 2007. *Compilation of Middletown III and Middletown IV Data, 1977-1999 [Muncie, Indiana].* Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research.

[238] Caplow, 1980, p. 46.

the Lynds "divided the collective life of Middletown into six compartments: getting a living, making a home, training the young, leisure, religion, and community activities."[239] Kliebard used their work as material for his historical analysis of the U.S. curriculum:

> Although English was still required for the first two years [of high school], it was replaced by commercial English in five of the courses and was an option in the fourth year… What is more, these were the courses to which the members of the Rotary Club and the public generally pointed with pride.[240]

While Kliebard used the Lynds' analysis for better understanding changes to the American curriculum over time, I utilize the Lynds' classic study in order to better understand views on studenting.

August Hollingshead studied the high school students of Elmtown, Illinois, a city in the Midwest just south of Chicago. Robert Lynd, who reviewed Hollingshead's work, wrote:

> … here we are given badly needed data on the kind of stable, 'really American' community commonly invoked to refute the relevance of class to American society… If that kind of community [small, with a stable, 'native-born' population] has clearly demarcated 'classes,' then the United States does![241]

Lynd wrote that Hollingshead's contribution was significant; he saw *Elmtown's Youth* as a key contribution to the growing research on stratification according to

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[239] Caplow, 1980, p. 47.
[240] Kliebard, pp. 126-7.
[241] Lynd, Robert S. 1949. Reviewed Works: Elmtown's Youth: The Impact of Social Classes on Adolescents. *American Sociological Review* 14 (4):560-561, 560.

socio-economic status (SES) in the United States. In addition, Lynd placed Hollingshead's contribution squarely alongside another set of sociologists whose work I consider here:

> Can we not, therefore, get further analysis from the Hollingsheads, Warners et al.., as to precisely how occupation and income qualified in each of the families where such qualifying factors prompt placement in a class other than the one to which occupation and income would seem to assign them?[242]

Warner, Havighurst and Loeb wrote that the schools that they observed in what they called "Yankee City" – the small New England town of Newburyport, Massachusetts – were not meritocratic.[243] Warner et al. supported tracking students but wrote that schools reproduced society's inequalities by tracking according to social and economic status instead of by capability. Warner et al.., Ellen Condliffe Lagemann wrote, "used a six-class framework (upper-upper, lower-upper, middle-upper, lower-middle, upper-lower, and lower-lower)."[244] Further, Lagemann wrote that Warner et al.'s book *Who Shall Be Educated?* "Helped launch studies of status attainment within the sociology of education, which subsequently became a staple in this growing subfield of educational study."[245]

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[242] Lynd, p. 561.

[243] On this, Warner et al. wrote: "Status factors are important in the classroom. They help mold the life career of a growing child. They load the dice for or against him…" p. 84.

[244] Lagemann, Ellen Condliffe. 2000. *An Elusive Science: The Troubling History of Education Research*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, p. 152.

[245] Lagemann, p. 154.

Willard Waller, who, David Cohen wrote, "apparently was a gifted teacher,"[246] wrestled with whether meaning and problem solving could typify students' work in schools given their separation from "real" experience. Ralph Tesseneer, in the *British Journal of Educational Studies*, wrote that Waller's ideas in the *Sociology of Teaching* were "the first comprehensive sociological analysis of the school."[247] To date, all of these pioneering and important sociological studies have been mined and used as rich data on the social structures of schools, as well as the texture and implication of "social change." Caplow wrote of the Lynds' work on Middletown: "they were the first sociologists to grasp the necessity of studying social change as a movement from one definite point in time to another."[248] Further, Geraldine Joncich Clifford wrote that there "is much to be learned from reading" Waller's *The Sociology of Teaching*, including:

> As a study in the sociology of knowledge, for positive and negative lessons about the case study method, for perspective on how the personal freedoms of teachers have expanded, and for its enduring insights into the sociology and psychology of schools and classrooms as social organizations and worksites for students and teachers. [249]

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[246] Cohen, David K. 1989. Willard Waller, on Hating School and Loving Education. In *Willard Waller on Education and Schools: A Critical Appraisal*, edited by D. J. Willower and W. L. Boyd. Berkeley: McCutchan Publishing Corporation, p. 79.

[247] Tesseneer, Ralph. 1990. Reviewed Works: Willard Waller on Education: A Critical Appraisal. *British Journal of Educational Studies* 38 (2):190-191, p. 190.

[248] Caplow, p. 47.

[249] Clifford, Geraldine Joncich. 1991. Reviewed Works: Willard Waller on Education and Schools: A Critical Appraisal. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* 13 (2):206-209, pp. 206-7.

These studies have been fruitful material for analyses of social change and the social organization of schools, but they also contain valuable data and material for my study of studenting. Cohen began to explore the implications of Waller's work for understandings of students' work. For, though he wrote that Waller's goal was: "showing what schoolteaching was really like, using cases, stories, and other material drawn from teachers' actual experience,"[250] Cohen also wrote that Waller's work:

> …suggested ways in which both student preferences and social circumstances can shape the practices of teaching and learning, and the social relations that they entail. It, therefore, opened up a more complex view of teaching practice, that went far beyond irreconcilable conflict, despised and exhausted teachers, and sullen students.[251]

I pursue those suggestions.

These sociologists reported on what they considered "engaged" studenting, although they did not use that term. Waller saw little "true" student engagement, which he wrote resulted from the formality of academic course work and due to the problems of compulsion and the politics of studenting. For the Lynds, Hollingshead, and Warner et al., students had vastly different opportunities to learn because they were tracked according to socio-economic status (SES). However, even the highest academic tracks did not seem to offer students challenging or sophisticated learning opportunities: "the Lynds also

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[250] Cohen, p. 80.
[251] Cohen, p. 100.

noted," Powell, Farrar and Cohen wrote, "that while most students did very little homework, they got through school quite nicely – even in the top academic courses."[252] The Lynds reported that one teacher told them that students should not be asked to "think," and that student work should be "simple."[253] Further, Hollingshead and the Lynds wrote that the higher the students' SES the greater the chance that they would receive better grades and more recognition in the form of prizes and awards.[254] Thus, a traditional marker of learning achievement – grades – was a skewed and imperfect representation of learning outcome or achievement. Further, Waller and Warner et al. made suggestions for reforming schools given the problems they observed, and in these suggestions neither pushed for an expansion of access to academic subject matter. Warner et al. supported tracking but wanted the most innately capable students, regardless of SES, to have access to the higher tracks. Waller, meanwhile, encouraged a radical paring of academic work in schools, with an expansion of authentic experiences out of them.

In this Chapter I use these sociological studies as material in order to answer my question – how was studenting understood? Studenting, here, is defined as the work that students do to learn, as well as students' work negotiating and managing being in schools. Here again, as in Chapters Two and

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[252] Powell, Arthur G., Eleanor Farrar, and David K. Cohen. 1985. *The Shopping Mall High School: Winners and Losers in the Educational Marketplace*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, p. 237.

[253] Lynd and Lynd, p. 199.

[254] Hollingshead, p. 173.

Three, pedagogy, equality, tradition, authority, and democratic virtues combine; I investigate similarities and differences in the conceptions of studenting among these studies, and associated ideas about the nature of student work and success in school.

The first element of my frame – the knowledge that students were thought to bring to their work – relates to this problem: whether and how to enable students to use the knowledge, experiences and interests that they bring to their work. These sociologists all wrote, to one extent or another, that much of what students brought to their work delimited their engagement in as well as their access to schools' academic curriculum. These sociologists wrote that both students and teachers brought SES biases to their work in schools; the inequities of society were fundamental aspects of schools, not left at the school door, much less undone by students' work in schools. As such, these sociologists wrote that students' SES shaped the interests that they brought to their work. Students understood the utility of their work in school as tied to economic success – not as valuable education for citizenship in a democratic society or for linking them to a commonly held history and a shared future. Further, the sociologists reported that educators' work was also defined by the SES biases that they brought; thus, educators saw students' SES as the key attribute they brought to their work, and used SES to track students instead of students' capabilities. Students, educators, and students' communities and parents all seemed to disavow interest in or recognition of the utility of the academic curriculum. Waller, meanwhile, wrote

that students bring what he termed a desire to "live" – to work on "real" problems instead of formal academic subject matter.[255] This infused students' work in vocational courses and in the extracurriculars with greater meaning. Few educators or students in the schools these researchers observed seemed to have even a remote interest in the academic curriculum.

The second element of my analytic frame is the politics of studenting. Here I examine how students were seen to respond to learning under conditions of compulsion and how the sociologists understood students' responses. These sociologists found that students overwhelmingly reacted to the compulsion of mass-attended schools by rejecting academic work and engaging in vocational and extracurricular activities. Schools, meanwhile, responded by paring academic expectations; schools met students' demands by asking of students only what they were willing to do and by expanding the curriculum to include a multitude of extracurricular and vocational opportunities. Students were not just acted upon; instead, these sociologists observed and reported that students had an active role in rejecting or disengaging from "despotic" schools[256] that were, as Waller argued, toxic to authentic learning.[257]

The third component of my analytic frame, the nature of the work that students were thought to do, relates to the final problem the authors portrayed students and schools were trying to solve: the disjunction between students'

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[255] Waller, p. 445.
[256] Waller, p. 9.
[257] Waller, p. 445.

views of their work in school to their lives outside of them. These sociologists wrote that there was little student or community interest in academic work, and plenty of skepticism about the link between academic work and students' work out of school. These sociologists wrote that educators, students, and their families viewed academic subject matter as formal and remote. In contrast, they wrote that authenticity and meaning resided in schools' extracurriculars and in vocational classes. These were where students' and their parents' and communities' interests seem to have been focused, and where the nature of students' work in schools seemed to most closely approximate their lives outside of them.

Thus, though this set of authors brought a different perspective to their work, they still dealt with the same common, fundamental set of problems of studenting as the thinkers I considered in Chapters Two and Three.

What students bring to their work

In this section I focus on the first element of my frame, and investigate what these sociologists found students brought to their work in the schools they observed. While the thinkers I considered in Chapters Two and Three wrote normatively of what they believed students brought to their work, these sociologists wrote about what they observed in schools – what teachers and

students made use of and recognized as salient to their work. Across these studies, the role and utility of what students brought to their work is the common problem that they all attended to, but solving this problem seems particularly complex in the reality of practice.

The way this common problem is solved is complicated in part because these sociologists wrote that students and teachers enter schools not as "disembodied intelligences" as Waller wrote, but as members of their community.[258] Educators and students assumed that SES generally corresponded to varying attributes, characteristics, capabilities and interests that students brought to their work. Thus, these sociologists reported that student were seen to bring to their work socially constructed or learned interests and dispositions which were imposed on students and which corresponded to their socio-economic positions in their communities. The Chapter Two and Three thinkers also worried about the coarseness and growing diversity of U.S. society, but most wrote hopefully that schools could effectively address these differences, help students construct common experiences, and that there were salient and useful educational commonalities among all students despite poverty and inequality.

The schools these sociologists observed were not set apart from their communities. They were not places where common interests and common citizenship were discovered and developed as Mann had hoped, nor were they

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[258] Waller, p. 1.

sites for changing society, schools where students' cooperative problem-solving would develop commitments and connections powerful enough for students to affect social and political change as Dewey had hoped. Instead, these sociologists reported that schools reproduced SES divisions, and teachers and students saw what students brought to their work through the prism of SES divisions. Though these researchers argued against the use of SES as criteria for allocating educational resources and opportunities, Warner et al. did not see schools as site for reforming society, much less transforming it. Instead, they wrote:

> all other American institutions, such as the church, government and associations, must assume their full share of responsibility" and push for change, for "only as our social order changes can the school indoctrinate its pupils with economic and political philosophies of human relationship which are now in sharp conflict with the prevailing social system.[259]

Thus, these sociologists wrote that schools reflect and reproduce social inequities; students were seen to bring to their work the biases that existed in their communities. Further, these sociologists wrote that the key criteria that students brought to evaluating the utility of their work in schools was economic – the relationship between what they learned in school and their future occupations, as vehicle for social movement. These thinkers wrote that students learned these values in their communities and brought these to their work in schools.

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[259] Warner et al., p. 143.

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Across these studies, students bring distinct and salient things – dispositions, interests, capabilities, handicaps and advantages associated with their SES – to their work in school. First, students bring their SES, which both students and teachers make use of in teachers' and students' work in schools. Second, they bring the views and biases of their communities to their work in schools; they come to their work with predispositions that they have learned from their families and communities. Third, students bring, as Waller called it, their desire to "live."[260] In the context of mass-attended U.S. classrooms, Waller wrote that this meant that students brought an interest in what they perceived to be "real" work – study that they interpreted as explicitly linked to their lives. They were also seen as bringing a strong distaste for working on what they perceive to be formal, codified subject matter. Fourth, Warner et al. wrote that students bring innate or "natural" capabilities to their work that were viewed as fixed. Further, they wrote that some exceptional innate capabilities – in sports, music, or even beauty and charm, for example – were lower SES students' only chance at educational opportunity.

These researchers reported that students' SES was one key attribute that students brought to their work in schools, and that both teachers and students noted, acted on, and made educational judgments based upon students' SES. Teachers and administrators saw SES as a reliable indicator of ability, and it was

[260] Waller, p. 445.

understood to predispose students to make better or more efficient use of educational resources. Further, teachers used these as criteria to dole out scarce educational resources. In this view, students' interests were not seen as uncoupled from their SES but instead their interests and capabilities were understood to correspond with and reflect their SES. In these accounts, what students brought to their work was not limited to their interests and experiences, but also included their SES, which was portrayed as currency or handicap in an overtaxed, under-resourced school system. Thus, Hollingshead concluded: "this class system is far more vital as a social force than the American creed."[261] The thinkers I considered in Chapters Two and Three recognized these social and class differences, but in their normative accounts they wrote, to one extent or another, that schools both could and should smooth these differences and enable students to discover important commonalities. These commonalities might be found in the universal appeal and shared nature of the humanist curriculum or in students' common U.S. citizenship; regardless, Mann, Dewey and others wrote that the cleavages the Chapter Four sociologists described should be leveled by schools.

These sociologists wrote that students do not enter classrooms just as students – Waller wrote: "Children and teachers are not… instructing machines and learning machines, but whole human beings tied together in a complex maze

[261] Hollingshead, p. 452.

of social interconnections."[262] Students were seen as bringing not just their individual experiences to their work, but the expectations and interests of their families and their communities. Some of these – the ones most commonly associated with the middle class – were seen as strongly associated with advantage, while those most often associated with the lower classes were seen as handicaps. Hollingshead, for example, wrote that the teachers he observed assumed that lower class students brought less ability and motivation to their work:

> because the academic teachers believe that college preparatory students have more ability, are more interested, and do better work than those in the general course, they prefer to teach the former group… these teachers look upon students in the general course as persons who have nothing better to do with their time, are mediocre in ability, lack motivation and interest.[263]

The key exception, in Hollingshead's observations, were vocational teachers, who seemed to not view students' class as reflective of their capability:

> the vocational teachers differ from the academic teachers in their estimation of student ability, as they do in most things relative to the school; they believe that students specializing in their courses are as bright as the rest of the lot.[264]

But while students were seen as enjoying vocational classes, the "college preparatory" classes enjoyed the most prestige among students and

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[262] Waller, p. 1.
[263] Hollingshead, p. 171.
[264] Hollingshead, p. 171.

educators.[265] Hollingshead wrote of the dissimilar expectations of different class groups that teachers, administrators, and students themselves held. He wrote that views of the class attributes that students brought to their work affected educators' and students' behaviors and expectations.

In these pieces, it is not just teachers that reacted to and privileged student class and social status; instead, these sociologists wrote that students themselves made active use of, and suffered from schools' privileging of students' SES. Hollingshead wrote that higher-class students brought to their work very clear expectations to succeed and to be recognized; these students came to their work with the expectation that they would receive good grades, honors, and prizes, and that if they faltered that they would be granted leniency: "the two upper classes generally assume that good grades, school prizes, student offices, and prominence in scholastic affairs are their natural due."[266] Thus, for example:

> … the honors in the graduating classes from both the elementary and high schools are deliberately given to children from the prominent families. According to these stories, the winner is not entitled to the honor under the rules of fair competition; but under the unfair rules imposed by some parents and teachers, these children are sure to win. It is charged that grades are changed, teachers threatened with dismissal, and examinations rigged to achieve this result. [267]

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[265] Hollingshead, p. 169.
[266] Hollingshead, p. 180.
[267] p. 184.

Hollingshead was clear that grades were fabricated and competitions "rigged" in favor of middle class students. He wrote that educators assumed that capability and class were intricately linked, but he also wrote that lower class students made less efficient use of educational resources. Lower SES students were discriminated against by their teachers because of blanket assumptions about what they brought to their work, even while Hollingshead wrote that they brought less capability and motivation for work in school than middle class students. Further:

> The class V adolescent has been subjected to a family and class structure in which failure, worry, and frustration are common. He has not been trained at home to do his best in school. His parents have not ingrained in him the idea that he must make good grades if he is to be a success in life. Moreover, the class structure as it functions in the school does not help him to overcome the poor training he has received at home and in the neighborhood.[268]

Thus, some of what students brought to their work resulted from what they learned as students, but also as children and members of their community:

> …adolescent behavior is a complex response to a series of definitions the child has learned in the family, the play group, and the school which have varying degrees of relevancy in recurrent and new social situations to which he has to adjust.[269]

These sociologists wrote that teachers saw social class as a valid indicator of student capability. Coupled with the belief that instruction and subject-matter offerings should be tailored to students' capabilities and likely occupation, the

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[268] Hollingshead, p. 176.
[269] Hollingshead, p. 445.

result, the sociologists wrote, was a system of tracking and funneling of educational resources to higher class students. Warner et al. wrote of the importance of tracking: "children and young people vary in their ability to take advantage of opportunity. Consequently we must have different kinds of education for different kinds of people."[270] Warner et al. did not argue against tracking, but instead against tracking according to social and class status; as I write below, they argued that students' innate capability should determine their track, not their class background.

These sociologists reported that schools were structured and operated with a clear middle class bias that influenced teachers' perceptions of student need and the way that administrators distributed educational resources. Thus, Warner et al. wrote:

> Education… is oriented to the middle class, and therefore attracts mobile lower class people. At the same time it tends to push ahead the mobile middle-class person; therefore education has different meanings and works on different principles for people of different classes.[271]

The Chapter Two and Chapter Three thinkers wrote, to one extent or another, of the importance of building upon students' experiences and interests, and most saw students as bringing salient experience to their work, some interests or experiences which could be used in their work. In contrast, the Chapter Four

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[270] Warner et al., p. 162.
[271] Warner et al., p. 97.

sociologists observed schools in which teachers seemed to see interest and capability not across all students but instead across specific classes of students.

Further, these sociologists wrote that students brought the biases of society to their work in schools; thus, they wrote that overall students did not value subject-matter work. This is in contrast to the view of the thinkers I examined in Chapters Two and Three; there, some thinkers wrote that students' interests linked them to the common history of mankind and others of their common role as citizens of the U.S. democracy. These sociologists, on the other hand, wrote that schools reflected and reproduced social inequities. Further, these sociologists wrote that the key criteria that students brought to evaluating the utility of their work in schools was economic – the relationship between what they learn in school and their future occupations, as vehicle for social movement.

The Lynds wrote that the students they observed would have to take on trust the meaning and utility of their academic work: "save in the case of vocational courses, a Middletown boy or girl must take the immediate relevancy and value of the high school curriculum largely on faith."[272] And, there was little faith to spare, given that teachers themselves seemed to not see the linkages between academic work and "life." In these pieces, no one – students, teachers, their families and communities – seemed to imagine that students would be interested in the academic curriculum for any other reason than as a vehicle for social movement. On this, the Lynds wrote that though "education is a faith, a

[272] Lynd and Lynd, p. 185.

religion to Middletown… this thing, education, appears to be desired frequently not for its specific content but as a symbol."[273] Further, the Lynds wrote that in their interviews with community members and parents, "almost never is the essential of education defined in terms of the subjects taught in the classroom."[274] These sociologists reported that the consistent message that students were given was that academic subject matter is uninteresting and disconnected from their lives and future work:

> both teaching and learning appear at times to be ordeals from which teachers and pupils alike would apparently gladly escape: 'Thank goodness, we've finished Chaucer's Prologue!' exclaimed one English teacher. 'I am thankful and the children are, too. They think of it almost as if it were in a foreign language, and they hate it.'[275]

Students learned and brought these dispositions to their work with teachers who also were reported to view academic work this way.

While students were thought to bring their SES into classrooms, some of these sociologists also wrote that they observed a more universal interest that was shared among students, regardless of SES. For example, Waller wrote that students brought what he referred to as a general interest and desire to "live."[276] Students, Waller wrote, brought an antipathy to the theoretical and the formal, to work that they perceived as disconnected from their communities and their lives,

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[273] Lynd and Lynd, p. 219.
[274] Lynd and Lynd, p. 220.
[275] Lynd and Lynd, p. 193.
[276] Thus, for example, Waller wrote "The formal, artificial social order of the school does not furnish a proper milieu for the development of normal person-ality; that is why students are rebellious: they want to live," p. 446.

all of which he wrote were unavoidable characteristics of work in U.S. schools. Waller did not think that this student interest was something that students and teachers could or would use in traditional, formal school settings. Thus, Waller differed from Warner et al. – he did not write about tracks and differential capabilities, but of what he saw as the a universal desire of students to "live" and to work with content that they did not see as disconnected or theoretical. Waller wrote that there was a unifying common interest that all students shared, and that this interest made learning in the schools he observed nearly impossible. Instead of enabling learning achievement in schools he wrote that this interest actually hindered learning achievement in formal settings; the key interest that students brought to their work, Waller wrote, was in direct opposition to the way that schools were structured.

The Lynds didn't label the *interest* that students brought to their work with the same moniker, but instead they applied this label to the subject matter in which students were interested in: "vocational work for boys is the darling of Middletown's eye… ask your neighbor at Rotary what kind of schools Middletown has and he will begin to tell you about these 'live' courses."[277] The Lynds wrote that the interests that students brought to their work were disconnected from academic subject matter. They wrote that students brought an interest in "sports, extracurricular activities, the social aspect of schools."[278] These are the student interests that Dewey saw as fleeting, and that he advised against encouraging.

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[277] Lynd and Lynd, p. 195.
[278] Lynd and Lynd, p. 211.

The Lynds reported that the nature of work in academic classes and extracurriculars actually reinforced these student interests and disinterests: "the formal, remote nature of much school work probably plays a larger role in discouraging children from continuing in school than the reference about to having to 'take so many things of no use.'"[279] Thus, the Lynds wrote that students' work on academic subject matter in the schools they observed reinforced their fleeting interest while Waller seemed to celebrate students' interest to "live" but also reported that this interest delimited the possibility of students' learning achievement.

In addition to the biases and prejudices that students brought to their work, and that teachers brought to their work with students, some of these sociologists also wrote of the salience of students' innate, individual characteristics or capabilities. They stressed that it was only in rare cases of exceptionally gifted students that teachers and educators recognized individual capabilities that diverged from students' SES. For example, Warner et al. argued that some small number of lower SES students brought outstanding capabilities to their work – they were gifted musicians, athletes, artists, for example, or particularly adept at mimicking middle class behaviors, another capability that was considered by teachers to be especially impressive.[280] Warner et al. reported that these characteristics were valuable currency – key for winning recognition from teachers and necessary for securing educational opportunity. They wrote

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[279] Lynd and Lynd, p. 185.
[280] Warner et al., p. 34.

that the teachers they observed took greater interest in and put their bets on these exceptional or gifted students because these capabilities marked them as having potential for transcending their SES. But the sociologists stressed that only a very select few were deemed worthy of educational opportunity greater than would normally be allotted to lower SES students; only the most gifted and talented students would benefit from additional teacher attention and higher teacher expectations. Lower SES students would have to exhibit "more" of these capabilities than middle class students in order to be recognized: "It is true though that the lower-class child must show greater ability to be recognized than does the higher-class child."[281]

Warner et al. did not argue against tracking – they believed that certain students were endowed with "higher capabilities" and that these were distributed evenly across class.[282] They wrote that the system for allotting educational opportunity was broken because it distributed opportunity according to students' SES instead of according to the innate capabilities students brought to their work. They wished to change *how* schools sort students – by ability, not by SES or "skin color, pronunciation, cut of clothes, table manners, parental bank account" – not *that* schools sort students.[283] Thus, they wrote:

> to make democracy work in our complex modern society… the individuals who exercise these skills should be the products of a superior native capacity, trained by highly competent instructors, and so placed

[281] Warner et al., pp. 81-2.
[282] Warner et al., p. 142.
[283] Warner et al., p. 50.

> after training that they can adequately employ their abilities.[284]

Warner et al. wrote that the key salient attribute that students bring to their work, their innate ability, was regularly overlooked by the schools they observed, in lieu of SES markers which were taken as indicators of capability. Hollingshead also reported that he saw almost unilateral agreement among teachers and administrators: the lower the SES the student, the greater the educators' assumption that these students' academic work would be sub-par, and that discipline would be a continued problem. Educators saw students as having fixed capabilities, and the chance of diverging from these outcomes was presented as severely limited. Waller, meanwhile, focused on what he saw as universal, less individual interest that he saw all students as bringing to their work.

Thus, the interests that students brought to their work resulted in their devaluing of the academic curriculum and engaging in the extracurriculum and vocational courses. The evidence that I present suggests that the sociologists saw a mutual construction of students' interests, where students' interests are informed, reinforced and constructed in tandem with their communities, parents, peers and teachers. But, this does not imply that there was no conflict between students and teachers or that students' work was driven by internal and not external pressure.

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[284] Warner et al., p. 141.

The politics of studenting

In this section I analyze these sociologists' views on the politics of studenting – how students responded to learning under conditions of compulsion, and how the authors understood these responses. As high school attendance approached universality, was no longer selective, and schools became mass institutions, there is a sense in which the students had more influence.[285] Extracurricular activities and vocational courses were offered to satisfy schools' "clients" – to keep students happy, engaged, enrolled. Powell, Farrar and Cohen wrote: "High schools offer accommodations to maximize holding power, graduation percentages, and customer satisfaction."[286] Thus, as enrollment swelled the balance of power seems to have shifted. These sociologists observed a scaling down of academic expectations as teachers and schools learned to accommodate what students would or would not do. Educators seemed to anticipate or expect students' inability to do sophisticated academic work. Further, schools reacted to students' rejection of the academic curriculum by accommodating students' demands, and by providing vocational courses and a large variety of extracurricular activities. These sociologists wrote that in the

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[285] According to historians David Angus and Jeffrey Mirel, by 1950 76.1% of the population aged 14-17 was enrolled in high school. Angus, David L., Jeffrey E. Mirel. 1999. *The Failed Promise of the American High School, 1890-1995.* New York: Teachers College Press, p. 203.

[286] Powell, Farrar, Cohen, p. 1.

schools they observed students' academic work was made easier, more accessible.[287] What this implies is that the politics of studenting, in these studies, was highly iterative; students and teachers and their communities were all seen negotiating the goals of schooling.

To Waller, the politics of studenting in compulsory, mass-attended schools was toxic to authentic learning; Waller wrote that he did not believe that compulsion would or could lead to student engagement.[288] The control that the Boston Masters sought over their students seems related to the "despotic" control Waller wrote was the key component of schools' and teachers' relationships with lower SES students in the schools he observed.[289] The sociologists did not write, as Dewey did, of vital human interests that would drive student work, or as Harris did, that the humanist curriculum was inherently interesting. Without these – inherent student interest or an inherently interesting curriculum – teachers and schools were seen to be less able to rely on student self-discipline. These sociologists reported that teachers and schools eased off from expectations of academically substantive and sophisticated student learning outcomes. Instead, teachers and schools seemed to ask students only for what they seemed willing to do and were thought able to do. By scaling down expectations, this in effect meant that while there existed compulsion to enroll in school that the compulsion to engage substantively in academic work was eased. Students' academic work

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[287] See also Angus and Mirel, p. 18.
[288] Waller, p. 445.
[289] Waller, p. 9.

was made easier, more accessible. One way of dealing with the problem of compelling students to engage in work they were not so interested in was to not demand so much.

One key point here is the agency that students have in their disengagement. These sociologists saw or recognized more of students' role in the politics of studenting – students' rejection of schools, students' classifying themselves and each other – than the others saw or recognized. These sociologists wrote that in the schools they observed students were not just acted upon but were actors as well in the politics of studenting. Hollingshead, the Lynds and Warner et al. wrote that students reacted to learning under conditions of compulsion by disengaging and/or dropping out.[290]

The picture that emerges from analysis of these studies is one that is rife with contradictions: students policed themselves and each other, reproducing social inequities, but nevertheless came to schools with a deep-felt belief in the meritocracy. Students, their families, and their broader communities revered schools, but disdained and rejected academic work. According to Waller, compulsion was inherent in formal schooling, but was anathema to student engagement. Warner et al., meanwhile, wrote that external compulsion was necessary and useful. They argued that compulsion was problematic in the schools they observed because students' access to content was not meritocratic. But though they could imagine a way for compulsion to successfully secure

[290] Warner et al., p. 108, Hollingshead, p. 443.

student engagement, they joined the others in their report that, in the schools they observed, students responded to compulsion by rejecting academic schoolwork.

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For Waller, controlling students was seen to be an unavoidable aspect of the schools he observed – and, he argued, any formal school – however he wrote that this control was anathema to engaged student work. Waller saw no way to avoid the "despotism" of formal schools, nor a way for that despotism to power student work and learning achievement.[291] Effective student work, he wrote, could not be compelled in formal schools. Waller contended that this problem plagued all schools, regardless of pedagogical approach. Schools, no matter the size or structure, were characterized by a despotic "authority principle." This "generalization," he wrote:

> … seems to hold true for nearly all types of schools, and for all about equally, without very much difference in fact to correspond to radical differences in theory. Self-government is rarely real. Usually it is but a mask for the rule of the teacher oligarchy, in its most liberal form the rule of a student oligarchy carefully selected and supervised by the faculty. The experimental school which wishes to do away with authority continually finds that in order to maintain requisite standards of achievement in imparting

[291] Waller, p. 10, p. 445, p. 446.

> certain basic skills it has to introduce some variant of the authority principle, or it finds that it must select and employ teachers who can be in fact despotic without seeming to be so.[292]

This authority and control was necessary across schools despite seemingly large cleavages of pedagogy and organization, Waller wrote, because students' interests did not align with the content and the form of the content they were mandated to learn.

Control of students in mass-attended schools was also physical. The Lynds wrote: "the school, like the factory, is a thoroughly regimented world." Specifically:

> Immovable seats in orderly rows fix the sphere of activity of each child. For all, from the timid six-year-old entering for the first time to the most assured high school senior, the general routine is much the same. Bells divide the day into periods… as they grow older the taboo upon physical activity becomes stricter, until by the third or fourth year practically all movement is forbidden except the marching from one set of seats to another between periods, a brief interval of prescribed exercise daily, and periods of manual training or home economics once or twice a week.[293]

One key component of engaging in schools, then, had to do with students' physical control and respect for schools' regimented rules. Quiet, order and physical restraint were treated as necessary behaviors in schools as organized, and the politics of studenting encompassed this type of control

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[292] Waller, p. 9.
[293] Lynd and Lynd, p. 188.

as well. As such, "another innovation today is the explicit recognition that education concerns bodies as well as minds."[294]

To Warner et al., the problem was not compulsion per se, but control regulated and trained on SES differences. They did not worry that external control and discipline would stymie student engagement, instead the toxic combination was control based upon socio-economic status. They wrote that external control would not be problematic if the rules of discipline were meritocratic. To Warner et al., schools themselves were crucial complements to students' learning in the family setting:

> Young children are largely asocial. They have yet to learn the give-and-take, the co-operation and competition of adult social life. The family alone cannot teach this. The school is an intermediate society between the family and the state which serves to train children in the ways of adult social life. In school and in play groups, which are a counterpart of school, they learn the why and wherefore of moral rules and they come to terms with social authority in the form of rules and laws made by the adult society.[295]

Warner and his colleagues did not advocate, as Waller did, that students learn outside of the control and regimentation of formal schools. Instead, they wrote that the control and discipline of schools were beneficial and essential components of their education. Part of what students were to learn in schools

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[294] Lynd and Lynd, p. 202.
[295] Warner et al., p. 55.

was what the "rules and laws" of adult society were, and to practice living by these in the school setting.

Warner et al. wrote that discipline in schools was ruled by assumptions about socio-economic status because schools are a "social institution" and they must do their "part in making the society 'work.' "[296] "Middle-class standards" were the arbiter of correct behavior, and ruled teachers' expectations of students:

> … children learn proper behavior as they learn other things by being rewarded for doing the correct thing or by being punished for doing the wrong thing. The teacher does a good deal of rewarding and punishing as she consciously or unconsciously encourages behavior according to middle-class standards.[297]

Reward and punishment were two key instruments teachers used to manage the politics of studenting – they could affect students' behavior externally through the systematic use of each of these.

But students were not victims only, without agency or responsibility. Instead, these sociologists wrote that students policed each other and themselves, ensuring that SES rules and stratifications were enacted in classrooms. Thus, for example, Hollingshead noted:

> if these students are observed throughout the school day, one will see them divide themselves into little

[296] Warner et al., p. 45.
[297] Warner et al., p. 82.

> groups composed of either boys or girls approximately the same age and class in school.[298]

In an exercise of monumental cynicism, students rejected the schools they perceived as rejecting them by dropping out or disengaging: "many children of lower-class parents," Warner et al. wrote, "escape the influence of teachers, through being recalcitrant in school and through dropping out just as early as possible."[299] Students' disengagement was their reaction to schools that had no place for them; Hollingshead reported that one of the things that students learn in school and out is their place in the class hierarchy: "the class V child… learns very soon that his family is stigmatized in many ways… and that he is held in contempt by boys and girls in the higher classes."[300] While students had agency in this rejection of schools, "escaping the influence of teachers" captures how anemic many students' opportunities in school were. The politics of studenting is no less complicated in Hollingshead's analysis. Hollingshead reported that, in the schools he observed, poorer students' "principal ambition… is to grow up and escape from the authority symbolized by his parents and teachers."[301] This was not a problem for middle-class students, for not only did they experience success in school, but they could see themselves in positions of authority in school and in their careers out of school.

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[298] Hollingshead, p. 167.
[299] Warner et al., p. 108.
[300] Hollingshead, p. 443.
[301] Hollingshead, p. 178.

The Lynds and Hollingshead wrote that the large majority of the students they observed rejected academic work in schools. Waller and Warner et al. wrote suggestions for changing and improving teaching and learning. They did not conclude from their observations of schools that students should or could be compelled to engage in more academic work, but quite the opposite. Warner et al. wrote:

> When trigonometry and French are recognized as vocational courses just as auto mechanics and shorthand are, instead of being set up as 'cultural,' it will be easier to do the job of guiding high-school students into those courses which will best meet their needs.[302]

Similarly, Waller wrote:

> As professionals, teachers need to compromise; they need to correct their intellectualistic and departmental bias with the thought that the fate of nations does not depend upon how much arithmetic Johnny Jones learns, with the thought that Johnny Jones can learn only so much arithmetic anyhow and that in a year or so he will probably forget what he does learn.[303]

Waller proposed that learning and teaching should mostly occur out of formal schools or in extracurriculars where the politics of studenting would not poison teaching and learning, where a "freer sort of self-expression" would be more possible.[304] Waller wrote that extracurriculars were "less definitely a part of the political structure, and they mitigate[d] somewhat the rigidity of that structure by

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[302] Warner et al., p. 161.
[303] Waller, p. 456.
[304] Waller, p. 11.

furnishing to students an opportunity for a freer sort of expression."[305] Thus, to Waller, another reason that students engaged in the extracurriculum was that this aspect of their work in schools was less affected by the politics of studenting.

Though Waller and Warner et al. wrote that significant changes in the politics of studenting were necessary for effective student work, they each judged that effectiveness differently; to Waller, students' work should not be compelled in formal classrooms, but should occur in what he regarded as authentic settings, not set apart in classrooms. Much of the "formal" or "remote" content that comprised the core of schools' curricula could be banished without problem.[306] To Warner et al., the formality of classrooms was not problematic; students' work in schools should be aligned or tracked given meritocratic views of the innate capabilities they bring to their work, not according to their SES. But in neither proposal would all students be expected or compelled to work on academic subject matter throughout their careers in school.

To Waller, most teaching and learning would have to occur out of schools – where he imagined the compulsion that marked the politics of studenting would be avoided – for authentic learning to occur. Short of deconstructing schools, educators' reaction to this reality seem to have been, according to the sociologists, scaling down what was asked of students to what they would or could do. The issue of control was not solved by the thinkers I consider in

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[305] Waller, p. 11.
[306] Waller, p. 443.

Chapter Two or Three either – the Boston Masters sought to control through corporal punishment and harsh discipline, but it was unclear how this external control would power internal learning processes. Both Dewey and Harris tried to finesse the issue, each arguing in some sense for internal control powered by the inherent interest of the curriculum or the grander human interests that Dewey stitched into students' beings. But my analysis in Chapter Three revealed that each ultimately wanted it both ways – for internal and external control to power student work.

These sociologists reported that students responded to learning under conditions of compulsion by rejecting schools and academic work. Powell, Farrar and Cohen wrote that: "The need to hold students for graduation and make them feel happy has the effect of disconnecting mastery from the school's expectations."[307] Schools responded to students' disengagement from and rejection of academic work by making themselves (more) amenable to the large majority of students by demanding less. In the next section, I explore the nature of students' work given the scaling back of academic subject matter expectations that I have detailed here.

[307] Powell, Farrar and Cohen, p. 4.

The nature of the work that students are to do

In the studies included here, the nature of the work that students were thought to have to do was formal and remote. This observation complicated the question related to this component of my frame – how to enable students to transfer their work in schools to their lives out of them – for the sociologists reported that students did not see the connections between their academic work in schools and their lives outside of them. The Lynds wrote that teachers aimed for student work to be "simple" and that teachers relied on the "lesson-text-book-recitation" method.[308] Students' work on academic subject matter was not trained on developing students' understanding or ownership of knowledge. Instead, the bar for mastery was set at students' ability to parrot back. One teacher went so far as to tell the Lynds that students should not be asked to "think."[309]

But authenticity and engagement did exist in the schools these researchers observed, if not in academic classes. One exception to the formality and remoteness of academic classes were vocational courses where learning tasks were considered "live," where students reported that they learned *how* rather than *about*.[310] The second exception was students' work in the extracurriculum, which included a panoply of offerings – from theater and yearbook to sports and cheerleading.[311] This suggests an interesting comparison

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[308] Lynd and Lynd, p. 188.
[309] Lynd and Lynd, p. 199.
[310] Lynd and Lynd, p. 195.
[311] Powell, Farrar and Cohen wrote: "Both the Lynds and Hollingshead, as well as nearly every other contemporary source, make clear that the schools were important. In Middletown and

with Dewey's view – Dewey wrote that students' work could be authentic if they learned academic content by focusing on *how* human problems were solved, by solving socially and historically relevant problems together in classrooms. But in the studies considered here, student work that was characterized by learning *how* did not occur with academic content, but in vocational courses and in the extracurriculum. None of these sociologists suggested reconstructing student work with academic content in schools so that it would more closely approximate the authentic tasks in vocational classrooms. Instead, Waller was skeptical that students' work could be authentic in schools; he recommended radically scaling back students' work in school. Waller argued that for student work to be authentic it would have to occur *in situ*, guided by "real" practitioners; otherwise, the nature of student work would remain formal and disjointed from "real" life.

Across these studies, students, their communities and their teachers coalesced around an understanding of what learning outcomes were valued, and why – i.e. those that were "real" and connected to their communities, and not "theoretical" as academic content in mass-attended schools was seen to be. These sociologists, like the thinkers considered in Chapters Two and Three of this work, wrestled with a key, common problem – how to enable students to see the link between their work in schools and their lives out of schools. Solving this dilemma is key to enabling student work, but none of the sociologists included

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Elmtown, for instance, many students spent an enormous amount of time and energy in socializing, in extracurricular activities and sports… The Lynds listed a veritable cornucopia of nonacademic pursuits that Middletown youth pursued: clubs, dances, band, sports teams, social cliques, orchestra, school papers and yearbook, drama clubs, class meetings, contests, fundraising for one activity or another, cheerleading, and so on" (p. 238).

here, the educators or the students they studied, seem to have solved this problem for mass attended schools. Instead, the solutions to the problem of students' transfer and use of knowledge from the classroom to their lives outside of school seems to have been: to abandon the goal of sophisticated understanding of the academic curriculum; to accept the formality and remoteness of academic subject-matter in mass-attended schools; and to displace students' authentic work from work on the academic curriculum to student work in vocational classes and on the extracurriculum.

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Though high school attendance grew the sociologists studied here reported that students' academic work in schools was formal, remote, not rigorous.[312] The Lynds wrote that teaching and learning in Middletown was consistently comprised of the "lesson-textbook-recitation method," which the Lynds called "imparting and learning facts and skills."[313] The standard for learning achievement was not depth of understanding of what students had memorized, instead, a teacher told the Lynds that students "get all mixed up and confused if we ask questions where they have to think."[314] Teachers did not model deep engagement with or reflection about content. Similarly, they expected students to display their mastery by parroting back. Thus, the very problems that Mann and his allies tried

[312] See, for example, Angus and Mirel, p. 98, p. 203.
[313] Lynd and Lynd, p. 188.
[314] Lynd and Lynd, p. 199.

to correct, that Colburn designed math curriculum for, and that Dewey and Harris designed against seemed to permeate the schools the Lynds observed. These teachers spoke as if students' work was not about "thinking" or problem solving, but rote memorization:

> …there are 'study-periods' in which children learn 'lessons' from 'text-books' prescribed by the state and 'recitations periods' in which they tell an adult teacher what the book has said; one hears children reciting the battles of the Civil War in one recitation period, the rivers of Africa in another, the 'parts of speech' in a third; the method is much the same.[315]

While the "method" Lynd and Lynd referred to here was teachers' and not students', teachers' method and practices are interactive, and the interactions were large part of students' work.[316] Demonstration of learning achievement was parroting back knowledge, not students' use of that knowledge. W.T. Harris would have despaired at the picture of teaching and learning these researchers drew; to Harris, memorization was not seen as sufficient for learning achievement, because it did not involve synthesis.[317]

Warner et al.'s portrayal of students' work also differed from what the Chapter Two and Three thinkers hoped the nature of student work could be. Dewey, Harris, Mann and the Boston Visiting Committee also noted the absence of problem solving and cooperation in schools, and asserted that students could be

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[315] Lynd and Lynd, p. 188.

[316] See, for example: Cohen, David K., Stephen W. Raudenbush, and Deborah Lowenberg Ball. Summer, 2003. Resources, Instruction, and Research. Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis 25 (2):119-142, p. 124.

[317] Synthesis is one of the key terms Harris used. Harris, *The Future of the Normal School*, p. 381.

resources for each other's learning. Dewey imagined students working cooperatively, and the others wrote, to one extent or another, that students' problem solving could be both relevant and helpful for each others' work. But Warner et al. reported that students were painfully aware of other students' accomplishments and their own deficits; students were not seen observing other's work with content and teachers, using these as rich educational resources. Instead, Warner et al. wrote that only some students could accomplish "prestige" in academic courses. Given the equal value ascribed to academic and vocational coursework, they proposed:

> The avocational or extracurricular program of the high school would thus help to provide many different kinds of prestige pyramids in the school and community so that practically every person could work up to a point near the top of at least one pyramid and thus gain satisfaction denied him if he strove and failed to get to the top of the socio-economic pyramid.[318]

Students' work was competitive, not cooperative. The goal of student work was not understanding or transfer of knowledge. Academic accomplishment was valued only insomuch as it would lead to socio-economic success out of school. The Lynds wrote:

> Every one lauds education in general, but relatively few people in Middletown seem to be sure just how they have ever used their own education beyond such commonplaces as the three R's and an occasional odd fact, or to value greatly its specific outcome in others.[319]

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[318] Warner et al., p. 162.
[319] Lynd and Lynd, p. 220.

Therefore if other students' progress was faster or more impressive, students would not get satisfaction from their own work. Students' work was defined by competition and accomplishment vis-à-vis other students, not vis-à-vis assimilation or synthesis of the knowledge itself. Given the equal value, in Middletowners' view, of vocational and academic work, providing vocational and extracurricular opportunities was the perfect solution: little would be lost, it seemed, if students would work on and excel at that which they were most interested.

Waller agreed that the nature of students' academic work was uninspired, not rigorous, and remote from students' interests and life experiences. He wrote, of the schools he observed:

> Man is a stupid child that can understand all the parts of his lesson but cannot understand the whole. This happens in teaching whenever a teacher overemphasizes the intrinsic value of his subject. It happens when learning is dry and dissected into facts.[320]

To Waller, students' work was focused on content that was not embedded in its real world use. The result, he wrote, was that students learned material by rote. Students' work was routinized and formulaic, and they did not understand nor were they able to use the knowledge they memorized. Waller joined the Lynds in writing that teachers did not ask students to demonstrate their use and understanding of material. To Waller, the organization of schools and subject matter actually obstructed students' work. The lack of meaning in the content of

[320] Waller, p. 443.

students' work arose, in large part, from the institution of schooling, from the structure, regimentation, and what Waller saw as the necessary politics of formal schooling in the U.S.: "He [the teacher] must, ordinarily, teach something definite, and from this comes the tendency of the teacher to build up courses from definite but probably unimportant facts."[321] Dewey also worried about concepts being organized and broken down into manageable, teachable nuggets devoid of their meaning and utility. Dewey, in *The Child and the Curriculum*, argued against the classification of subjects, and wrote, "things do not come to the individual pigeonholed."[322] Waller agreed, and wrote that the inclusion of subject matter seemed to be at least partly constrained by the reality of teaching in schools – where neither students' interests nor views of necessary, core curricula were considered.

Apart from the anemic nature of students' work on academic subject matter in the schools these authors observed, these sociologists wrote that students' work in schools extended beyond the core, humanist curriculum. Vocational courses and the extracurriculum were vital parts of students' work in schools, and were where authenticity and engagement were most often found. As noted earlier, these sociologists reported that students and their communities valued students' work in vocational courses and in extracurriculars because these were "live."[323] The distribution of teacher salaries reflected students' and

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[321] Waller, p. 443.
[322] Dewey, *The Child and the Curriculum*, pp. 105-6.
[323] See, for example, Lynd and Lynd, p. 195

their families' values: "the highest salaries are paid to the vocational" teachers, Hollingshead wrote, "and the lowest to the academic teachers."[324] Warner et al. wrote that vocational courses were an important opportunity for socializing lower SES students, for providing an opportunity for them to learn the behaviors and practices of middle-class adults in school. Schools, they wrote, were key for giving students the opportunity to: "Associate with children of middle-class and upper status. Learn the social skills of middle and upper status. Learn the vocational skills of middle and upper economic status."[325] Though Warner et al. wrote that lower SES students were systematically stigmatized and that they generally had fewer educational resources in schools, they saw vocational courses as a key opportunity for some lower SES students to move up socially and economically. Warner et al. and the Lynds portrayed students engaging in vocational courses because the work that students did in vocational courses was work they could readily see in their community, thus it had meaning to them.

Hollingshead also wrote that one aspect of upwardly mobile students' work was a sort of cultural anthropology. He wrote that students observed higher-SES students and watched and imitated them. This work was a key means to upward mobility for a select few, and was seen by Hollingshead as an important component of their work:

> Class III children who aspire to climb the social ladder take the same courses as the Class I's and Class II's, groom themselves in a similar manner, join the same

[324] Hollingshead, p. 172.
[325] Warner et al., p. 57.

> clubs, try to work into their cliques, and follow the same leisure activities.[326]

Hollingshead observed Elmtown students mimicking behavior not because they held academic learning in high esteem, but because middle-class students' behavior was socially valued, was salient currency for upward mobility.

Hollingshead wrote that another component of students' work that they enjoyed and that was celebrated by their community was the extracurriculum. The extracurriculum was what students modeled to their communities, students' achievements in extracurricular clubs and sports was the most vital representation of their work in schools. Hollingshead wrote:

> An elaborate extracurriculum program brings the school's activities before the public on a broader front than its teaching functions do, since this, the "circus side" of school, entertains students, parents, and Elmtowners in their leisure time.[327]

Students' engagement in this "circus side" of schools was large part of students' work. Waller wrote that extracurriculars or "activities" were highly valued by students, the aspect of students' work in schools that "youngsters consider[ed] by far the most important part of school life."[328]

Students' families and their communities reveled in the extracurricular activities, and felt that:

> This informal training is not a preparation for a vague future that must be taken on trust, as is the case with so much of the academic work; to many of the boys

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[326] Hollingshead, p. 176.
[327] Hollingshead, p. 192.
[328] Waller, p. 13.

> and girls in high school this is 'the life,' the thing they personally like best about going to school… sports, extracurricular activities, the social aspect of schools.[329]

Students' engagement in extracurriculars was considered by their families and communities as a more realistic approximation of their work outside of school. Even more, the Lynds contrasted "The relative disregard of most people in Middletown for teachers and for the content of books, on the one hand, and the exalted position of the social and athletic activities of the schools, on the other," which they wrote "offer[s] an interesting commentary on Middletown's attitude toward education."[330] Thus, there seem to have been two important perceptions that drove students', their families', and their teachers' views of student work in school: the first is the way that they saw students' academic work – as remote, too intellectualistic, and with little meaning or utility for students' work out of schools; the second is the way that they saw students' work in vocational classes and extracurricular activities – as linked to work out of school, as transferable after graduation, as "real." The contrast between the two in effect seems to have reinforced each perception – academic work seemed all the more distant and unusable out of school, and vocational and extracurricular work seemed all the more vital and useful.

The Lynds and Hollingshead did not put forth suggestions for solving the problems of student work that they observed: the formal nature of student work

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[329] Lynd and Lynd, p. 211.
[330] Lynd and Lynd, p. 218.

on academic subject-matter, the paltry learning outcomes, the displacement of students' engagement from academic subject-matter to extracurriculars and vocational classes. But Warner et al. and Waller did try to fashion suggestions for change so that the nature of student work could be more authentic, in Waller's case, or more meritocratically distributed, in Warner et al.'s case. Waller struggled to craft solutions to deal with the problems he catalogued, each of which was informed by two guiding principles. The first principle was that any solution must undo the autocratic nature of formal schooling, which Waller wrote exists in all formal schooling.[331] The second principle was that students' work should be authentic; it should reflect the "actual world around him" and not the "theoretical and formal world" of the school.[332] Ultimately, Waller's suggestions consistently upheld his view of what effective studenting is or should be: uncompelled and authentic. The inconsistencies in Waller's work arise in the solutions he constructed and deconstructed in trying to imagine how to enable this.

Relating Waller's ideas to Dewey's is interesting – Dewey believed in the possibility of authentic student work in school, even if implementing and enabling these in the Dewey school was difficult and challenging; Dewey admitted that there were many problems that he and his teachers had not yet solved. [333] I wrote, in Chapter Three, that there were problems in Dewey's proposal that he

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[331] See, for example, Waller, p. 10.
[332] Waller, p. 450.
[333] Mayhew, Katherine Camp, and Anna Camp Edwards. 1936. *The Dewey School: The Laboratory School of the University of Chicago 1896-1903*. New York: D. Appleton-Century Company.

did not acknowledge – i.e.: how could re-enaction be sufficiently "real" to students? Waller first suggested that it *might* be possible for students' work in schools to be authentic, but he then made an extended case for why this would in fact be untenable. In this argument, Waller leaned heavily on the very points that Dewey did not acknowledge, including the difficulty of reenacting complex situations in schools.

Waller referred to his first solution as "the method of 'activities.'"[334] In this method, students and teachers "imitate" or recreate the "social situations" that they would find in their environment. In this approach, "the school may attempt to reproduce the pattern situations of life itself." Waller wrote that this approach "seems the most satisfactory," but his advocacy of this solution waned precipitously over the course of just a few paragraphs. He quickly withdrew this suggestion. For, how could imitation be sufficiently "real" to students, given Waller's impassioned arguments for the importance of "spontaneous" and "actual" social interactions? He explained that:

> the number of social situations which the school and its activities can imitate is limited. Nor is it possible for the school ever to reproduce complicated situations, or those of any great range. Direct education, then, must be subject to some supplementation.[335]

[334] Waller, p. 451.
[335] Waller, p. 451.

Waller concluded that students' work must be focused on "real" experiences, and that the formal institution of schooling delimits this possibility. Waller abandoned this solution because he concluded that it would not enable what he saw as effective student work.

In crafting his proposals, Waller was unencumbered by a commitment to the institution and current structure of schooling or to "formal" instruction:

> a school exists wherever and whenever teachers and students met for the purpose of giving and receiving instruction. The instruction which is given is usually formal classroom instruction, but this need not be true.[336]

Freed from this constraint, Waller crafted a solution to the problems he observed outside of formal schooling. Waller wrote this "second method is that of mediating existent or prospective social situations to the child at second hand."[337] But again, no sooner did Waller suggest this approach than did he tear it down, and he quickly pointed out a succession of obstacles to success. The greatest challenge that Waller discussed was teachers themselves, for they "in general do not have that whole and unbiased view of life which would make such training worth while."[338] Thus, successful implementation of this approach would involve very specific type of student work – Waller specified the importance of "spontaneous participation of the student" – but students were not the barriers,

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[336] Waller, p. 6.
[337] Waller, p. 451.
[338] Waller, p. 451.

teachers were: “the reformation of education becomes a problem of the teaching personnel.”[339] Waller remained steadfastly utopian vis-à-vis students’ abilities to self-direct if the nature of student work were authentic, characterized by “real world” experience and social interaction. Thus, many of the assumptions that Waller made that were crucial to the success of his reforms of schools had to do with the nature of students’ work; in this solution, the problems were not students’ interests or their motivation, what they brought to their work, or even their SES. Compulsion, formality, institutionalization of the curricula, teachers’ lack of virility, these were the problems Waller believed degraded the nature of student work, and which he sought to address.

If these two solutions did not work to change the nature of student work, Waller wrote that radically scaling back formal schooling would be the necessary solution:

> the schools will have to limit themselves to the imparting of a few basic skills and a limited amount of training meeting the basic and relatively simple social situations which underlie modern life, leaving the task of adaptation to the more complicated conditions of life to be met in the child’s off hours or after he leaves the school.[340]

In essence, if “real experience” cannot be had in schools, then we should ask of schools only what Waller believed they can deliver – instruction and learning of a “few basic skills.” Students would engage as long as their work was not

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[339] Waller, pp. 452-3.
[340] Waller, p. 451.

compelled, formal, and what Waller saw as artificial. Student work would occur in interaction with vigorous practitioners, would be grounded in real experience, and would be disciplined by the "natural social order." Given these social interactions, Waller maintained great hope that students' work would be effective. In order to solve the problems of mass-attended schools that he saw, they would have to be undone: students would have to student outside of schools, alongside of teachers who were not educators but "real" practitioners. Waller's reform of schools required largely dismantling them. Success would depend upon many things, including students' engagement, practitioners' availability and capability, and the political will and ability to undo formal schools and laws about school attendance. Waller was making a huge bet, built upon unproven assumptions.

Warner et al.'s recommendations for improving the nature of student work did not involve dismantling mass-attended schools, but the shifts they recommended were nevertheless substantive. They recommended banishing the use of SES as an arbiter; they wanted educators to use students' capability instead for tracking and distribution of educational opportunity. But they seemed to want it all: they wanted schools to continue to sort students, but according to a true meritocracy. They wanted a common curriculum that would establish feelings of common linkages, much like Mann outlined, but they wrote that different outcomes were necessary: "We need to see more clearly that various subgroups in our society can aim at different goals and that it is not necessary for

everyone to shoot for the top…"[341] They wrote of the importance of schooling, and that teaching and learning should occur in schools – a necessity that Waller could do without – but proposed a program of "socially valuable work experience" in which students from all backgrounds work together. [342]

In schooling *as it should be*, Warner et al. wrote that some of students' work should be *in situ* – unpaid – with others to "raise the common standard of living."[343] In this work, students might be: "clearing land for a park, building a swimming pool, cleaning up alleys and vacant lots, caring for a community forest."[344] But Warner et al. proposed not that students would be learning how to do these tasks in particular. What would be educative and important in this work was that students would work together across different socio-economic statuses and abilities, enabling them to appreciate their common bonds as citizens. There is a similarity with Dewey, here, in that students would be solving problems together, and thus they would form common bonds. But, a key difference is that the activities themselves were not reenactments of historical problem solving – the content was not as important. Warner et al. did not explain why students would not make the judgments and classifications that they wrote students make innately in the schools they observed, nor did they propose any sort of

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[341] Warner et al., p. 147.
[342] Warner et al., p. 160.
[343] There is an important historical context for this. The Civilian Conservation Corps, which was part of FDR's New Deal, provided work and educational opportunities for youth aged 18-24. Angus and Mirel wrote that "educators asserted their political will" and fought against the CCC, as it was seen as a threat to their local work in schools (p. 66).
[344] Warner et al., p. 160.

scaffolding of these experiences – they assumed that the experiences themselves would enable these common linkages. Warner et al. did not write about the nature of students' work in academic courses in schools as they should be – would these be structured so as to privilege authentic problem-solving? Their recommendation that "avocational activities" be "linked with adult activities in the community" suggests that that might be important.[345] By not detailing students' role in academic classes, they avoided many problems. Further, not asking these questions can be seen as enabling the solutions that they proposed.

Looking closely at the solutions Waller and Warner et al. crafted after extended ethnographic and sociological study of schools illustrates the enduring nature of the dilemmas of studenting; even with the advantage of extended study of schools neither crafted solutions which did not evince as many continuing or new problems as the ones they solved. The schools these researchers studied abandoned the goal of sophisticated learning of the academic curriculum, and instead displaced that work to student work on vocational courses and extracurricular activities. Enriching students' experiences in schools, and enabling students to see the links between their work in schools with their work out of them amounted to providing more opportunities for students to work outside of academic subject matter in school.

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[345] Warner et al., p. 161.

Conclusion

According to the Lynds, Americans viewed schooling with a zealous commitment: "it is no exaggeration to say that it [education] evokes the fervor of a religion, a means of salvation, among a large section of the working class."[346] They wrote that this devotion was not built upon a commitment to the academic content of schooling, but instead upon a less concrete view of schools. American's love affair was with the symbol of school and not the content of schooling, or even students' work in schools. These sociologists wrote that students, their communities, parents, and teachers did not value the academic content or the rigor of students' work in schools.[347] Instead, Warner et al. wrote that what students and their community did value was the "quantity" of education students consumed, the status of the school they attended, and the grades they received, which they wrote did not often correlate with students' ability or whether they had actually mastered content.[348]

All the studies included in this chapter have been extensively analyzed, mined for a better sense of the social contexts of U.S. schools in the early and mid-twentieth century. I ask a different question of these studies; I analyze them

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[346] Lynd and Lynd, p. 187.
[347] Warner et al., p. 67.
[348] Warner et al., p. 67.

in order to better comprehend what studenting was seen to be in the schools these researchers observed. While my question – how did educators, theorists, researchers and sociologists understand studenting? – was not one any of these sociologists used to guide their research, these studies provide rich data and material in pursuit of my answer to this question.

The sociologists included in Chapter Four brought a different perspective to their work than those included in Chapters Two and Three. These sociologists were looking at schools as they were versus schools as they could or should be. In these studies, there is a different view of what was thought to be possible – to this group schools seemed to be the problem not the solution. Each of these thinkers wrestled, to varying extents, with the question: is authentic learning possible in mass-attended schools? Another point of comparison with the Chapter Two and Chapter Three thinkers is that the Chapter Four sociologists understood studenting to include a degree of making do or gaming the system. Studenting was not just about being successful at learning academic content, but also about negotiating the school system. Looking across these studies, there seems a tremendous cynicism; these sociologists wrote of overextended schools, students that were disinterested in academic subject matter, and radically scaled back academic curricula and expectations.

Even though the sociologists I consider paid attention to different aspects of students' work in schools, the three key elements of my analytic frame – understandings of what students bring to their work, the politics of studenting,

and the nature of student work – remain useful for exploring how these sociologists understood studenting and why they understood it that way. This set of authors wrestled with the same problems that the first two sets tried to solve. The differences between them were in part informed by the way these thinkers saw the key problems of studenting – the problems they saw in compelling or guiding students' work, the role and utility of students' interests for their work, and reconciling students' work in school with their lives outside of it.

In these pieces, the assumption that students' work in schools could substantively minimize differences and create a common people was eviscerated. These sociologists reported that students and teachers brought the full experiences of their lives out of school to their work together. Warner et al. wrote:

> …the American school reflects the socio-economic order in everything that it does; in what it teaches, whom it teaches, who does the teaching, who does the hiring and firing of teachers, and what the children learn in and out of the classroom.[349]

These were schools where the classism and the materialism that Dewey and Mann hoped schools would undo instead defined students' work. Students themselves, Warner et al. told us,

> evaluate their classmates. They decide who is good-looking, who plays games well, who is a good fighter, who is a leader, who is quiet, who is noisy, who is a

[349] Warner et al., p. xii.

> teacher's pet, and they make a host of other judgments about each other.[350]

Students saw teachers and administrators using socio-economic status to distribute scarce educational resources, they learned these biases from their parents and their communities. These sociologists wrote that students had agency in reproducing social inequities and in disengaging from schools. The Chapter Two and Three thinkers sought teachers and schools that would not "learn" students, in which students' work is what creates learning outcomes, in interactions with educational resources. Here, we see that inequities and biases are imposed upon students, for they are tracked according to their SES. But, students also play an important role in the politics of studenting in their interactions with and judgments of each other, as well as in the extent and character of their own engagement with the academic curriculum.

These sociologists' views of schools and students' work in schools was not nearly as hopeful as that of the thinkers considered in Chapters Two and Three, even if some of these authors imagined ways for schools to be meritocratic, and/or to enable ambitious or authentic student work on academics –outside of them schools. Geraldine Joncich Clifford wrote, about Waller:

> Like the pioneers of American sociology, Waller perceived individual and social improvement as resting most securely upon education, but he was

[350] Warner et al., pp. 84-5.

> more cynical than they about schools as the locus for realizing education's promises."[351]

This duality resulted from the fact that Waller, as David K. Cohen wrote, was both a hater of school and a lover of education.[352] Clifford elaborated:

> Waller abhorred the arid formalism of conventional schools. He celebrated the educational adventures that come with experiences – solving *life's* problems – and with the aid of dynamic, vigorous teachers – practitioners in the 'real world.'[353]

Students and teachers in Elmtown, Middletown and Yankee City viewed schools with a sort of schizophrenia. They brought both a reverence for school as symbol with a disdain for the academic work of school; a deep belief in schools as meritocracies overlaid with overwhelming evidence that schools in fact reproduced socio-economic and racial inequities. Students were caught between these cleavages. Students and teachers each had to adjust their practices given the divergent realities and goals of schooling. But the adjustments they made – largely abandoning sophisticated learning of academic subject matter – can be seen as recognition that a key goal of schooling had not been attained.

These schools were not the site for making over society, nor were they schools where common experiences were shared – the Lynds described up to a

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[351] Clifford, Geraldine Joncich. 1991. Reviewed Works: Willard Waller on Education and Schools: A Critical Appraisal. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* 13 (2):206-209, p. 207.

[352] Cohen, David K. 1989. Willard Waller, on Hating School and Loving Education. In *Willard Waller on Education and Schools: A Critical Appraisal*, edited by D. J. Willower and W. L. Boyd. Berkeley: McCutchan Publishing Corporation.

[353] Clifford, p. 208.

dozen tracks per school.[354] Further, students' learning within classrooms, in these schools, was not common:

> Miss Crane knew, the prescribed social lines of the community fell upon them and even influenced their learning in school. What a given child learned was not in Miss Crane's power to determine. She could try to teach them all the same things but they would not learn the same things.[355]

This was not only because of differences in the capabilities that students brought to their work, but also because of what students learned about themselves and what they were or were not entitled to in schools and out. That said, to compare students' experiences in these schools to the "common" goals Mann advocated is not entirely fair, for the definition of "common" that existed during Mann's time was not, in itself, inclusive. As Diane Ravitch wrote:

> All the Protestant sects could feel very comfortable in American public schools… If you read Horace Mann you will see that his idea was we should have no sectarianism in the schools – we should all read the same Bible. We should all say the same prayers, we should use those religious ideas that are common to all of us – meaning all of us Protestants.[356]

In addition, most age-eligible students were not in school during the Common School era. The sociologists in this chapter, like the Boston Visiting Committee a century before, wrote that students' work in the schools they observed was heterogeneous, that students' experiences in schools were not common across

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[354] Lynd and Lynd found, pp. 191-2.
[355] Warner et al., p. 15.
[356] Ravitch, Diane, in Mondale, Sarah, ed. 2001. *School: The Story of American Public Education. Boston: Beacon Press.*

students. Instead, tracking was constructed to provide diverse student work to different students: "group training no longer means the same set of facts learned on the same days by all children of a given grade."[357] In these schools, two key aims – education for common linkages and differentiation – seemed at cross-purposes, and differentiation was the winner. These studies, then, imply the following questions: Can each goal be successfully realized? That is, can students learn about and come to appreciate their common heritage as well as their common role as citizens while also having markedly different opportunities to learn? Further, these schools were not where revolution was sown, where society was brought together in common cause, nor were they meritocratic. The common school reformers argued for one version of equality – for equal access to equal content. They imagined and worked for schools where all students would have access to schools and learn the same kinds of things. These sociologists wrote about a different problem of equality.[358] Harris would also have been deeply worried by what the sociologists found; throughout his long career as an teacher and administrator, he consistently argued for equal access to the humanist curriculum; all students, no matter their provenance or the likelihood of their future occupation should study and master the same curriculum. He worked against manual and vocational education, and against tracking, even as both of these gained currency in U.S. schools.

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[357] Lynd and Lynd, pp. 120-1.
[358] See Angus and Mirel, pp. 104-105.

In these schools, teachers and students were joined and affected by the interests, views and values of their parents and their communities. The lofty goals of schools lifting up and improving society that Mann, Harris and Dewey propounded seemed unrealistic to most, and inappropriate to others;[359] schools seemed much more affected by society than vice versa. All of these sociologists agreed that the schools they observed were not internally meritocratic and that the inequities that ruled them resulted in severely limited educational opportunities for many students.

When what students do with academic content seems to matter so little to the people who matter so much to students, how could teachers and students possibly construct an answer to the challenging problems I sketched in Chapters Two, Three and Four? That the two efforts to provide solutions themselves evince so many additional questions or problems highlights the enduring challenges of balancing students' interests with what educators see as necessary content, of the tensions between inner and external pressure, and of the challenges of seeing the relationship between work in schools and work outside of them.

These sociologists depicted students engaged in vocational courses and the extra-curriculum and disengaged and disinterested in their academic courses. They were portrayed learning to navigate schools that were seen as hostile to all but the smallest percentage of students, as students were tracked according to

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[359] Thus, for example, Warner et al. wrote: "the school is not, however, the only institution which could be used to improve democratic living" p. 143.

socio-economic status. Different groups of students, while working in the same school, took different courses, with variously committed teachers. Further, expectations for performance and learning were different across groups. Schools were characterized not by their focus on authentic learning, but instead by a displacement of authentic learning from an academic focus to an extra-curricular focus, with students' work largely represented as engagement in a set of social activities, much of it focused on the extra-curriculum, and/or the adoption of stances that actively rejected academic work. Student success in these schools was largely dependent upon engagement in these extra-curriculars; they were vital part, if not nearly the whole of what students did in the schools these sociologists studied. Thus, we can understand these depictions not as a form of effective distraction from studenting, but as displacement of studenting as it is related to authentic learning.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

My study has accomplished two main objectives. First, I have highlighted how thinkers have understood students' work, or studenting, and the practices thought to be associated with different views of studenting. Second, I have related those ideas to changes in the reach and organization of schools and the effects these things were thought to have on students' work. This dissertation is the first step in a research program that will focus on understanding the nature of students' work in classrooms, and will lead to my future work, which will be to better understand the ways in which studenting interacts with instruction and schools' social conditions in contemporary classrooms. I have analyzed how thinkers understood studenting, the work that students were thought to have to do to learn. Gary D. Fenstermacher coined the term studenting in his 1986 piece, "Philosophy of Research on Teaching: Three Aspects," in which he wrote that "whether and how much" a student "learns from being a student is largely a function of how he students."[360]

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[360] Fenstermacher, Gary. 1986. Philosophy of Research on Teaching: Three Aspects. In *Handbook of Research on Teaching*, edited by M. C. Wittrock. New York: Macmillan Library Reference USA, Simon and Schuster Macmillan, p. 39.

The issues that I deal with here are not new; instead, I have considered long running issues with a different focus. Looking across my analysis, one of the key refrains is that enabling effective studenting comes down to managing this problem with students: how to secure engagement when it is necessary for learning, but when students might not be interested in that which teachers believe they should learn.

Key similarities and contrasts across the three conversations

Across the thinkers studied here, students' work was not portrayed as passive; instead, students' work with teachers, each other, and content is what was seen to lead to learning achievement. David Ericson and Frederick Ellett Jr. wrote, in their discussion of studenting: "Students, obviously, are not raw materials, awaiting only a teacher's skillful hands. They are an integral factor in the learning process."[361] Reading across these three sets of thinkers suggests a series of questions. Given students' active role, how can teachers enable students with widely divergent resources to make the most of their work in schools? How to structure schools to educate many while also making use of student interests and capabilities? Another key question implied by these thinkers is: How to provide more equal opportunities to learn given the

[361] Ericson, David P., and Frederick S. Ellett Jr. July 2, 2002. "The Question of the Student in Educational Reform." Education Policy Analysis Archives 10 (31), p.4.

differences that students bring and the suppositions that schools and educators make about what students bring?

Mann and Colburn's answers to these questions drew upon the work of Pestalozzi. While students' differential resources were a key reason that Mann advocated for Common Schools, he also believed that all students shared vital commonalities, and that if they had equal access to common schools that these differences could be smoothed. Dewey also worried about inequities, and also imagined key commonalities between students, no matter their differences. Dewey's answer to these questions was to construct student work around what he saw as universal interests inherent to all mankind. To Harris the key answer to these questions was equal access to a rich, comprehensive humanist curriculum. The sociologists I consider in Chapter Four looked at the schools they studied and concluded that while students' access to and enrollment in schools swelled, students' work in these schools was formal, remote, "dumbed down" – even at the highest track. Even more, they found that schools reproduced society's inequalities. They wrote that schools' answers to these questions were to scale back academic expectations. Most of the sociologists I consider saw cooperation and problem solving as key aspects of effective studenting, but none reported that they found these in schools. The Chapter Two and Chapter Three thinkers argued for those things precisely because they were absent in the classrooms of their day. They saw more or less the same problems that the sociologists in

Chapter Four observed, even if the sociologists wrote about them differently decades later.

Another vital question brought up by all of these thinkers is how to strike a balance between studenting that leads to learning achievement and student work that is making do, getting by, or negotiating the school system. Fenstermacher wrote about this in his 1986 paper:

> In the context of modern schooling, however, there is much more to studenting than learning how to learn. In the school setting, studenting includes getting along with one's teachers, coping with one's peers, dealing with one's parents about being a student, and handling the nonacademic aspects of school life, though one of the more immediate tasks of the teacher is to enable the student's learning of academic content, the secondary tasks just mentioned are nearly as critical …[362]

Worry about the make-work aspects of studenting flow through the texts I have examined. Mann, Colburn, the Boston Visiting Committee, Harris and Dewey all designed for ways to tip the balance such that students' work would more effectively lead to learning. They all recognized students' work negotiating being in schools as a problem, and worked to minimize this aspect of studenting. The sociologists' reports of the schools they observed confirmed that the balance between these two categories of studenting did not approach what the Chapter Two and Chapter Three thinkers had intended.

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[362] Fenstermacher, p. 39.

Thus, despite different views across the three conversations, there are important consistencies as well. First, the presumed mission of schools – sites where students would have common experiences, develop feelings of and commitments to mutual citizenship, would have equal access – was common among all the thinkers examined in this study. The Common School era theorists, Dewey, and Harris set the bar for goals of schooling very high. Their ambitions for schools were lofty, even utopian. On the other hand, the sociologists considered here looked at schools and asked whether students' experiences were common, if students' work in schools fostered feelings of mutual citizenship, if their opportunities were egalitarian. But they reported that the answer to each of these was a resounding "NO."

Second, the sociologists examined in Chapter Four wrote that they observed rote learning, teacher-student and student-content interactions that were superficial, with "parroting back," content being a prime example. These were all problems that the Boston Visiting Committee observed over a century earlier, and that Mann had tried to solve. The Boston Masters argued that there was something going on in students' minds that went beyond the superficial view of "parroting" back, that students were actively investigating and engaged with material, but that is not what the Boston Visiting Committee found in their canvass of schools and assessment of student learning outcomes. The Chapter Four sociologists reported that the schools they observed were permeated with the same problems that Mann and the Boston Visiting Committee identified and

tried to address, that Colburn wrote math curriculum for, and that Dewey and Harris worked to prevent. Worry about students' superficial engagement with content spans all of the thinkers considered in my analysis. The problems of the early to mid-1800s and the turn of the twentieth century were not solved in the schools the sociologists observed at mid-century.

How can these problems be solved? How can students' work more closely approximate the active engagement in and investigation of academic subject matter that thinkers from Mann to Harris to Dewey envisioned? Waller lucidly described the challenges of working to improve schools: "It is easier to diagnose social ills than to cure them. And it is far easier to criticize institutions than to suggest remedies for the evils that are in them."[363] The thorny problems I sketched in Chapters Two and Three were not solved in the schools the sociologists observed – how to utilize students' interests and experiences, how to enable engagement when students might not be interested, how to transfer from school life outside of school – instead, these challenges continued.

The Chapter Two and Chapter Three thinkers acknowledged that not all of students' interests and experiences were salient for their work in schools, but they believed that students did bring some important interests and experiences to their work in schools: Dewey distinguished between individual and fleeting interests and what he saw as more fundamental interests that were common

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[363] Waller, p. 448.

across mankind; and Harris saw students' interests as diversion from important attention to the curriculum, yet he encouraged teachers to use students' experiences as illustration whenever possible. Thus despite some reservations, the earlier theorists for the most part acknowledged the salience of students' interests (to some degree) for their work. But the Chapter Four sociologists did not write about student interests that were salient for their academic work in mass-attended schools. Students' interests drove their work in vocational classes and in the extracurriculum. Only one of these sociologists – Waller – asked whether students' academic work could be more authentic, whether the nature of students' academic work could be changed so as to better approximate the "real" student work in vocational classes and the extracurriculum. The sociologists, in fact, reported that students' anti-academic interests were not so different from their teachers', parents' and administrators' interests, all of which were seen to be strongly anti-academic and largely anti-intellectual.

All of this begs the question: if students, their teachers and their schools were both in and of their communities, and these teachers and their communities did not value academic subject matter, how could students' work be anything but superficial? This is a key point that I discussed in my consideration of Dewey: how could schools remake society when they were, in fact, of society? In my analysis of Mann I detailed another, perhaps more practical version of this question: if there were the problems of teacher quality Mann wrote about, how could teachers teach the way he wished? But why did these thinkers not see or

face these questions? One part of the answer to why they did not see these questions has to do with assumptions of causality; they each believed in schoolings' potential with near religious fervor, and built their commitments upon a view of causality of reform from the inside out – from schools *to* society. Another part of the answer might be that they were unable or unwilling to consider other roads to reform. Waller, meanwhile, did not believe that student learning had to occur in schools; as such he crafted a solution to the "despotism" of teaching and learning in mass-attended schools that significantly pared down students' work in schools and that reduced the teaching force to a mere "skeleton."[364] Fenstermacher, in his 1997 piece wrote that the deleterious, make-work practices of studenting are:

> an artifact of our ways of organizing education into systems of schools and colleges. In larger doses, it is deleterious. It detracts from the actual learning of the disciplines or mastery of the performing arts, and places primary value on learning the rules of the game of being a student.[365]

The solutions he suggested were not as radical as Waller's but they involved reorganizing the methods, assessments and organization of schools.[366]

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[364] Waller, Willard. 1932, reprinted 1965. *The Sociology of Teaching*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., p. 454.

[365] Fenstermacher, Gary D. April 5, 1994, revised 1997. On the Distinction Between Being a Student and Being a Learner. Paper read at Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, at New Orleans, LA, p. 5.

[366] Among other suggestions, Fenstermacher (1997) wrote that all students should be treated like "honor students," that there should be more student choice vis-à-vis curriculum, that letter grades should be eliminated, that student portfolios should be used for assessment (pp. 5-6). Last, "another step is to provide instructors with support and encouragement to learn from their students about the effects and consequences of teaching in different formats and settings, and with different styles" (p. 7).

Throughout my analysis, I have noted the iterative, interactive nature of teaching and learning. The works that I consider suggest that it is not just that teachers do not "learn" their students, but also that students are deeply involved in negotiating with teachers. A key lesson drawn from my analysis is that enabling student work in schools that leads to learning achievement involves solving a series of problems; these concerned educators at the turn of the 19th century, and they concern us today. These problems include: enabling students to see the relevance of their academic work in schools to their lives outside of them; guiding and compelling student work; and, last, enabling student work to be active. In the words of the thinkers I studied, effective student work signified a range of practices, none of which were passive. Instead, Mann wrote that student work should be "natural," work that brought "sense to his [the students'] understanding?"[367] The Boston Masters wished students to "investigate,"[368] Dewey aimed for authenticity that was grounded by his view of the importance of "experience" or "research" – "that conjoint trying and undergoing."[369] Harris, meanwhile, envisioned student work that was characterized by "synthesis."[370] In each of these, students' work was active, the key means to student learning achievement, a point that Fenstermacher highlighted: "only a slight shift in

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[367] Mann, Horace. 1846. *Report of an educational tour in Germany, and parts of Great Britain and Ireland, being part of the seventh annual report of Horace Mann, esq., Secretary of the Board of education*. London: Simpkin, Marshall, and company, p. 103.

[368] Schools, Association of Masters of the Boston Public. 1844. *Remarks on the Seventh Annual Report of the Hon. Horace Mann*. Boston: Charles C. Little and James Brown, p. 53.

[369] Dewey, John. 1916. *Democracy and Education*. New York: The Free Press, p. 144.

[370] Harris, William Torrey. 1899. *The Future of the Normal School*. Edited by J. W. Null and D. Ravitch, *Forgotten Heroes of American Education: The Great Tradition of Teaching Teachers*. Greenwich, Connecticut: Information Age Publishing, p. 380.

perspective is needed to fix the notion that learning follows directly from studenting, not teaching."[371] The sociologists I studied in Chapter Four reported scarce evidence of these practices in the schools they studied. Instead, they wrote that schools dealt with the problem of compelling students to engage in work they were not so interested in by not demanding so much, by making students' academic work easier and more accessible.

Next steps

This dissertation lays the foundation for future work. First, I intend to extend my analysis into post WW II ideas. This effort will include more contemporary researchers and thinkers. Some in this group tried to define and enable learning, asking not *if* but *how* learning achievement could occur in schools, like the curriculum reformers in 1950s and 1960s.[372] Others, including Paul Goodman, whose views take up where Willard Waller's left off, tried to imagine how learning could occur outside of schools, given the key disadvantages of formal, mass attended schools that they saw.[373] Still others explored effective student practices – such as Carl Bereiter and Marlene Scardamalia's work on intentional learning, Scott Paris and Anne Cunningham's

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[371] Fenstermacher, 1986, p. 40.

[372] See, for example: Dow, Peter B. 1991. Schoolhouse Politics: Lessons from the Sputnik Era. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

[373] Goodman, Paul. 1964. Compulsory Mis-Education and the Community of Scholars. New York: Vintage Books, A Division of Random House. Original edition, 1962.

work on learning strategies, and Claire Weinstein and Richard Mayer's work on learning.[374]

Second, this dissertation helps to inform my empirical work on how the student role is enacted in various aspects of contemporary U.S. schools and what schools and teachers do to sustain or frustrate learning achievement. My analysis here can be understood as prolegomena to my future observation work, and will help to inform that research. John Wallace and Helen Wildy wrote:

> …the domain of students rarely arises in the school reform literature. Teachers are busy reforming things that teachers notice – timetables, content, pedagogy, staff meetings – rather than things that students notice. It may be that the things teachers think are important are not important to students. Maybe, students are connoisseurs of other things that remain largely unrecognized giving rise to the phenomenon of studenting described previously.[375]

As I wrote in the introduction, Wallace and Wildy's choice to focus on students was, admittedly, "arbitrary."[376] They shadowed one "successful" student – Jake – for only the "first four periods of a single day."[377] In this short period, they observed a very different school than they had while studying it over "several

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[374] Bereiter, Carl, and Marlene Scardamalia. 1989. "Intentional Learning as a Goal of Instruction." In *Knowing, Learning, and Instruction: Essays in Honor of Robert Glaser*, edited by L.B. Resnick. Hillsdale, NJ: L. Erlbaum Associates; Paris, Scott G., and Anne E. Cunningham. 1996. "Children Becoming Students." In *Handbook of Educational Psychology*, edited by D. C. Berliner and R. C. Calfee. New York: Macmillan; Weinstein, Claire E., and Richard E. Mayer. 1986. "The Teaching of Learning Strategies." In *Handbook of Research on Teaching*, edited by M. Wittrock. New York: Macmillan.

[375] Wallace, John, and Helen Wildy. April 2004. "Old Questions for New Schools: What are the Students Doing?" Teachers College Record 106 (4):635-650, p. 646.

[376] Wallace and Wildy, p. 637.

[377] Wallace and Wildy, p. 635.

years." Their analysis is illuminating; their piece demonstrates why it is useful to explicitly attend to students' work when analyzing teaching and learning in classrooms. Their work also helps to elucidate the necessity of further developing our understanding of the concept of studenting that Fenstermacher introduced, and which I have explored in this study. Thus, for example, I plan to observe contemporary classrooms, perhaps investigating interventions which attend to students' learning and which are explicitly oriented to the idea that students do the work of learning.[378]

My next steps will not be arbitrary, but instead will be built upon the work that I have done here, and the analytical frame that I have developed. My analytical frame will help to structure and inform my observational work. While there has been much research on students and about students, there has been relatively little effort to see how students view their experience in schools. How students view and understand their work is a different approach, and is a key question I am committed to exploring.

[378] As an example of a site for potentially fruitful empirical work, I could investigate students' work in the Coalition of Essential Schools. One of the key CES Common Principles reconfigures students' and teachers' roles, proposing the "student-as-worker" and the "teacher-as-coach."

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