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The Task of Renewing A Common World: A Democratic Feminist Ethic of Care in Schools

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The Task of Renewing A Common World:
A Democratic Feminist Ethic of Care in Schools

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"Education is the point at which we decide whether we love the world enough to assume responsibility for it and by the same token save it from that ruin which, except for renewal, except for the coming of the new and young, would be inevitable. And education, too, is where we decide whether we love our children enough not to expel them from our world and leave them to their own devices, nor to strike from their hands their chance of undertaking something new, something unforeseen by us, but to prepare them in advance for the task of renewing a common world."

- Hannah Arendt, The Crisis in Education

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Introduction - Cash Rules Everything Around Me:
Public Schools in a Time of Neoliberalism

Education tends to mark the beginnings and endings of periods in many people's youth and development as we advance from elementary and middle school to high school and perhaps, college. Each transition brings with it a new cast of characters and a new set of curricular and social challenges, and it is perhaps for this reason that people tend to organize their early lives into sections based on schooling. When I reflect on growing up in southeastern Michigan, this is certainly the case. In elementary school, I think of the teachers who allowed me to sit with my twin sister at lunch even though we were in separate classes - even though it was strictly against the rules! In middle school, I remember how my seventh grade teachers offered their picture day vouchers to my sisters and I in case we could not afford to have our photos taken, and I remember my school's librarian, who often paid for my lunch when I did not bring one with me. In high school, I remember the English teacher who emailed my mother copies of my papers when I wrote something that I was proud of. And I remember my principal, who encouraged me to explore my emerging senses of justice and self by connecting me with organizers in Metro-Detroit. Each of these most important memories constitutes my understanding of the school as a place of care.

This project stems from two pieces of work that have had a significant impact on the way that I think about care and education: Concha Delgado-Gaitan's *The Power of Community: Mobilizing for Family and Schooling* and Angela Valenzuela's *Subtractive Schooling: U.S.-Mexican Youth and the Politics of Caring*. I read these pieces right before embarking on this project, and as with many education courses and readings, they prompted me to reflect on my own experiences as a K-12 student. Delgado-Gaitan's book chronicles her participatory ethnographic work in Carpinteria, California. Inspired by Paulo Freire's literacy campaigns, she

researched literacy activities at home and in schools for Mexican-American youth, guided by the conviction that "everyone is a whole person, in spite of the fact that they might live in impoverished conditions." [1] Her work foregrounds stories - the story of her life, the story of her participants' struggles and victories, the tales that children in Carpinteria tell - as ways of weaving together the researcher and storyteller, the community and its members, the storyteller's past and the listener's past. She writes, "my job as an ethnographer and writer is to honor these peoples' stories about the meaning of language, culture, and literacy in this community."[2]

As I read Delgado-Gaitan's work, I was amazed by her respect for stories. She gives equal attention and care to her own story of becoming an ethnographer as she does seven-year-old Maria Vargas' story about a group of children who help an old man grow an apple tree.[3] Indeed, stories are her main way of knowing the people of Carpinteria, and ultimately of understanding their efforts to improve their children's schools. I was astounded by this attention and immediately wondered if I knew of schools, teachers, or communities that held their children's and parent's stories in such high regard - as authoritative and important knowledge. Were there schools that welcomed students' lives and creativity so fully, and if so, what did that mean for the classroom? What did it mean for student learning? Because I am trained in Marshall Ganz's model of community organizing, which relies on the power of public narrative storytelling to build relationships and enact change, I was excited for the possibilities that storytelling in schools might present for bridging divides or building communities in schools.[4]

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[1] Concha Delgado-Gaitan, *The Power of Community: Mobilizing for Family and Schooling* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2001), 164

[2] Ibid., 175

[3] Ibid., 167

[4] See Lee Anne Bell, *Storytelling for Social Justice: Connecting Narrative and the Arts in Antiracist Teaching*, The Teaching/Learning Social Justice Series (New York: Routledge, 2010); Lyn Mikel Brown and Mark Tappen, *Stories Told and Lessons Learned: Toward a Narrative Approach to Moral Development and Moral Education.* (Harvard Educational Review: July 1989*),* 59 (2), 182-206; Loyce Caruthers, "Using Storytelling to Break the Silence That

Stories seemed like a fix for all that was wrong with schools that did not care to know their students beyond test scores and data. If we could only find room and methods to honor student experience, I thought, schools might shift towards becoming places of safety and enrichment for students that they often exclude or push out. Ultimately, Delgado-Gaitan's work prompted me to wonder if schools are able to hold authentic student experience, to welcome the students as a "whole person," and if so, how.

Read in conjunction with Valenzuela's investigation of the politics of care and U.S-Mexican youth in schools, this idea of bringing personal experience, narrative, and knowledge to the school provided the jumping off point for this thesis. Valenzuela spent three years conducting an ethnography of U.S-Mexican youth at Juan Seguín high school in Houston, Texas. She found that that "schools are structured around an aesthetic caring whose essence lies in an attention to things and ideas" rather than an authentic care that "nurtures and values relationships."[5] Authentic caring attunes the teacher to the student as another person rather than an object. She argues that:

> Teachers expect students to demonstrate caring about schooling with an abstract, or aesthetic commitment to ideas or practices that purportedly lead to achievement. Immigrant and U.S.-born youth, on the other hand, are committed to an authentic form of caring that emphasizes relations of reciprocity between teachers and students.[6]

While teachers encourage students to care for the abstract ideas of success and mobility, the U.S.-Mexican students at Seguín sought more than an education, but *educación*, a "competence in the social world, wherein one respects the dignity and individuality of others." [7] Valenzuela

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Binds Us to Sameness in Our Schools," *The Journal of Negro Education* 75, no. 4 (2006): 661–75; Pamela Cooper, "Introduction to the Special Issue: Storytelling and Education," *Storytelling, Self, Society* 3, no. 2 (2007): 75–79; Jerome Bruner, "Life as Narrative," *Social Research* 54, no. 1 (1987): 11–32

[5] Angela Valenzuela, *Subtractive Schooling: U.S.-Mexican Youth and the Politics of Caring*, SUNY Series, the Social Context of Education (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), 22

[6] Ibid., 61

[7] Ibid., 23

asserts that by focusing on these abstract ideas of achievement rather than relational reciprocity, teachers must use only their interpretation of students' self-representation to understand them, often leading to negative assumptions and labeling based on assumed race, ethnicity, or class-based stereotypes. Her research led me to wonder: what might it mean to have "complete information" about a student, and how might schools and teachers move towards this more holistic understanding of the people that they serve every day?[8]

Valenzuela's work provided the impetus for looking to care as a theoretical concept and/or a practice that might bring more complete knowledge of the student into schools in order to cultivate the school as a political place and the student as a political person. As the memories in the introduction of this section demonstrate, care means nurturing and valuing relationships between students and teachers. Care constitutes relationships between students and between students and teachers that did not exist beforehand. Within this explicitly relational framework, care invites knowledge of others - especially difficult knowledge that motivates both deeper understanding of the student and caring actions towards them. For example, when I felt able to be vulnerable about my family's economic difficulties in middle school, caring teachers responded with interventions that eased those difficulties. Their care came both in their willingness to listen to a student discuss the realities of their life as well as their determinedness to take action on my behalf.

What's more, the kind of care that this thesis investigates - a feminist democratic ethic of care - insists that care acknowledges structural contexts. Within the new relationships that care creates, one can envision new kinds of students who act as empowered citizens. Recall another example above. In high school, my principal advised an independent project where I wanted to investigate the intersections of being LGBTQ and Catholic (like my mother) and Jewish (like my

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[8] Ibid., 84

father). These are parts of myself that I shared in the context of a caring teacher-student

relationship, and they provided an opportunity for him to encourage me to use my project to

learn about religious LGBTQ communities organizing in Metro-Detroit. Thus, the school

became, for me, a site of caring for something public - in this case, LGBTQ liberation work and

community organizing towards a number of ends. I became more than a student in an economic

or disempowered sense, but a student of democratic processes and civics in a dynamic way.

Yet care of this kind is rarely the focus of investigations into school culture, climate,

practice, or success/failure. Discourses of care are certainly present in schools, especially in early

childhood education, as "day care" or "child care." [9] However, these constructions generally

constitute caregiving as ensuring the safety and survival of a charge rather than attending to their

growth and development as actualized beings. Particularly since the National Commission on

Excellence in Education's 1983 report, *A Nation at Risk,* which warned that the United States

was falling behind other nations in terms of the quality of public education and thus in the global

economy, questions regarding schools tend to ask whether they are preparing students to be

successful and marketable workers in a globally interconnected world, not whether or not they

are being cared for or if teachers understand them as people.[10] Schools are institutions where

individuals learn the skills necessary to strengthen their chances at mobility and the United

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[9] Emily K. Abel and Margaret K. Nelson, eds., *Circles of Care: Work and Identity in Women's Lives*, SUNY Series on Women and Work (Albany, N.Y: State University of New York Press, 1990); Mary Tuominen, "Motherhood and the Market: Mothering and Employment Opportunities Among Mexicana, African-American, and Euro-American Family Day Care Workers," *Sociological Focus* 31, no. 1 (1998): 61–79.

[10] Diane Ravitch, *Reign of Error: The Hoax of The Privatization Movement and The Danger to America's Public Schools* (New York: Vintage Books, 2014), 10

States' ability to compete economically. Crucially, this learning often comes at the expense of robust civics education or the cultivation of a democratic ethos in schooling.[11]

In the chapters that follow, I aim to answer the following questions: What is care, and do we see it in schools today? Can schools be sites of care? What theory of care would be most conducive to revitalizing schools as institutions of radical democratic citizenship? Before doing so, I will provide an overview of the problems that I see with the prevailing model of schooling in America's public schools. This model, I will argue, is one that reflects Wendy Brown's "neoliberal rationality." It threatens the democratic potential of schooling by surrounding students and teachers with a discourse of economy and fostering a competitive environment that values wins and losses over equitable learning and growth. I will argue that our schools are increasingly creating economic citizens, concerned more with private competitive advantage, rather than political ones, concerned more with a public democracy. Finally, I will conclude the chapter by arguing that schools can and should be sites of democratic citizenship as sites constituted in and through care.

Public Schools in Crisis: Two Views

Public schooling has been said to be in crisis for much of my life. From the advent of No Child Left Behind to more recent programs like Race to the Top, I spent my school years wondering who was being left behind and to what "top" we were all racing. These questions reflect a literal understanding of two dense and divisive programs -- yet they point to deeper insecurities reflected in the policy and practice surrounding schooling today. For much of my

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[11] Marta Baltodano, "Neoliberalism and the Demise of Public Education: The Corporatization of Schools of Education," *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 25, no. 4 (June 1, 2012): 487–507, https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2012.673025.

life, I have understood the schools around me (and as I study more broadly, schools around the country) to be in a state of crisis. But what is the nature of that crisis?

I will investigate two major opinions among those who want to change America's public schools. The first is the reformers - among them former D.C. Public Schools Chancellor Michelle Rhee, President Obama, and the emergency city managers of Detroit's public schools. Though composed of diverse individuals with varying levels of power, different interests, and a range of positionalities with regards to education, there are some prerequisites to membership in the reformer camp. Reformers are interested in fixing "broken" schools. They argue that America's public schools are failing to produce citizens with the competitive edge necessary to successfully take part in our global economy. But it is not the school as a whole entity that is failing -- students are stuck in a regime of irresponsibility where teachers translate their students' disadvantage into low expectations and, therefore, low achievement.[12] The onus for school failure falls on the teachers and principals for three reasons. First, they do not believe that their students can overcome the circumstances of their lives outside the school to achieve in the classroom. Second, they are not held accountable for their students' achievement, so it is easy for them to believe that their students cannot perform.[13] And finally, they abandon students who might have graduated to become productive citizens in favor of biding their time and collecting their union-won pensions. What's more, public schools have shown time and time again that they are incapable of improving on their own because of stubborn teachers and burdensome

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[12] Michelle Rhee, "What It Takes to Fix Our Schools: Lessons Learned in Washington, D.C.," *Harvard Law & Policy Review* 6 (2012): 39–66;   Karl Weber and Participant Media, eds., *Waiting for "Superman": How We Can Save America's Failing Public Schools*, 1st ed (New York: PublicAffairs, 2010); Alan Wolfe, "The Irony of School Choice: Liberals, Conservatives, and the New Politics of Race," in *School Choice*, The Moral Debate (Princeton University Press, 2003), 31–50, http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.wellesley.edu/stable/j.ctt7s6n2.6.);   Emily Van Dunk and Anneliese M. Dickman, eds., "Unleashing the Power of School Choice Through Accountability," in *School Choice and the Question of Accountability*, The Milwaukee Experience (Yale University Press, 2003), 178–90, http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.wellesley.edu/stable/j.ctt1nptz1.11.

[13] Robert L. Mendro, "Student Achievement and School and Teacher Accountability," *Journal of Personnel Evaluation in Education* 12, no. 3 (September 1, 1998): 257–67, https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1008019311427.

regulations.[14] The reformers find solutions in opposing unions, firing the unmotivated teachers who broke schools in the first place, evaluating public schools via test scores ad nauseam and closing those that don't make the cut. Reformers also champion "student choice" in the form of vouchers, online schools, and charter schools so that students can escape teachers who don't care about them and schools that do not push them to succeed on standardized tests, which serve as an impartial and quantitative measure of school success.[15]

The other major opinion that I investigate is that of individuals and policymakers who do not see public education as broken in the same way that reformers do. These are people of diverse opinions who are wary of discourses of "school reform" as outlined above for a number of reasons, including theorists Henry Giroux, Linda Darling Hammond, and Mica Pollock, that I will refer to as progressive critics of school reform. Diane Ravitch provides an excellent overview of their critical viewpoint in her book *Reign of Error: The Hoax of the Privatization Movement and the Danger to America's Public Schools.*[16] She cautions against the homogenization of "failing" schools, noting that when we talk about schools in decline, we actually often mean low income schools and/or schools with many students of color. Yet we're giving these students the opposite of what they need - privatization, induction into testing regimes, and even the dissolution of entire schools or districts.

Perhaps most importantly, this second group sees the ails of modern schooling not as a failure of greedy teachers and principals but the inevitable outgrowth of systemic inequality.[17]

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[14] Paul Peterson, "Post-Regulatory Schol Reform," October 2016, https://harvardmagazine.com/2016/09/post-regulatory-school-reform.

[15] David A. Goslin, *Search for Ability, The: Standardized Testing in Social Perspective* (Russell Sage Foundation, 1963), http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.wellesley.edu/stable/10.7758/9781610446358.

[16] Ravitch

[17]   Michael Godsey, "The Inequality in Public Schools," *The Atlantic*, June 15, 2015, https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2015/06/inequality-public-schools/395876/.; Nikole Hannah-Jones, "How The Systemic Segregation Of Schools Is Maintained By 'Individual Choices,'" NPR.org, accessed April 26,

The reformist viewpoint that any child can learn and must learn despite their life outside the classroom, many argue, ignores the rich context in which each student lives -- especially and disproportionately when that context is one of poverty, racism, and other forms of structural disadvantage.[18] Reformers believe that teachers and schools can address systemic inequality, using strict enforcement of rules, discipline, consequences, and an ethos of "no excuses" as a fix for poverty. On the other hand, thinkers like Ravitch argue that schools are embedded in structures of inequality that must be addressed if every student is to be able to learn.[19] Thus, when Ravitch argues that schools are not broken, she is not denying the problems that plague public education today. She is instead suggesting that these problems should be analyzed in the societal context of inequity in which they exist. Ravitch posits that "even high expectations, as important as they are, are unlikely to be enough to overcome the adversity that results from not having enough money to meet life's basic needs."[20] When we look at these groups side by side, they leave us with conflicting viewpoints and, perhaps, some confusion as to what the nature of crisis in public schools is today. Is it poverty, or is it teachers who believe too fully in the reality that poverty lays out for their students? Is it too much accountability, or too little? In the paragraphs that follow, I will situate the school in the reality of neoliberalism to explain some of the tensions between these groups and uncover the ways in which schools have landed in the perilous state in which both groups now see them.

The Economization of Schools under Neoliberalism

2018, https://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2017/01/16/509325266/how-the-systemic-segregation-of-schools-is-maintained-by-individual-choices.

[18] Gerardo R. López, "The (Racially Neutral) Politics of Education: A Critical Race Theory Perspective," *Educational Administration Quarterly* 39, no. 1 (February 1, 2003): 68–94, https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X02239761.

[19] Brian D. Smedley et al., Inequality in Teaching and Schooling: How Opportunity Is Rationed to Students of Color in America (National Academies Press (US), 2001), https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK223640/.

[20] Ravitch, 291

I view education as a public good with vital purposes. Among these are learning in diverse subjects including civics, science, mathematics, literacy, and the arts; the cultivation of democratic citizenship and a feeling of responsibility to one's community and peers; and building relationships between peers and among teachers and students. I see the school in a crisis not of lazy teachers after nothing but their pensions and students failing to reach federally mandated benchmarks but as just one social and political space that is being reconfigured before our eyes as an economic space. To explain this, I borrow the term "economization" from Wendy Brown, who describes neoliberal rationality as exchanging political subjects and democratic ideals with economic ones.[21]

I see the reformers of the first camp as complicit in the neoliberal economization of public education and people in the second group trapped within it. Ravitch returns throughout her book to the ways in which education reform, particularly privatization, gambles not only with student learning but the future of American democracy itself. In the paragraphs that follow, I will outline what I mean by the "neoliberal economization of schools," drawing primarily on Wendy Brown's *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution* to explain the ways in which neoliberalism shapes our schools today and what it means to say that schooling is "economized." I will then turn to theorists of democratic education to explain why we have historically and still should think of schools as spaces where democratic citizenship is taught and enacted and discuss why the economization of schools threatens democratic schooling.

Scholars typically define neoliberalism as a set of political economic policies that tie governments to free markets. However, In *Undoing the Demos*, Brown argues that neoliberalism is more fundamentally "a peculiar form of reason that configures all aspects of existence in

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[21] Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution*, First Edition (New York: Zone Books, 2015)

economic terms" that is "quietly undoing basic elements of democracy."[22] This is to say that

neoliberalism is not only a set of policies but a way of thinking about ourselves and the world

around us.[23] Brown discusses "economization" as the mechanism by which neoliberalism

challenges democratic institutions and citizens - while, prior to the neoliberal insurgence in the

seventies and eighties, we might have understood ourselves as political beings with the ability to

interrogate power and discuss rights, at least insofar as we desire the ideals of equality and

freedom, we now understand ourselves primarily and solely as market actors. Under this regime:

> Both persons and states are construed on the model of the contemporary firm,
> both persons and states are expected to comport themselves in ways that
> maximize their capital value in the present and enhance their future value, and
> both persons and states do so through practices of entrepreneurialism, self-
> investment, and/or attracting investors.[24]

Thus, neoliberalism is not only destructive insofar as it threatens liberal democratic institutions

and values including the political spirit of our society and thus our ability to come together to

discuss public problems and political action. It is also constructive in that it creates us as new

and previously unrecognizable subjects. Political ends are replaced with economic ones for

individual people and the state itself; this is the project of economization.

What happens to democratic institutions under this regime of neoliberalism? Looking at

the government on a federal level, a government's concerns are "economized" such that it

pursues economic profit and growth rather than political goals such as accountability to the

people. Furthermore, the government is judged against the other countries with whom it

competes based on its ability to create economic growth. Institutions are accountable to markets,

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[22] Ibid., 17.

[23] Stefanie Wöhl, "The Political Rationality of Neoliberalism - A View Following Wendy Browns Reflections on Democracy," *Osterreichische Zeitschrift Für Politikwissenschaft* 40 (January 1, 2011): 37–48.

[24] Brown., 22

not the people.[25] Thus, the practices and the very ethos of an institution that make it "democratic" in the first place are replaced by an endless pursuit of economic growth. This is to say that the *demos,* or the people who constitute the state, no longer makes decisions - the goal of competing and winning in global markets does.[26] Economic metrics have likewise become more important than social goods. Take, for example, fiscal austerity measures that sacrifice the citizen's wellbeing in the interest of boosting metrics of economic competitiveness like the size of a nation's deficit, their credit rating, etc. Even the International Monetary Fund is at times cautiously critical of austerity. Its criticism focuses on "fiscal consolidation," a broad term for policies including deep cuts to public services, unemployment insurance, government sponsored pensions, and similar components of social safety nets. Such consolidation actually increases inequity, decreases a nation's output, and increases long-term welfare costs as nations must grapple with the poverty, unrest, and suffering that policies like cuts to unemployment insurance inevitably cause.[27]

Replete with the language of the market, institutions entrenched in neoliberalism must foster competition even if it harms the public.[28] We often hear that competition is a social and economic good because it creates efficiency and increases productivity. But competition also creates winners and losers, a process that neoliberalism hastens and reinforces. We can look to President Obama's "Race to the Top" initiative, which promised huge grants to states that met certain benchmarks including metrics-based teacher and principal assessment, the use of data

[25] Fikret Adaman and Yahya M. Madra, "Understanding Neoliberalism as Economization: The Case of the Environment," in *Global Economic Crisis and the Politics of Diversity*, International Political Economy Series (Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2014), 29–51, https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137293688_2.
[26] Ibid., 18.
[27] "Neoliberalism: Oversold? -- Finance & Development, June 2016," accessed November 16, 2017, http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/fandd/2016/06/ostry.htm.
[28] David Neilson and Thomas H Stubbs, "Competition States in the Neoliberal Era: Towards Third-Generation Regulation Theory," *Competition & Change* 20, no. 2 (April 1, 2016): 122–44, https://doi.org/10.1177/1024529415623917.

systems in schools, and removing barriers to the growth of charter schools, as an example. The

program promised to use competition between states to "prepare students to succeed in college

and the workplace and to compete in the global economy."[29] As nations fight to prove that they

have the most competitive economy (equating success with economic ranking), our federal

government devolves this responsibility to states who compete against each other to prove that

they can mass produce the most competitive global citizens through their schools. States then

devolve this goal to rest on the shoulders of school districts, individual schools and, as we will

see, teachers themselves.[30] Ironically, they ask states to demonstrate that they can perform

without providing the resources to do so: this is devolution without resources. Even apart from

the neoliberal policies that Race to the Top asked states to implement, its very basic ask

demonstrates key facets of "economization." In Race to the Top, states compete as if they are

individual firms that need to demonstrate their superiority in providing a service. Through this

competition, winning states effectively court the federal government, a potential investor. Losing

states fail to do so. Importantly, "winning" states prevail by proving that they are more efficient,

more metrics based, and more tightly wedded to quantitative measures of schools' success and

failure than their competitors (other states).[31] This is one example of the primary concern of

institutions under neoliberalism: gaining a competitive advantage and securing economic growth.

Individuals also act as competing firms under neoliberalism. Brown argues that

neoliberalism has remade political citizens into economic ones. We were once *homo politicus*, a

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[29] "Race to the Top Fund," Program Home Page; Programs, July 19, 2016,
https://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/index.html.
[30] See, for example, Patricia Allen and Julie Guthman, "From 'old School' to 'farm-to-School': Neoliberalization from the Ground up," *Agriculture and Human Values* 23, no. 4 (December 1, 2006): 401–15,
https://doi.org/10.1007/s10460-006-9019-z.

[31] "Kerry, Brown, Entire Ma Delegation: Massachusetts Wins Race To The Top Competition | Congressman Stephen Lynch," accessed November 25, 2017. https://lynch.house.gov/press-release/kerry-brown-entire-ma-delegation-massachusetts-wins-race-top-competition.

subject concerned with "political equality and freedom, representation, popular sovereignty, and deliberation and judgment about the public good and the common."[32] *Homo politicus* is distinctly human in its ability to harness moral reflection and association making in the interest of creating a political self. This subject simultaneously constitutes democracy and legitimizes it through political acts such as deliberation and judgment. But neoliberalism vanquishes *homo politicus*; *homo oeconomicus* began to replace *politicus* at the advent of capitalism as interest in property and things (rather than the public good and the common) prevails.[33] In sum, citizenship shifts such that we are no longer political citizens but economic ones; we are passive consumer citizens.

To expand on the state of the individual under neoliberalism, I will draw on Brown's conception of governance. Governance operates by "isolating and entrepreneurializing responsible units and individuals, through devolving authority, decision making, and the implementation of policies and norms of conduct."[34] As I said above, governance devolves responsibility from federal to local levels. At the end of this chain is the individual. Neoliberal governance devolves the responsibility to respond to public issues, make decisions, and implement policy or norms to that individual regardless of their ability to meet the demands of that responsibility. Importantly, devolution happens regardless of the individual's ability to meet the demands previously put on a larger authority. Not only does the individual have no resources, but they are compelled to act a certain way under policies and norms of conduct that replace dynamic responses - think, for example, of the dominance of "best practices" in schools and the ways that these guidelines often replace instruction tailored to the students in any specific class.

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[32] Brown, 87
[33] Ibid., 92
[34] Ibid., 129

Prevailing demands on individual schools, even individual teachers, are emblematic of neoliberal governance. Michelle Rhee, former chancellor of D.C. Public Schools, writes: "while some contend that you can't have great schools in every community until you solve the problem of poverty, I would argue the opposite . . . the single most effective strategy for combating generational poverty is education."[35] I previously noted that education reformers tend to believe that schools can alleviate poverty itself and that schools and teachers who fail to produce superb results regardless of a child's class, race, gender, or differing ability are simply accepting that child's unfortunate circumstances as their destiny. Rhee argues that schools can and must be places of intervention in poverty and disadvantage.

While I do not disagree (and indeed, research shows) that highly skilled teachers can have a lasting impact on their students, I argue that Rhee's view is emblematic of neoliberal governance because it devolves the responsibility for the alleviation of a gigantic social issue - poverty - to individual schools and then to individual teachers. Teachers are given the responsibility to fix a problem that is deeply embedded in our communities over time and space. This is classic neoliberal governance in that it pays no mind to "structural stratifications in economy and society that could produce different political stakes and positions."[36] Teachers should not have to accept that poverty is destiny, but neither should they be in charge of relieving poverty itself - for example, relying on crowdfunding websites to pay for pencils and paper in their classrooms. The opinion that teachers can and should do so, I argue, ignores the fact that schools are also situated in a larger context of socioeconomic stratification. It tells the school to solve problems like poverty without providing the resources to do so - devolving responsibility

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[35] Michelle Rhee, *Radical: Fighting to Put Students First*, 1st ed (New York: Harper, 2013), 210.
[36] Brown, 129

from entities that might have the power and resources to actually effect change to teachers as individuals.

I turn now to Brown's investigation of the ways in which higher education is transformed under neoliberalism to argue that neoliberalism has reshaped K-12 education to ends that are just as destructive as the remaking of higher education that she outlines.[37] In brief, neoliberalism has transformed the goals, provision, and practice of schooling. As I will elucidate in the paragraphs that follow, schools were once focused on the goal of creating a democratic citizenry capable of engaging with the problems of life in a democracy. Under neoliberalism, education is economized such that its only goal is capital enhancement that will produce "positive return on investment."[38] This means that students become consumers of skills, schools become mechanisms of "personal investment in individual futures," and teachers become producers of skills that, when bought, can make the individual a successful income-generator.[39] In terms of provision, many citizens no longer conceive of education as automatically a public good. Without attending to public schooling's roots in sustaining democracy, we have forgotten that comprehensively funded and widely available public education is essential to that democracy. Neoliberal rationality makes the idea of a public (and by extension a public good, project, or concern) incoherent such that it makes no sense to provide universal schooling in the interest of creating a citizen who can engage in that public.[40] Finally, neoliberalism alters the practice of schooling. Teaching becomes a series of best practices and benchmarks to adhere to and meet rather than a relational practice. Teachers evaluate students based on quantitative

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[37] See also Michael Fielding's work on neoliberalism in public schools, especially "On the Necessity of Radical State Education: Democracy and the Common School."
[38] Brown, 178
[39] Ibid., 181
[40] Jason Blakely, "How School Choice Turns Education Into a Commodity," *The Atlantic*, April 17, 2017, https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2017/04/is-school-choice-really-a-form-of-freedom/523089/.

measures of achievement that reflect the model of the market, replacing economic growth measured by money with academic growth measured by test scores. The economization of schooling, in particular, therefore dissolves the relationship between education and the public purpose.

I turn to care because neoliberalism is fundamentally uncaring. Its presence in schools contributes to the attenuation of teachers' and students' ability to care. Even if teachers attempt to care by providing students with lunch, engaging them in discussions about their lives and experiences, or encouraging involvement in their communities, many of these caring practices are curtailed by neoliberal austerity and devolution as well as the hegemony of standardized testing. I believe that a feminist democratic care can be a practice and ethic that can intervene in the neoliberal reality outlined above because of its relational inclination and commitment to rethinking the seemingly apolitical - for example, schools - as political. Within this specific framework of care, there is space to care for public things including the school and the communities that they are a part of. As this project progresses, I will discuss care as an ethic, practice, and a means of constituting new relationships in order to construct care as a versatile concept that might reinvigorate schools towards a democratic ethos and practice.

Schools as Democratic Institutions

As much as neoliberal reason makes it difficult for us to imagine that there was any time before or beyond it, schooling was not always consumed by economization. John Dewey articulates a comprehensive view of the school as a space of democratic engagement, debate, and citizenship in his crucial book, *Democracy and Education.* Most importantly, he argues that the school is the site of learning to engage in these elements of democracy. I will therefore investigate how schools can reflect a robust vision of democracy by providing all students with a

comprehensive education that allows them to become democratic citizens, not solely economic ones.

Public education in the United States has historically been a public good. Distinct from a private marketplace, public schools cannot choose who they educate. They are charged with teaching all students regardless of their class, race, ability, immigration status, or myriad other factors. This is the beauty of public schooling - that it is available, in fact mandated, to all. The common school movement, founded by Horace Mann in the 1830's and regarded as a singular precedent for today's public schools, saw education as a political act.[41] Common schools were free, locally governed, secular, and created in the interest of civic education. Localities across Massachusetts, then across the new country, founded common schools in order to cohere the relationship between education and democratic practice.[42] Moreover, the common school sought to establish in its students "the political perspective of patriots," meaning "ideological consensus" and "a fraternal bond between students."[43] This fraternal bond, Mann wrote, ensured cooperation despite life's polarizing struggles. Finally, such a political perspective and bond work together to cultivate social unity and "moral consensus."[44] Thus, Mann viewed education as valuable in a democracy insofar as it allowed students to come to agreements despite difference because they live and learn with each other. The common school sought "a political life without any controversy at all."[45] Thus, while the common school established public schools as spaces where children learned to engage in a democracy, they also placed limits on *who* could

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[41] Bob Pepperman Taylor, *Horace Mann's Troubling Legacy: The Education of Democratic Citizens*, American Political Thought (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2010).
[42] "The Common School Journal.," 1851 1839, 13 v.
[43] Pepperman Taylor, 63
[44] Ibid., 125
[45] Ibid., 14

learn to engage in democracy by emphasizing consensus rather than critique, unity rather than debate.

I turn now to contemporary theories to answer the question: why might we conceive of schools as democratic spaces? Drawing on John Dewey, I will argue that for a school to be robustly democratic in a liberal sense it creates citizens positioned not only to succeed as individuals, but citizens who are prepared to engage in community building and collective political participation. Dewey acknowledges the explanation that schooling is needed because "popular suffrage cannot be successful unless those who elect and who obey their governors are educated" as a superficial justification for democracy and education.[46] The more comprehensive reason rests on Dewey's definition of democracy as something more than just a kind of government, but "a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience."[47] Thus, schools interested in educating students for life in a democracy must enable a student's understanding of their place not only as a discrete individual but as a person with obligations to others in a broad sense. Education can help students facilitate harmonious cohabitation with their peers and the world around them. Crucially, I argue that Dewey's vision of schooling for democracy emphasizes schools as preparing individuals to participate in the existing constitutional democracy of the United States. Dewey, unlike Mann, has some tolerance for discomfort and debate in democracy insofar as individuals can interact with each other within "existing social life."[48] Ultimately, Dewey envisions education for a robust liberal democracy wherein rights bearing individuals are bound to each other through shared experience and a tolerance for difference. These individuals gain the knowledge and expertise to use existing

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[46] John Dewey, *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education* (New York: Free Press, 1997), 87
[47] Ibid., 87
[48] Ibid., 129

procedures - including negotiation, convincing others, argument, and debate - to reach a "mutual consensus."[49]

While these are important, we can note that even these better forms of schooling reinforced a certain form of democracy: liberal democracy. I am interested in thinking about democratic schooling as a means towards a radical democracy. Why radical democracy? I worry that the influential views of democratic schooling proposed by Mann and Dewey emphasize a limited vision of democracy wherein only those educated for political life in a rather narrow sense (learning and working within shared values and existing institutions) can participate in the *demos* because they have the skills and common understanding to come to a consensus and make concrete decisions together. I want to imagine a democracy, cultivated by schools, that allows for conflict in the name of addressing hierarchy and power. Thus, I draw on theories of radical democracy because of its ability to "engage marginalized and emerging actors" to challenge existing institutions and hierarchies.[50]

Schools and Radical Democracy

I argue that education for radical democracy takes Dewey's vision of schooling a step further: it allows students to see the school and society as interconnected *and* reveals the ways in which structural advantage and disadvantage shape their lives in school and society. [51] More than locating a potentially superficial commonality among their peers, radical education for democracy is a praxis towards liberation. As Paulo Freire writes, liberation is a praxis: "the action and reflection of men and women upon their world in order to transform it." [52] If

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[49] Vucina Zoric, "Fundamentals of John Dewey's Concept of Civic Education," *History of Education and Children's Literature* 10 (January 1, 2015): 427–45.
[50] Romand Coles, Mark Reinhardt, and George M. Shulman, eds., *Radical Future Pasts: Untimely Political Theory* (Lexington, Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 2014), 187.
[51] Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 30th anniversary ed (New York: Continuum, 2000), 79
[52] Ibid., 79

education for radical democracy requires conflict, contestation, and questioning the status quo, Freire introduces this idea of liberation, which tells us that education can in fact transform the world in a way that requires reflection. Reflection is, in this case, both a process of knowing oneself, knowing one's world, and knowing one's positionality in that world. Education for radical democracy reflects a Freirian vision of schooling that acknowledges and names structural advantage and disadvantage. It thus necessitates learning about differences in power, hierarchy, and structural oppression, while constructing the school as a site of contestation based on understanding of positionality.

Freire's vision, I argue, is more instructive towards the kind of democracy that this thesis will investigate - namely, the kind that care might create or contribute to in schools - because I see care as an intervention in the hollowed out liberalism of the neoliberal school. Neoliberalism eliminates dissent and obscures the ways that power work in our society. It makes democracy more procedural than substantive, aimed at reaching consensus rather than engaging in debate. Radical democracy holds a collective subject - the demos - responsible for constantly constituting and reconstituting alternate ways of working together. This thesis will suggest care as an intervention in schools that can reinvigorate the democratic institutions of the school in the interest of more radical forms of democracy.

Looking Forward

In the first chapter of this thesis I will turn to a vision of care as an intervention in neoliberal schools and schooling. I will use the school as a democratic institution to examine how care can revitalize the democratic purpose of schools within the context of neoliberalization. In order to do this, I will argue that given the neoliberal economization and de-democratization

of schools, care is one way to revitalize the democratic and relational mission and potential of public schools today.

In the second chapter, I turn to an investigation of critical pedagogy as a potentially caring intervention in neoliberal schools. Critical pedagogy is a form of teaching and learning that understands both as political acts and begins by affirming the lived experience and knowledge of students. As such, it resists the neoliberal economization of schools by encouraging teachers to know their students as more than clients in a value-adding enterprise of schooling. What's more, it constructs the school as a political space insofar as it insists on addressing power in society writ large through curriculum. I will investigate one particularly promising example of critical pedagogy, hip hop pedagogy, to develop an understanding of care as a potential intervention in schools.

Finally, chapter three discusses communities that are mobilizing to improve their schools via community organizing. As a means of building relationships and mobilizing these relationships to create change, I turn to community organizing as one way to reassert the school as a political space through practices of care. I examine various examples of community organizing for school reform to argue that community organizing in schools returns students, teachers, and/or parents at least modestly to *homo politicus* by allowing organizers to care for each other as well as the public good of education itself.

Chapter 1 - When I'm Out of School / Asked Me What I'm Gonna Do:
Care in Schools as Democratic Spaces

I believe that schools have a unique potential to become places of radical democracy if and only if they invite interventions comprised not of privatization and freeing up markets, but of intentional relational work throughout the school - in other words, interventions focused on care. Democratic and feminist theorists point to care as an ethic that requires sincere effort to respond to the needs of another so that "they can survive, develop, and function in society."[53] Because it depends on the interaction between individuals or groups, care is a fundamentally relational practice and ethos. Feminist theorists are especially insistent that care focuses not on a single act but on the ongoing caring relationship, upon which the caregiver relies for information about the care-receiver's needs, interests, and personhood.[54] It requires a displacement of one's own concerns in the interest of another's - a displacement that neoliberal rationality cannot comprehend. Neoliberalism's focus on market rationale, rather than reason based on emotion, ethics, affect, etc., creates a world where it makes no sense to assist someone else if it is not in the interest of one's individual competitive advantage. Within care's relational framework, I believe that care can revitalize institutions by shifting them away from competitive mentalities and towards a care for public or common goods. By emphasizing the importance of relationships

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[53] Daniel Engster, *The Heart of Justice: Care Ethics and Political Theory* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 29.

[54] Nel Noddings, *Caring: A Relational Approach to Ethics and Moral Education*, 2. ed., updated (Berkeley, Calif.: Univ. of Calif. Press, 2013); Joan Tronto, "Women and Caring: What Can Feminists Learn About Morality From Caring?," in *Gender/Body/Knowledge: Feminist Reconstructions of Being and Knowing*, ed. Alison M. Jaggar and Susan Bordo (Rutgers University Press, 1989), 172–187; Maureen Sander-Staudt, "Reassembling Political Assemblies: Care Ethics and Political Agency," *Journal of Social Philosophy* 39, no. 2 (June 1, 2008): 269–90, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9833.2008.00424.x; Joan C. Tronto, *Moral Boundaries: A Political Argument For an Ethic of Care* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

based on "affection and concern," care resists the harsh divisions between self and other, private and public that neoliberal reason creates and sustains.[55]

Care has the potential to move institutions and the people within them away from liberal emphasis on concrete consequence and outcome, away from competitive mentalities, and, perhaps, at least modestly away from *homo oeconomicus.* By rejecting an evaluation of success based only on the immediate consequences of the caring action in favor of an ongoing relationship, care asks individuals to think of themselves as interrelated, even interdependent, in a way that fundamentally exceeds Brown's neoliberal rationality. Care makes vulnerability between individuals possible. It allows individuals to be people who need something from other people for purposes other than our own capital enhancement - purposes like survival, self-actualization, or the pursuit of genuine understanding of someone different. For example, care allows students space to discuss the joys and pains of their lives through autobiographical storytelling, journaling, or simply via discussion with their teacher - activities that neoliberal rationality would likely dismiss as unimportant since they do not add quantifiable value to the student. Care makes it possible to acknowledge that individual human beings have needs that simply cannot be met by individual action, as one might see in schools where teachers emphasize the classroom as a "team" working towards learning as a common goal, rather than constructing students as individual competitors.[56] It asks individuals to acknowledge that they must be interdependent *and* shows them how to value that interdependence. Daniel Engster asserts that all humans implicitly acknowledge the importance of care when they accept or request care for

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[55] Engster and Hamington, 285.

[56] Engster 2009, 48; Robert D. Abbott et al., "Changing Teaching Practices to Promote Achievement and Bonding to School.," *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 68, no. 4 (1998): 542–52, https://doi.org/10.1037/h0080363.

themselves.[57] He writes, "in claiming care from others, we imply that capable human beings ought to help individuals in need when they are able to do so.[58]

Why will this thesis focus on care? Wouldn't schools benefit from an influx of cash, or better teacher training programs, or a requirement that schools provide comprehensive healthcare to every child on site? Of course they would. I do not turn to care as a singular and comprehensive solution for the troubles that schools face today. Rather, I turn to care in the spirit of democratic and feminist theorists who see it as essential in thinking of ways to create democratic institutions. In the paragraphs that follow, I will argue that a democratic feminist ethic of care provides an alternative to neoliberal and liberal understandings of human interaction as individual and privatized. I will explore how care allows a reconceptualization of institutions like the school and what implications this has for democracy. Finally, I will discuss the gendered and racialized elements of care and the ways in which imperialist and colonialist projects use discourses of care in a way antithetical to my definition. These critiques will provide a critical lens for subsequent chapters, in which I discuss students' engagement with issues of marginalization and oppression in the classroom as well as their responses outside the school.

Feminist and Democratic Care

My understanding of care, and the one that I will focus on in this thesis comes from feminist and democratic theorists. Care is a democratic (and thus public) ethos and practice that reconnects private and public spheres by genuinely responding to a vulnerable person or group's needs. I draw on Maurice Hamington to define care as concerned with the quality of a relationship such that it is an avenue towards knowing "the kind of information about the other

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[57] Ibid., 49
[58] Ibid., 49

that is compelling and disrupts our lives to the point of motivating emotion and action."[59] Care is

therefore not necessarily comfortable but asks the caregiver to listen and respond to another

person's needs in a way that might require a disruption of one's own assumptions and beliefs. It

is antithetical to the ways that neoliberalism constructs subjects because it asks that subject to act

not as an agent of their personal gain but as a caretaker who recognizes their needs as well as the

needs of another.

A feminist ethic of care seeks increased agency and respect for caregivers via a

transformation of caring as a private sphere activity to one of the public sphere. Care has long

been constructed as a private matter; women especially care for their children, for the sick, and

for other private needs of individuals for whom they are immediately responsible.[60] A feminist

ethic of care says that those who care will not be true agents or respected citizens until care is

construed as a public good as well. Christopher Lasch argues that care work has moved, at least

somewhat, into the public sphere because care workers like teachers and nurses are now paid for

their work[61]. However, I agree with theorists like Maureen Sander-Staudt, who point to a

"political sphere" into which caregivers must enter if they are to gain the political agency

necessary to radically change our society's conceptions of care.[62] As I will demonstrate in

Chapter Three, this might mean thinking of the school as a place where power is built, exerted,

or confronted through parent organizing and collective action. This is the difference between an

ethics of care and a *feminist* ethics of care: it is not enough to enter a public sphere wherein care

can be exchanged for wages. An entrance into the political sphere is necessary because caring

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[59] Daniel Engster and Maurice Hamington, eds., *Care Ethics and Political Theory*, First edition (Oxford, United Kingdom ; New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2015), 279
[60] See Lasch, Gilligan, Tronto
[61] Christopher Lasch, *Haven in a Heartless World: The Family Besieged* (New York: Norton & Co., 1995).
[62] Maureen Sander-Staudt, "Reassembling Political Assemblies: Care Ethics and Political Agency," *Journal of Social Philosophy* 39, no. 2 (June 1, 2008): 269–90, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9833.2008.00424, x.

relations are not confined to the private sphere of family or the service market, but permeate all aspects of life, including formal and electoral politics."[63] In sum, feminist theorists of care argue that caregivers impact the world at large one person at a time, one caring relationship at a time. That when a society acknowledges that care is political and that caregivers deserve political agency, it resists neoliberal constructions of subject and self as solely economic.

Caring Democracy

In *Caring Democracy: Markets, Equality, and Justice,* Joan Tronto argues that "what it means to be a citizen in a democracy is to care for citizens and to care for democracy itself."[64] Care thus has implications not only for relationships between individuals but for democracy itself. Tronto's argument allows this project to turn towards the broader implications of a feminist ethic of care - that is, to begin to understand the ways in which this shared vision of care might have implications for the ways in which we imagine and enact democracy. Theorists disagree as to how societies and states might enact a feminist ethic of care in a democracy. Maureen Sander-Staudt puts theorists into two categories: those like Rita Manning and Marilyn Friedman, who see care's political context as one of extending welfare, foreign aid, and/or rights rhetoric; and others like Virginia Held and Julie Anne White who see care's role in democracy as advocating for "procedural changes to political practice" that make it "more authentically democratic."[65]

Joan Tronto asserts that it is difficult to conceive of democracy and care as interconnected because of the ways in which care is constructed as a private consideration, whereas democracy is the lifeblood of public relations, especially in the United States. Theorists

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[63] Ibid., 272
[64] Joan C. Tronto, *Caring Democracy: Markets, Equality, and Justice* (New York: New York University Press, 2013), x
[65] Sander-Staudt, 273

note "deficits" in caring wherein societies cannot find enough people to work in "caring"

positions or professions and meet the needs of citizens who require care.[66] She writes that this is

intimately related with the "democracy deficit"[67] that points to government's' inability to reflect

the *real values* of their citizens due in no small part to the hegemony of economic concerns

under neoliberalism.[68] These deficits are related in that they are the product of a "public/private

split that is an outdated inheritance from Western political thought that misses important

dimensions of both contemporary caring and democracy."[69] This is, of course, derived from

second-wave feminism's slogan, "the personal is political," an assertion that women who were

relegated to the domestic and private sphere of the home ought to assert themselves in the public

sphere of work and politics.[70] This assertion ignored the reality of Black women in particular,

who often worked in domestic roles and thus could not neatly divide their lives into home and

work or public and private.[71] Rather than suggesting that care must "move" into the public

sphere, this thesis aims to trouble the dichotomy of public and private by recognizing, in the

tradition of bell hooks, the political actions (including consciousness raising, resistance to

oppression, and even organizing) that occur in seemingly private spaces like the home or

school.[72] As Tronto notes, this reconceptualization has implications for democracy itself: when

citizens allow themselves to rethink seemingly "apolitical" institutions and practices

democratically, they begin to form "a democratic process by which citizens are able to care with

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[66] Bennhold 2011, Llana 2006

[67] Booroah and Paldam 2007 and Nye 2001

[68] Tronto 2013, 17

[69] Ibid. 17

[70] Brigitte Bargetz, "The Politics of the Everyday: A Feminist Revision of the Public/Private Frame" *IWM* (blog), November 9, 2009, http://www.iwm.at/publications/5-junior-visiting-fellows-conferences/vol-xxiv/the-politics-of-the-everyday/.

[71] Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*, 2nd ed., Routledge Classics (New York: Routledge, 2009), 46.

[72] bell hooks, *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1990), 42

their fellow citizens."[73] This might mean thinking of the school as a place of political education, a place where students ask "how might we live together" rather than "how might I get the best grades in order to achieve the most?"[74]

The Caring Institution

There is a significant emphasis in the previously surveyed literature on the role of the caring institution. Engster in particular is a strong advocate of the caring institution insofar as it is uniquely positioned to fulfill certain "obligations to others."[75] Institutions can be evaluated, whether we want to categorize them as caring or not, based on how successfully they execute practices of caring.[76] For the purposes of this thesis, I will discuss "institutional care" as not necessarily care that one receives within an institution like a hospital or old-age home but, instead, any care that is organized via institution and considered a convention of society. I will outline the normative role of these institutions by drawing on three central elements of theorists' investigation: the family as a caring institution; modeling larger, mostly governmental institutions (including "government" itself) on the family to enact democratic values; and practical/logistical considerations in creating and maintaining a caring institution.

Tronto argues that non-family institutions need to explicitly work out the care that is implicit in families. It might be strange to state the norms for caring that exist within a family because they are most often agreed upon implicitly. These norms exist because of the relational bonds that tie family members together into the collective unit of "family." Yet we often take

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[73] Tronto 2013, 13

[74] Diana E. Hess and Paula McAvoy, *The Political Classroom: Evidence and Ethics in Democratic Education*, Critical Social Thought (New York: Routledge, 2015).

[75] Engster, 2

[76] Ibid., 10

these rules for granted.[77] They go unrecognized and unnamed because they are embedded in the

family's structure and expectations. A child need not tell their parents that the parent will care

for them when they are sick, just as it would be strange for a parent to tell a child that they will

care for them when they are young and expect that care to be returned to them as they enter old

age. Yet these are the kind of rules that dictate care within a family. Family love is ideally

automatic and comes from feelings of devotion. It is thus desirable, especially in the sense that

Noddings and Engster write, that we care for others in hopes that we will also be cared for.[78]

Not many institutions are like the family in that they can successfully provide caring

based on implicit agreement. It is therefore necessary to take the model of familial caring -

generally accepted as a successful caring institution - and make explicit the norms that it

upholds. Tronto outlines three elements of institutional care that might be derived from the

family: "First, a clear account of power in the care relationship and thus a recognition of the need

for a politics of care at every level; second, a way for care to remain particularistic and

pluralistic; and third, that care should have clear, defined, acceptable purposes."[79] A brief

consideration of care in families reveals the ways in which these norms are implicit in the care

given and received within the family. Those more powerful (i.e. parents vs. children) are charged

with caring for those without power (defined here as the ability to satisfy one's own needs). Care

must be pluralistic and particularistic because it concerns the individual's needs in the context of

the family as a unit. And its purposes must be clear, defined, and acceptable in order to

determine when caring has succeeded. While we rarely make these conditions explicit within

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[77] Joan C. Tronto, "Creating Caring Institutions: Politics, Plurality, and Purpose," *Ethics and Social Welfare* 4, no. 2 (July 1, 2010): 158–71, https://doi.org/10.1080/17496535.2010.484259, 159

[78] Nel Noddings, *Caring: A Relational Approach to Ethics and Moral Education*, 2. ed., updated (Berkeley, Calif.: Univ. of Calif. Press, 2013); Joan C. Tronto, "Creating Caring Institutions: Politics, Plurality, and Purpose," *Ethics and Social Welfare* 4, no. 2 (July 1, 2010): 158–71, https://doi.org/10.1080/17496535.2010.484259, 159

[79] Ibid., 162

families, Tronto argues, they are essential for institutions. Plainly stating these aims provides space within institutions for discussing who has power (and who does not, and what kind of power, and how much), what everyone's needs are, and how they might best be fulfilled.

Institutions such as the school, hospital, or government that are interested in performing care work must also make their ends explicit. These include flattening out hierarchy both in terms of who is doing the caring and who is determining what care looks like.[80] Maureen Sander-Staudt sees this happening through a gradual redistribution of care. Focusing on the government as a potentially caring institution, she suggests setting direct democracy as a long term goal while pursuing "representational agency" in the form of representational democracy. Especially for caregivers, the transition from representational to direct democracy allows them to exercise agency in decisions about care while maintaining their "balance of life" as individuals who exist as more than caregivers.[81] Institutions will become caring if and only if they can enable a positive freedom regarding care, or "the ability to be able to care-for and be cared-for."[82] I appreciate this view of care in particular because it provides a vision of institutions which collectively solve problems of care, avoiding the pitfalls of dependency by flattening hierarchy (at least somewhat) through an understanding that everyone needs, receives, and gives care without exception.

This thesis will discuss care as an ongoing and relationally oriented intentional response to the needs of another. It focuses not only on the consequences of a caring action, but of the quality of a continuous caring relationship. Within this relationship, the caregiver perceives and adjusts to the care receiver's needs based on the "disruptive knowledge," that caring interactions create when they are attuned to impact as relational and ongoing rather than focused on means

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[80] Tronto 2010, 164
[81] Sander-Staudt, 280
[82] Ibid., 279

and ends.[83] This information compels the caregiver, unsettling them to the point of emotional response as well as action. When ongoing, this response and/or action is care. In schools, this means that the teacher's job is not only to facilitate student learning, but to know their students in the context of their lives' outside the schools and allow the classroom to reflect those contexts. Through this process, care constitutes relationships and spaces - the teacher-student or student-student relationship and the classroom, respectively- that did not exist previously. A democratic feminist ethic of care also insists that these acts of disruption and risk are political ones; they point to the family, school, and other caring institutions as not merely private matters but public ones that have implications for broader democracy, not just the caretaker and their charge. Within these institutions, such an ethic seeks knowledge of how power operates in a space and how this might affect caring efforts.

Dangers of Care

However, this project must also consider two important tensions in caring: the ways in which caring is a gendered and racialized labor and the question of for whom we care. The first topic concerns who is performing private and public caring. Engster says that caring societies need "public support for parenting, education, health care, elder care, and the like.[84] But who is working in education, as parents, and in health care or elder care? Christine Williams' article, "The Glass Escalator: Hidden Advantages for Men in the 'Female' Professions" outlines some of the ways in which men are underrepresented in four "female professions:" nursing, elementary school teaching, librarianship, and social work.[85] Despite their underrepresentation, she finds, they ride a "glass escalator" towards higher salaries, greater recognition, and other "hidden

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[83] Engster and Hamington, 279

[84] Ibid., 8

[85] Christine L. Williams, "The Glass Escalator: Hidden Advantages for Men in the 'Female' Professions," *Social Problems* 39, no. 3 (1992): 253–67, https://doi.org/10.2307/3096961.

advantages" in traditionally feminized work. At the same time, they experience prejudice and harassment from individuals outside their professions for pursuing "easy" work that is, not coincidentally, work that requires a caring relationship. Women's work in these fields is strongly devalued - Gilligan finds that this devaluation is in part because the work uses relationships and feelings as justification for action. Such a justification is inherently "feminine" and, as such, are "scored at a lower stage of moral development."[86] Men are told not to care and are regarded with contempt when they do -- caring is "gay and girlish."[87] But when women take up the mantle of caring as they are told they must, they too are seen as morally inferior. There are no winners when society asks who should be caring.

What's more, the work of women of color is both devalued and harnessed to violent ends and racialized stereotypes. Care work, while feminized, is also divided hierarchically between white women and women of color. Mignon Duffy notes that domestic service and reproductive labor, which I would argue are always care work, are still dominated by Black women, an inheritance of "slavery's racialized division of labor." [88] Despite the prevalence of care work as a profession for women of color, we often expect a performance of care that exceeds what we might reasonably expect from an employee to the point that it is inhuman. Take, for example, the "mammy" stereotype that paints Black female caregivers as self-sacrificing and nurturing to a point that is impossible for any single human being.[89] This is also true of Latina and Asian American women who increasingly constitute a vulnerable workforce that is simultaneously essential and degraded for performing care work. The cycle continues as Black, Latina, and

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[86] Carol Gilligan, *Joining the Resistance* (Cambridge, UK ; Malden, MA: Polity, 2011), 20
[87] Ibid., 172
[88] Mignon Duffy, *Making Care Count: A Century of Gender, Race, and Paid Care Work* (New Brunswick, N.J: Rutgers University Press, 2011), 24.
[89] Nnennaya Amuchie, "The Forgotten Victims," *Seattle Journal for Social Justice* 14, no. 3 (September 5, 2016), http://digitalcommons.law.seattleu.edu/sjsj/vol14/iss3/8/?utm_source=digitalcommons.law.seattleu.edu%2Fsjsj%2Fvol14%2Fiss3%2F8&utm_medium=PDF&utm_campaign=PDFCoverPages.

Asian American care workers raise children who might only ever see them as performing care work. Race allows employers, often white women, to justify making senseless demands of the women of color that they employ to perform care work because it constructs women of color as "suited for degrading work."[90]

The overburdening of care workers, particularly women of color, brings up an essential question of caring: for whom do we care? Nel Noddings provides a theory of "circles of caring" to answer this question. She writes that we all find ourselves within "concentric circles of caring" that move from most intimate to least intimate.[91] The circles, from most intimate to least intimate, are characterized by love, then personal regard, then the "proximate others" unknown to the individual in the center of these circles but for whom they are prepared to care if need be. While Noddings suggests that we remain receptive to the stranger as an individual (rather than a problem to be solved via formula) she also cautions against caring for everyone. Caring for everyone is impossible to actualize in a way that reflects Noddings' definition of genuine care - that is, because the stranger is unknown to us we run the risk of turning to a formulaic form of caring that does not reflect actual "care" as Noddings defines it. What's more, moving "beyond the natural circles of caring" outlined above creates burdens and hardship for the one caring because they become aware of their inability to meet every potential cared-for.[92]

I think that Noddings' analysis is well intentioned, especially on behalf of the one caring. It is certainly true that caring for *everyone* is impossible and any attempt to do so would lead to burnout (indeed, we see burnout among folks in caring professionals and they are certainly not trying to care for everyone indiscriminately). But it also ignores political, material, and social

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[90] Evelyn Nakano Glenn, "From Servitude to Service Work: Historical Continuities in the Racial Division of Paid Reproductive Labor," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 18, no. 1 (October 1, 1992): 1–43, https://doi.org/10.1086/494777.
[91] Noddings, 64
[92] Noddings, 38

realities.[93] Turning a blind eye to the needs of others, even if they are not proximate to oneself, can maintain an oppressive status quo. Sarah Hoagland calls this refusal to care for those outside of the circles outlined above a withdrawal from the public sphere, writing that "caring cannot be insular and it cannot ignore the political reality, material conditions, and social structure of the world."[94] Insular caring reduces potential collectivist spirit and enhances our view of ourselves as self-interested subjects, caring perhaps as far as the family but not beyond it. It also allows us to ignore the historicity of our actions and the ways in which we have either had a hand in producing the suffering of others that we can now ignore or the positionality (often privileged) that allows us to ignore the needs of others.[95] If we are interested in a kind of care that stems from a feminist ethic of care and/or care that contributes to justice, Noddings' vision is insufficient.

In expanding our "circles of care" to include those we do not immediately or proximately know (or perhaps expanding the idea of who qualifies for our care by abolishing these circles altogether) we encounter another set of ethical and moral issues. I argue that the greatest of these is a concern with paternalism. Without intimately knowing the potential cared for, there is certainly a greater risk of assuming what those receiving care need and what completed care will look like for them.[96] This is particularly true when the person caring and the person receiving care interact, as Sarah Hoagland argues, "in a way that is premised on a difference of power."[97] Power differentials in caring relationships are great indicators of potential paternalism in caring. Especially if, as is often the case, the person caring has more power than the person who is in need of care, it is easy for the act of caring to become one of pity as they perceive the person that

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[93] Hoagland, 260
[94] Ibid., 260
[95] Ibid., 261
[96] Joan C. Tronto, *Moral Boundaries: A Political Argument for an Ethic of Care* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 161.
[97] Hoagland, 251

they care for as "incompetent or less competent than we are in being able to make decisions."[98] In this case, the person who is to be cared for is robbed of their subjecthood and becomes instead the object of the one caring's paternalistic and misguided "care." As Uma Narayan points out, colonizers and imperialists have justified violent dehumanization in the name of care, writing that "the colonizing project was seen as being in the interests of, for the good of, and as promoting the welfare of the colonized-notions that draw our attention to the existence of a colonialist care discourse."[99] Care can and has become an instrument of domination and subjugation.

Especially in schools, where there already exists a significant power imbalance between teacher and student, we must be attuned to the perils of paternalism when our intention is care. One paramount example of teachers and administrators of education using a discourse of care for assimilationist ends is found in the Native American boarding schools first established in 1879. These boarding schools tore Native American youth from their families in an attempt to "Americanize" them or, as the first school's founder Richard Pratt said, "Kill the Indian in him, and save the man."[100] These schools allowed a white man and settler colonist with a perception of the Native American as infantile, in need of saving, and incompetent in making their own decisions to decide both what Native Americans wanted and what they needed without ever allowing them to define these things for themselves. And the enterprise of Native American boarding schools, a plainly violent and dehumanizing institution, claimed to be caring for the Native Americans who they stripped of land, language, culture, and family. Through this

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[98] Ibid., 251

[99] Uma Narayan, "Colonialism and Its Others: Considerations on Rights and Care Discourses," *Hypatia* 10, no. 2 (1995): 133–40.

[100] "'Kill the Indian, and Save the Man': Capt. Richard H. Pratt on the Education of Native Americans," accessed November 28, 2017, http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/4929/.

process, the Native American could "demonstrate that he can be truly civilized," an "opportunity that Pratt saw as essential to answering the question of what was to be done with Native Americans. Care therefore became a discourse that justified a violent assimilationist project in the name of education and through the school as an institution. As this thesis investigates schools and care, it is essential to note the ways that care has been intentionally used to subjugate and disaffect and to highlight practices of care that resist hierarchy by foregrounding lived experience and subaltern knowledge.

In the next chapter, I turn to critical pedagogy as a practice of a feminist democratic ethic of care, particularly towards creating the school as a space that values subjugated knowledge. It suggests opportunities to know students based in the context of their homes and communities as well as using that knowledge to shape a classroom *with* the student. It also opens opportunities for examinations of power in classroom curriculum. In particular, I draw on hip hop pedagogy to discuss the ways that teachers can use critical pedagogy to engage students who are traditionally silenced or marginalized in the classroom. Thus, I examine critical pedagogy as a practice that might bring care into the classroom by constituting new spaces and relationships that did not exist previously.

Chapter 2 - Celebrated, Graduated, Made it Pass/Fail:
Critical Pedagogy and Hip Hop Pedagogy

In the previous chapter, I defined care as an intentional response to the needs of another and a way of knowing disruptive, paradigm altering information about that other. I argued that America's public schools are currently entrenched in a regime of neoliberalism that creates economic citizens rather than students prepared to engage in democracy. I looked to care as one way to revitalize the democratic and relational mission and potential of public schools because care, understood as disruptive knowledge and attention to needs other than one's own, might resist the individual value enhancement for which schools teach students to compete and creates schools as public and political spaces and students as democratic citizens. Given this definition of care and the state of public schools today, this chapter turns to critical pedagogy as one possible practice of care. Critical pedagogy in the tradition of Paulo Freire asserts that learning and teaching are political acts that cannot be removed from the social and civic context in which they take place. It begins by affirming the lived experience of students and insists on knowing those students as more than future workers or economic citizens, but as individuals with families, stories, and knowledge that is important to the pursuit of learning. It models and practices relationships in which teachers are responding to the lived experience of students and students are learning how to respond to each other. In cases where critical pedagogy foregrounds subjugated or ignored student knowledge, such as the knowledge of students of color, poor students, or differently abled students, it can be part of the transformative possibility of care. This chapter will argue that critical pedagogy opens possibilities for caring for the other as well as caring for the school as public space itself.

What Is Critical Pedagogy?

I recently observed a seventh and eighth grade English classroom in Mattapan, a neighborhood of Boston named by Native Americans. The neighborhood is predominantly African American, as were the students in this classroom. While the students adjusted to being back to school from their extended winter break (snow days granted them an extra few days), their English teacher warned me that the next few days would be tough as they tried to get back in the swing of the classroom routine and a new unit. But with the new year came an exciting prospect for the seventh and eighth graders: new books. Students may have dreaded spending their days in the regimented space and time of their school once more, yet they were undeniably curious about their new reading material. The seventh graders built on a past semester learning about the Little Rock Nine by reading aloud from *Warriors Don't Cry,* Melba Pattillo Beals' memoir recounting her experience integrating Central High School in Arkansas. The eighth graders each received a brand-new copy of *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, spines uncracked and edges unbent. They practiced identifying literary devices as they read, but they also made connections between the texts and their own experiences with racism. They compared their lived experience to Malcolm and Melba's. They saw themselves in the texts through their analysis, as evidenced in the timed essays that I graded where they drew out the books' themes using stories from their own lives as evidence. In accepting their lived experience as "evidence," their instructor affirmed their experience and testimony as valuable ways of knowing in the classroom and school.

This is one of many examples of critical pedagogy. Paulo Freire is an essential theorist of critical pedagogy, which he develops in his seminal work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed.* According to Freire, a critical pedagogy is one in which "the oppressed unveil the world of oppression and. .

. commit themselves to its transformation."[101] On a basic level, critical pedagogy is twofold. It inspires reflection on one's world towards a realization of the ways in which it is unjust *and* action to change those injustices. When students read *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* and *Warriors Don't Cry*, they were dually exposed to the truth of structural injustice - namely, racism and classism - and people like them who were able to intervene in these structures. In 2011, hashtags like #Weneeddiversebooks and #Diversity Critical pointed to the importance of self-representation in children's literature for developing healthy self image and empowerment.[102] Critical pedagogy aims to teach students to be critical thinkers, give them opportunities to interrogate power and oppression, and engage them in the co-creation of knowledge alongside the teacher. And beyond knowledge creation, it aims to teach students how to transform their world(s) through democratic order.

Critical pedagogy is the opposite of what Friere calls the "banking model of education" wherein students, who know little or nothing, are gifted knowledge by the teacher, who knows most if not everything. Students are empty containers that teachers fill with knowledge. Such a model is not unheard of in public schools today, especially under a regime of neoliberalization. "Teaching to the test," I argue, is the banking model by another name. Under intense pressure to perform on standardized tests, teachers mold their lesson and classrooms to prepare students for those tests, rather than shaping the class around student interest, identity, or context. There are key elements of the neoliberalization of schools in this continuation of the banking model. It is, one example of the economization of schooling. Students add to their value by memorizing and repeating the teacher's knowledge. Their scores, almost exclusively quantitative, confirm their success or failure in doing so. And their success and failure is not only indicative of their ability

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[101] Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 30th anniversary ed (New York: Continuum, 2000), 54.
[102] "Why Diversity in Fiction Matters," TCK Publishing, June 21, 2017, https://www.tckpublishing.com/why-diverse-fiction-matters/.

to absorb information, but frequently tied to their worth as human capital, their future productivity, and their potential value.[103] This model voids education of any political or communal ethos, instead striving for a measurable increase in uncontested knowledge. Education is no longer about public purpose. Instead, it focuses on reaching benchmarks of career readiness by repeating ad nauseum the knowledge that the teacher bestows upon students.

Critical pedagogy cultivates a critical eye towards transforming the world, but it also allows teachers and students to cultivate the kinds of relationships and community needed to change the world. In critical pedagogy, the distinction between teacher and student is not simply reversed, but transformed, via problem-posing education. Unlike the banking model, Problem-posing education is a form of pedagogy that, rather than starting with content that students must know, starts with the idea that students already have valuable knowledge. As Freire notes, it "affirms men and women as beings in the process of becoming—as unfinished, uncompleted beings in and with a likewise unfinished reality."[104] It is a praxis in that it aims to cultivate students' humanity, their movement from the object of deposits to a subject in the classroom and their own lives.

Crucially, the teacher facilitates problem-posing by "[taking] the peoples historicity as their starting point."[105] They ground the class not in abstractions but in the lived experience of their students. Thus, the student becomes more than an empty vessel - because their learning is grounded in *their* lives, *their* communities, and *their* history, they of course bring authoritative knowledge to the classroom. The teacher becomes less the sole source of knowledge and more a facilitator of student learning. The student in problem posing education becomes, ideally, a

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[103] "Should Standardized Tests Evaluate Career Readiness? - EdSurge News," EdSurge, June 10, 2014, https://www.edsurge.com/news/2014-06-10-should-standardized-tests-evaluate-career-readiness.
[104] Freire, 80
[105] Ibid., 84

citizen in the making who has knowledge of public issues. At its best, critical pedagogy intentionally blurs the line between teacher and student such that both hold valuable knowledge. It refuses to teach students that the world "is" one way or another, instead encouraging them to ask questions about their worlds. And since humans and their reality are "unfinished," the task at hand becomes one of investigation and exploration in the process of becoming *more* human by uncovering reality.

Books that reflect student experience - in this case, the experiences of racism and learning as a Black student - are a form of critical pedagogy because they interrogate "how history shapes structural problems"- in this case, racism and its legacies - as well as the lived experience of students.[106] These books show an attention on the teacher's part to creating critical learners - students who can engage questions of power - and engaged learners - students who care about what they are learning and are learning what they want to know.

Critical Pedagogy as a Response to Neoliberalism

Critical pedagogy insists that education is political and that the school is a political space, just as care urges citizens to rethink institutions often constructed as apolitical - like the school or hospital, for example - as places where power is built, contested, and negotiated. To consider something political is to acknowledge that power moves within and throughout it. A democratic feminist ethic of care and critical pedagogy thus converge in this point as they insist that schools and education must address and interrogate power. To care in the school is inherently a project of critical pedagogy, as it asks the carer to "negotiate the social forces and disciplines that seek to constrain [caring] behavior."[107]

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[106] Joe L. Kincheloe, *Critical Pedagogy Primer*, 2nd ed, Peter Lang Primer (New York: P. Lang, 2008), 14
[107] Engster and Hamington, 281

The idea of "praxis" is also useful in understanding the connection between care and critical pedagogy. Praxis is the marriage of theory or knowledge and action. Critical pedagogy might serve as one praxis of a democratic feminist ethic of care that can potentially enhance democracy in schools because it combines reflection and action. In terms of reflection, critical pedagogy asks students to question dominant knowledge as it appears in their lives outside of school, their curriculum, etc. It challenges students to understand root causes, social contexts, hierarchy, power structures, hidden meanings, and ideology rather than settling for first impressions or surface level understanding. At its best, critical pedagogy therefore creates in students a care for public things like community, history, or even society itself. As praxis, this reflection is followed by action determined by students, which students continue to reflect upon to refine, improve, and critique. In this way, critical pedagogy at its best cultivates a "radical notion of cultural citizenship" wherein citizens - in this case, students who come to see themselves as citizens - can contest and reimagine the status quo[108].

Indeed, critical pedagogy explicitly aims to "enable students to envision alternatives" and "inspire them to assume the responsibility for collectively recreating society."[109] But, as I will demonstrate in this chapter, critical pedagogy has implications for schools as sites of democratic practice by working within classrooms, not just by mobilizing students outside of their schools. I will locate critical pedagogy as a site and/or praxis of care and argue that this connection comes from their shared orientation towards relational, non-hierarchical, and political practice and their potential for building democratic relationships and institutions.

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[108] Ibid., 513

[109] Ann George, "Critical Pedagogy: Dreaming of Democracy." *A Guide to Composition Pedagogies.* Ed. Gary Tate, Amy Rupiper, and Kurt Schick. (New York: Oxford UP, 2001), 97.

Critical Pedagogy in Action

Paulo Freire's work teaching adult literacy in Brazil is the basis for fundamental understandings of critical pedagogy.[110] His work clearly provides the theoretical underpinnings for liberatory education. As Richard Miller notes, it has "given weapons of resistance to those dissatisfied with instrumentalist approaches to education: it has offered a critical vocabulary, a philosophically grounded and politically defensible pedagogy, a vision of a better world."[111] But because it was developed in Brazil, for adults rather than K-12 students, his theories require adaptation in American contexts and schools. In the paragraphs that follow, I will discuss three examples of critical pedagogy in American schools that demonstrate its alignment with care as a reality-investigating, non-hierarchical, and relational practice.

Theorists and practitioners of critical pedagogy resist prescribing specific "how-to" guides of critical pedagogy. This makes sense because, as discussed above, critical pedagogy must be rooted in the lived experience of students - their communities, identities, and interests. These will vary from case to case and school to school, and they certainly vary from Brazil to the United States. As Timothy Monchinski notes, "the specific context of your classroom, your students, your subject, and your personality—what you're comfortable and not comfortable with—will help shape any critical pedagogy in your everyday classroom."[112] But context is more than a hindrance; it provides a jumping off point for the reality-investigating classroom.

Critical pedagogy invites knowledge of the student just as care theory insists that "I cannot care for that which I have no knowledge . . . I must perceive that my caring actions can be

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[110] See Darder 1998, Weiler 1991, Shor 1987, Giroux 1991, McLaren 1999, Roberts 2000

[111] Richard E. Miller, "The Arts of Complicity: Pragmatism and the Culture of Schooling," *College English* 61, no. 1 (1998): 10–28, https://doi.org/10.2307/379055, 11.

[112] Tony Monchinski, *Critical Pedagogy and the Everyday Classroom*, 1. ed, Explorations of Educational Purpose 3 (Dordrecht: Springer, 2008), 141.

effective in making a difference on behalf of the other."[113] Critical pedagogy offers possibilities

to understand a student and make a difference in their lives through non-hierarchical practices as

noted above. It also focuses heavily on "dialogue" between teacher and student as a way of

understanding each other. As bell hooks notes, "to engage in dialogue is one of the simplest ways

we can begin as teachers, scholars, and critical thinkers to cross boundaries, the barriers that may

or may not be erected by race, gender, class, professional standing, and a host of other

differences."[114] Dialogue, and engagement with students' lives broadly, can take many forms.

Young children might bring photos of their families to school and post them around the

classroom. In English classes, students could begin the year by writing "Where I'm From"

poems about the sights, smells, and tastes of their homes and families. Teachers might make

home visits throughout the year to cultivate a relationship with parents or guardians,

contextualizing the student's classroom experience. Each of these practices is meant to empower

both the teacher and the student. For the student, they ostensibly cultivate enthusiasm about

being asked to talk about their lives and homes in the classroom - a topic on which they are the

experts. For teachers, relational work demonstrates an investment in students beyond the walls of

the classroom and provides the knowledge of their students that the caring teacher needs to

adequately understand and respond to their needs.

Critical pedagogy can also create create classrooms where teachers emphasize

relationships and communal responsibility rather than competition. In *The Dreamkeepers:*

Successful Teachers of African American Children, Gloria Ladson-Billings discusses a number

of practices that create a fluid teacher-student relationship for the benefit of everyone in the

classroom. One teacher, for example, physically switches seats with one of her students from

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[113] Engster and Hamington, 282

[114] Hooks 130.

time to time. Telling them that they are the teacher, she encourages the student to explain a

concept to her and the class, prodding them with helpful questions and affirmations of

understanding.[115] In another classroom, the teacher places students in groups that they call

"families:" these students affirm and support each other, help each other academically, and

provide positive praise for each other.[116] Students discuss the care that they see in their families -

how they affirm and help each other at home - and agree to do the same for their classmates.

Thus, care and critical pedagogy merge as students learn that they can take leadership roles in the

classroom or a communal and noncompetitive outlook on their success in school. At the same

time, students allow themselves to be vulnerable with each other in a way that proves to be

transformative for students' relationships with each other , as I will demonstrate in the discussion

of hip hop pedagogy below.

Finally, critical pedagogy uses student context as a place to begin investigating reality. In

Beyond Heroes and Holidays: A Practical Guide to K-12 Antiracist, Multicultural Education

and Staff Development, one lesson plan in the Holidays and Heritage section is named "A Native

Perspective on Thanksgiving."[117] This lesson plan takes a decidedly American context -

celebrating Thanksgiving - and troubles majoritarian narratives about its origins and celebration.

To begin, the teacher engages the students in a discussion about their Thanksgiving traditions

and asking what they know about the holiday's origins. They read a handout that discusses the

Wampanoag resistance to Pilgrim settlements and kidnappings as well as their shared celebration

of the harvest. Students list "what each group, the Pilgrims and the Wampanoags, had to be

thankful for in 1621" and use their lists to discuss why many Native people in the United States

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[115]Gloria Ladson-Billings, *The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African American Children*, 2nd ed (San Francisco, Calif: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2009), 66.

[116] Ibid., 67.

[117]Enid Lee et al., *Beyond Heroes and Holidays: A Practical Guide to K-12 Anti-Racist, Multicultural Education and Staff Development* (Washington, D.C.: Teaching for Change, 2008), 378

consider Thanksgiving a National Day of Mourning. In this way, one lesson plan invites students to explore myths about Native people in the United States, ask big questions about how the colonization shapes our world today, and consider the often obscured perspective of Indigenous people. This is one example of caring practices that are, as Hamington notes, by definition "a form of inquiry. . . that informs growth, learning, and adjustment."[118] Because the lesson is rooted in their knowledge of an American holiday, it allows students to see the relevance of a new perspective and bring it out of the classroom with them. It demonstrates care on the teacher's part, for they initiate a disruptive conversation with their students that begins in student context. But perhaps more importantly, this example demonstrates that in order to care, students must discern the ways in which they are not caring currently. This does not mean shaming students for not understanding structural forces of settler colonialism, but instead inviting them to ask questions about the traditions they take as status quo.

Critiques of Critical Pedagogy

Despite the clear promise of a Freirean critical pedagogy, practitioners and theorists alike critique its efficacy. Many of these critiques attempt to reconcile the liberatory and non-hierarchical ethos of critical pedagogy with the inherently paternalistic nature of teaching - that is, the fact that the teacher is almost always in a position of authority over the student, especially with regards to knowledge. Critical theory speaks back to paternalism by insisting that through critical pedagogy "the teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach."[119] However, theorists like Bizzell deepen this fear of power in the classroom by noting that teachers committed to critical and liberatory pedagogy are often caught at an impasse: how might they

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[118] Engster and Hamington, 285
[119] Freire, 80.

teach in a way that is by definition anti-oppression while also promoting specifically "left-oriented or liberatory goals?"[120] While they are "deeply suspicious of any exercise of power in the class," they must employ that inherent power of the teacher position to set a liberatory agenda for their students.[121] This is a maddening proposition for the teacher who wants to practice critical pedagogy. Doesn't dismantling the teacher/student dichotomy require that the teacher decide to do so, thus exercising their power over the student in the first place?

Beyond the complex power relationship between student and teacher, critical pedagogy can fail to critique and, worse, reinforce the very power dynamics that it aims to address and dismantle. In *Why Doesn't This Feel Empowering? Working Through the Repressive Myths of Critical Pedagogy*, Michelle Ellsworth critiques critical pedagogy as highly abstract such that it can "strip discussions of classroom practices of historical context and political position," which is of course antithetical to the aims of critical pedagogy outlined above.[122] Actually naming the political agenda behind critical pedagogy and situating that agenda in "actual, historically specific struggles" like movements for ethnic studies or struggles for equity on campuses does some of the work of moving classrooms towards a non-oppressive classroom, if not an actually liberatory one.[123] Otherwise, she notes, the strategies of critical pedagogy "give the illusion of equality while in fact leaving the authoritarian nature of the student/teacher relationship intact."[124] Even the idea that a teacher can learn from their students, thus reversing the teacher-

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[120] Patricia Bizzell, "Power, Authority, and Critical Pedagogy," *Journal of Basic Writing* 10, no. 2 (1991): 54–70, 54.
[121] Ibid.
[122] Ellsworth, 300
[123] Ibid.
[124] Ibid., 306

student hierarchy, can procedurally be a method for the teacher to learn the best ways to "bring the student 'up' to the teacher's level of understanding."[125]

What's more, Ellsworth argues that critical pedagogy's emphasis on revealing a truth or reality of oppression ensures that "the foundation for the classroom interaction is reason."[126] To suggest that there is some objective revelation to be had, and to position the students and teachers as off on a mission to find that truth, implies that the class is a fact finding mission under a utopian guise. Ellsworth writes,

> "[The] rationalist assumptions underlying critical pedagogy. . . [aim for] the teaching of analytic and critical skills for judging the truth and merit of propositions, and the interrogation and selective appropriation of potentially transformative moments in the dominant culture . . . As long as educators define pedagogy against oppressive formations in these ways the role of the critical pedagogue will be to guarantee that the foundation for the classroom interaction is reason."[127]

The critical pedagogue's classroom often sees even students' experience as mere "proposition," to be analyzed based on their "truth and merit." Holdings students, especially students who occupy marginalized positions in the classroom and the society in which that classroom is embedded, and their lived experience up to scrutiny and debate is not only dehumanizing but antithetical to the liberatory goals of critical pedagogy. Consider the above example of *A Native Thanksgiving.* What would it mean for an indigenous student to be asked what Native Americans had to be thankful for in the midst of genocide via settler colonialism? It would be potentially dehumanizing, if not traumatic, to subject this student and their community to rational debate about whether or not Native Americans should have been thankful at the first thanksgiving. And what's more, it potentially forces this student into a position as "the oppressed" as well as the spokesperson for indigenous experience, assuming a collective trauma to which they may or may

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125 Ibid., 306
126 Ibid., 304
127 Ibid., 303-4

not be attuned. Yet it is what happens when, as Ellsworth notes, critical pedagogy aims for an

abstract and idealist vision of liberation. In search of truth and reality, it opens the floor for

debate regarding the efficacy of marginalized students' lived experiences and how they fit into

such a vision. And it asks students to "subject themselves to the logics of rationalism and

scientism which have been predicated on and made possible through the exclusion of socially

constructed irrational Others."[128] Thus, these classrooms may continue to marginalize subaltern

knowledge and emotion and, when it is brought to light, to subject it to a fundamentally

dehumanizing rational scrutiny.

Finally, we must ask what it means to work towards the truth that critical pedagogy

suggests as an end - the "liberation" at the end of the journey - for students of different identities.

By this I mean two things: first, wondering if and how students of "oppressor" status can learn

from critical pedagogy in the first place; and second, how critical pedagogy might integrate

indigenous critiques of emphasis on a democratic imaginary, as noted above. There were white

students in the eighth grade class that I discuss previously in the chapter, though all of the

students in the seventh grade were students of color. Still, theorists and practicioners invested in

critical pedagogy must ask whether their theory and methodology can work for "oppressor

students," usually white, who might actively resist or passively disengage with critical

pedagogy.[129] This is even more fraught in classrooms of oppressor/oppressed students or, in

other words, students who occupy varying positions of racial and socioeconomic power. Some

theorists suggest that the solution here is a "radical love" for the oppressor student such that they

are "treated as capable of becoming more fully human once released from their investment in

their oppressor status. Loving the oppressor student requires interventions that help them learn

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[128]Ibid., 305

[129] Ricky Lee Allen and César Augusto Rossatto, "Does Critical Pedagogy Work with Privileged Students?,"
Teacher Education Quarterly 36, no. 1 (2009): 163–80, 166

how to not dehumanize themselves and others. It requires not allowing them to take on the oppressor role in dialogue. And it requires letting them know that if they make a mistake they will still be loved. That is radical love."[130] However, as noted at the end of Chapter One, we must problematize demands for labor and love from teachers and other students, particularly in this context if it may be teachers of color asked to "radically love" the "oppressor student." Thus, theorists and practitioners of care should not expect care to progress into love or for love to be a necessary part of care.

On the other hand, students who are certainly "the oppressed" rather than "oppressor students" resist critical pedagogy as well. In *American Indian Geographies of Identity and Power,* Sandy Marie Anglas Grande contends that indigenous students and communities have good reason to be suspicious of critical pedagogy. Grande's critique emphasizes the ways in which an emphasis on democracy within critical pedagogy harms Native learners. She argues that "the particular history of imperialism enacted upon Indigenous peoples requires a reevaluation of dominant views of democracy and social justice as working towards inclusion in American democracy, and of the universal validity of such emancipatory projects - including critical pedagogy."[131] Indigenous people across the world continue to fight assimilation and absorption. In the United States, this includes assimilation into the American democratic imaginary. Rather, Native people fight "for the right to remain distinct, sovereign, and tribal peoples."[132] The end goal of democratic engagement in issues of justice and oppression can sound neutral, even desirable, but is not so for every student, family, or community. Teachers

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[130] Ibid., 176

[131] Sandy Marie Anglas Grande, "American Indian Geographies of Identity and Power: At the Crossroads of Indígena and Mestizaje," *Harvard Educational Review* 70, no. 4 (December 1, 2000): 467–99, https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.70.4.47717110136rvt53, 467

[132] Ibid., 475

who wish to employ critical pedagogy must accept and interrogate its intentions as they relate to their students.

I do not wish to discount or disregard these criticisms. Rather, I think that they are correct and important to the study of critical pedagogy, just as critiques of care are essential to this project. Each of these critiques draws us closer to the mutually reinforcing relationship between care and critical pedagogy. As we critique one, we can look to the other for guidance. Working together, I argue, enhances critical pedagogy's ability to care and care's ability to remain critical. Thus, each concept draws strengths from the other, as I will detail in the following paragraphs. When linked, critical pedagogy and care can work together towards a vision of more robustly democratic schools, as I will argue in the paragraphs that follow.

How does critical pedagogy address criticism, and what role does care play in that process? As noted above, critical pedagogy can be a way of changing relationships in the classroom, attending to students who hold subjugated knowledge, and enabling knowledge, agency, and/or action. It has sought to address power imbalances in the classroom, which many see as a natural outgrowth of Freire's assumption that the teacher is somehow conscious of reality while his students have their heads in the sand. Smith argues that, "the most inclusive and anti-authoritarian among us depend on the existence of at least some hierarchies" in the classroom in order to get anything done.[133] The counterargument also lies in a definition of authority rather than power over. As Bizzell writes,

> Authority is exercised by A over B instrumentally in the sense that sometimes B must do what A requires without seeing how B's best interests will be served thereby, but A can exercise such authority over B only if B initially grants it to A. . . The beginning of the exercise of authority lies in persuasion: A must persuade B that if B grants A authority over B, B's best interests ultimately will be served. This stage of persuasion would be

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[133] Jeff Smith, "Students' Goals, Gatekeeping, and Some Questions of Ethics," *College English* 59, no. 3 (1997): 299–320, https://doi.org/10.2307/378379, 31

subject to all the conditions of collaboration described earlier in my discussion of persuasion. But, once B has been persuaded to grant authority to A, their relationship changes to a less dialogic one. B empowers A to direct their course of action without A's having to exercise persuasion at every step taken.[134]

 There is therefore a difference between authority and authoritarianism in the classroom. The difference in critical pedagogy is that the teacher aims not to control the students from beginning to end but to teach them to take initiative.[135] The teacher does not assume unjustified power, but "demonstrates links between his or her own historical circumstances and those of the students, to suggest that their joining together in a liberatory educational project will serve all of their best interests."[136] Key here is the teacher's attention to students' lives and the places where their experiences converge or diverge. This knowledge of the student, based on the student as an authority and expert in their lives, is essential to care and can enhance critical pedagogy by creating points of mutual understanding - the "persuasion" phase of authority.

Rooting caring in knowledge of the student makes critical pedagogy, if it can be a caring practice, a different kind of reality-finding mission. It bases itself in knowledge of the student, but the goal of the caring teacher is not to convince the student that they are oppressed or an oppressor. The goal is, instead, to experience that very process of uncovering reality - it is not to uncover a specific reality, or one that the teacher has decided is the most true, but to be able to thoughtfully consider that reality, whatever it may be for the student. One excellent definition of a critical student is one who has "the ability to move from being told information to asking new questions and having political agency."[137] As teachers engage with disruptive knowledge of their

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[134] Bizzell., 57-8

[135] Paulo Freire and Ira Shor, *A Pedagogy for Liberation. Dialogues on Transforming Education* (Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1987), 91

[136] Bizzell, 58.

[137] Rezvan Shahsavari-Googhari, "How Do Teachers Challenge Neoliberalism Through Critical Pedagogy Within and Outside of the Classroom?," *Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Repository*, August 16, 2017, https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/etd/4760, 54

students, they move beyond surface understandings of those students and their lives, encouraging them to ask questions about power and politics as it shapes their lives.

In this form of critical pedagogy, a teacher may, for example, wish to see their students recognize the realities of white supremacy and racism in their lives, but this realization will come about as the result of problem-posing - that is, by digging through the context of student lives. One teacher writes that he will not tell his class, "racism impacts your lives" to begin such a lesson. Rather, he will root his lessons in the goals of understanding students' experiences with race and structuring activities in such a way that they are asked to think critically and question race. For example, he prompts students to write a "reflective piece about discrimination" with prompts including "have they had experiences with discrimination, do they know anybody else even if they haven't, what was it like, how do they know that it was discrimination?"[138] Students might write about experiences being watched in stores because of their race or of witnessing an act of intimidation in their community. Not only does this information allow them to think critically about the substance of their lives, it gives the teacher information about what the students know and experience regarding discrimination. It says to the student: your experiences are critical to learning; they are valid and useful for learning; and you are the expert of your experience. Critical pedagogy thus relies on the same "autopoietic feedback loop" as care, meaning that as an action, it requires inquiry, and uses the knowledge garnered from that inquiry to enhance its own practice.[139]

What's more, a focus on caring as action - or as performance, as Hamington argues - provides some clarity to the practice of critical pedagogy. As noted above, critical pedagogy can consist of poetry, simulations, debates, photo sharing, or a variety of other lessons. Because

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[138]Ibid., 55.
[139] Engster and Hamington, 284

teachers must be intentional about what they are doing in the classroom - that is, they must plan rather than improvise - observing the school as a site of critical pedagogy and care provides some relief to the abstractions of theory for both. When pointing to critical pedagogy as a praxis of care, action by teachers and students allows us to understand what that actually means. Thus, we can point to caring as a set of practices in a way that provides some clarity for both concepts.

Beats, Rhymes, and (Classroom) Life: Hip Hop Pedagogy

For the rest of this chapter, I will focus on the work of Christopher Emdin, Marc Lamont Hill, Ruth Nicole Brown, and other theorists of hip hop pedagogy. While each of these writers use different words to describe their style of teaching - some explicitly reference hip hop in calling their practices "Hip Hop Based Education" or "Critical Feminist Hip Hop Pedagogy," and some do not - I will describe hip hop pedagogy as any style of teaching and learning that uses the cultural elements of hip hop to incorporate students' lived experience and interests into the classroom. For example, what Emdin calls "reality pedagogy" approaches teaching and learning as a way of "meeting each student on his or her own cultural and emotional turf."[140] In this case, Emdin writes for teachers whose students are urban youth and whose turf is the city - the students he calls "neoindigenous" because of their connection to urban space and ongoing marginalization.[141] This term is crucial because it requires seeing students not as abstract and interchangeable, but as people whose sense of self and identity cannot be disentangled from their place and the culture that stems from it despite attempts to extinguish it. Each author moves critical pedagogy towards a focus on cultural studies by centering the lived experience of urban youth, particularly students of color, thus adding a focus on the cultural dimensions that shape

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[140] Christopher Emdin, *For White Folks Who Teach in the Hood ... and the Rest of Y'all Too: Reality Pedagogy and Urban Education.* (Beacon Pr, 2017), 27
[141] Ibid., 9

students' lives whether they are hegemonic cultures or cultures of resistance.[142] Using hip hop as a cultural lens, they create a new kind of critical pedagogy that, I argue, is one of the best iterations of an ideal definition of caring as attentiveness to the other in order to cultivate new kinds of relationships between students and teachers as well as students and their peers.

Hip hop pedagogy transforms both the teacher and the student in ways that reflect this transformation in the practices of critical pedagogy discussed above. Christopher Emdin's *For White Folks Who Teach in the Hood: And the Rest of Y'all, Too* is written primarily for white teachers, but also acknowledges the biases and stereotypes that teachers of color have adopted to work and survive in a school system that privileges an imaginary white middle class ideal. Thus, he assumes that any teacher of urban youth is, to some extent, "conditioned to perceive anything outside their own ways of knowing and being as not having value."[143] Yet in hip hop pedagogy, they strive to undo that baggage. The effective teacher of urban youth unpacks why they assume that their students are violent, distrustful, or unable to learn.[144] This analysis takes critical pedagogy a step further. While critical pedagogy insists that students are more than empty vessels, Emdin and his contemporaries appeal to the realities of teaching in an urban school in arguing that teachers should refuse to take a deficit view of their students. In this case, a deficit is more than emptiness but seeing creativity as deviant or excitement as out of turn. And crucially, effective teachers of hip hop pedagogy do more than unpack but interrogate the racial and class based stereotypes that inform their views of students. Thus, hip hop pedagogy moves forward from critical pedagogy to ask that the teacher puts themself closer to the level of the student and

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[142] Marc Lamont Hill, *Beats, Rhymes, and Classroom Life: Hip-Hop Pedagogy and the Politics of Identity* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2009), 5
[143] Emdin, 11
[144] Ibid., 41

asks what their self-image is instead of assuming that the teacher's image of the student is correct, kind, or whole.

Hip hop pedagogy can also transform the student. Emdin draws parallels between the indigenous and the neoindigenous to explain the ways in which urban youth are subjugated in the classroom because they deviate from the imagined norm of the perfect student - that is, a white and middle class student. Despite this, and in some ways because of it, the neoindigenous student for whom hip hop pedagogy is created and practiced "respond[s] to the denial of their voices by showcasing their culture in vivid, visceral, and transgressive ways . . . these celebrations enable participants to make a powerful political statement about how they are positioned in society and the importance of reclaiming their voices."[145] Teachers often label these showcases as "acting out" - for example, talking to peers during a lesson or expressing their discomfort aloud. As an extension of critical pedagogy, hip hop pedagogy embraces these vivid, visceral, and transgressive celebrations, incorporating them into the classroom and school rather than stifling them. In the next few paragraphs, I will draw on examples of hip hop pedagogy to demonstrate how this form of pedagogy incorporates this and other elements of neoindigenous experience. I will highlight the ways in which hip hop pedagogy allows teachers to know their students by using songs as texts in the study of literature, how it changes existing relationships and cultivates new ones through classroom cyphers, and how critical feminist hip hop pedagogy like Saving Our Lives, Hear Our Voices encourages critical engagement and action in students' lives.

Framing students as neoindigenous allows Emdin to emphasize the importance of local knowledge in teaching urban students. In *Beats, Rhymes, and Classroom Life*, Marc Lamont Hill reflects Emdin's focus on place and space in teaching a Hip Hop Literature after school class. The course teaches students to "demonstrate traditional and nontraditional methods of literary

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[145] Ibid., 12

analysis and critique using hip-hop texts as a primary sources."[146] It therefore begins in affirming

student culture as worthy of the classroom in a way that traditional pedagogy either fails or

refuses to do. Hill divided the class into six sections: Roots of Hip-Hop and Literature, Love,

Family, "The Hood," Politics, and Despair. Within each of these, he chose songs that

demonstrated a specific literary device through which students would analyze the song. In using

familiar songs and artists - known in the course as "texts" and "authors" respectively - Hill

cultivated a knowledge of his students as well as their knowledge of each other.

Using hip hop as a text meant that students could engage deeply in the course while

sharing aspects of their personal lives - like their views on love, family, violence, and community

- that allowed their teachers and fellow students to know them in a more authentic sense than is

often allowed in schools. In turn, the teacher shares aspects of his life and incorporates students'

lives into the course. For example, Hill observed that his students were more engaged when the

texts talked about specific locations. When the class read texts from Nas and Jay-Z about their

lives in Queens and Brooklyn, students noted that they believed these texts more easily because

they emphasized the "extreme local."[147] It was necessary to create contexts in which students

could talk about their lives and the places where they lived - their hoods. Hill did this by showing

them texts where the authors talked about their neighborhoods. Crucially, the authors'

experiences were not dissimilar from the experiences of neoindigenous urban youth. Two

students, Jay and Keisha, discussed the ways in which texts that reflected their experience made

them excited to learn:

> Jay: When we would read [local narratives], I get hype 'cause that's my hood. Like, when
> Freeway and Beans and them be rapping about my hood I know the whole world gonna
> know about the shit that I go through [. . .]

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[146] Hill, 19

[147] Ibid., 40

Keisha: Yeah, like, don't nobody care about your 'hood till someone else rap about it.[148]

Not only did local texts show student experience, they subverted traditional pedagogy in a few ways. First, using rappers as authors and their music as texts told students that their culture is worthy of inclusion in the formal classroom. Second, they positioned students as the experts on hip hop and the places that they live. And finally, the combination of hip hop culture and learning about places important to the students told them that their experiences were important to more than their class or school, but the entire music-listening world. Thus, the teacher practiced hip hop pedagogy as care by foregrounding student knowledge and experience.

Beyond reading already-produced texts that they could see themselves in, students produced their own knowledge to share their lives with each other and with Hill in journals, in conversation with each other, and in their own music. Importantly, they were able to do so in large part because their teacher was familiar with the landscape of their lives as a formerly neoindigenous student. Thus, he bolstered Emdin's argument that teachers can learn a great deal from the churches, beauty salons, and barbershops in their students' communities, including the value of "infusing story and humor into the instruction" and "allowing the space of the release of tensions and frustrations"[149] Students of Hip Hop Lit delved into issues including mass incarceration, race relations, sexism, and homophobia. Hill's transcription of the following classroom conversation elucidates the ways in which students discussed what was "real" in their lives:

> Kia: [A] lot of times, we start talking about stuff and it gets real.
> Hill: and by real, you mean…
> Shaheem: When we start talking about how niggas getting locked up or how [living in] the projects be all messed up. You know, the stuff that be in the stuff we reading in class.
> Kia: yeah. That be real.

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[148] Ibid., 41
[149] Emdin, 58

Hill: But what makes those things real? What if you don't know about those things?
Shaheem: Then you not real. I mean, like, you could still listen and stuff but you really can't talk unless you been through it. That's why White people get kinda quiet when we start talking about 'real' shit.[150]

In order to apply the texts, Hip Hop Lit relied heavily on storytelling in various forms, including writing new songs, stories, letters, and journal entries. Each student kept a journal and responded to prompts relating to the text/song each week. After independent writing, Hill would ask the students to share out from what they had written. After reading Lauryn Hill's Manifest, the journal prompt was: "'I loved hard once but the love wasn't returned.' Can you relate to this? If so, how?"[151] Robin tells her story first: "I gave him everything and he didn't love me for real for real. I got pregnant and he just left. If it wasn't for my son, I don't know what I would've dd to myself. I knew he needed me. Otherwise, I don't know." Through journaling and group sharing, Hill cultivated a community of "wounded healers" who could grapple with their own hurts while listening and reacting in ways that healed their peers. Robin, for example, found community in other students who wrote about abusive relationships in their journals - all from the prompt of one of Lauryn Hill's songs. Students engaged with each other not as competitors, but as vulnerable individuals with shared, and sometimes different, experiences of pain.

This single practice is an interweaving of critical pedagogy and care. Teachers often use journaling to get students to practice writing without much attention to the content of their entries. Hill, however, chose prompts that spoke to students life experience *and* affirmed the value of those experience by asking them to share out. As the basis of classroom interaction, journal entries were a way of showing students that their thoughts and feelings mattered in the classroom and a way of inviting students to connect to one another. Their personal storytelling

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[150] Hill, 57
[151] Ibid., 68

constructed the classroom as a space that welcomed their pain, joy, triumphs, and failures and deferred to them to create a community based on those experiences.

However, students were not only enthusiastic to affirm and elevate each others' narratives. The class used hip hop texts for students to "co-sign" and "challenge" each other. For example, when the class read Nas's "Project Window," Kia, a Black student, argued that the song's imagery vividly depicted "how neighborhoods turn into 'hoods,'" elaborating that "Black people don't know how to keep they neighborhoods. Look at where we live. Everytime I come outside people be selling drugs and they be shooting all the time. The same stuff Nas was talking' about." Dorene, another Black student co-signed by saying, "Exactly. White people keep they house clean on the outside. Black people throw stuff everywhere. That's why the hood look like it do. It don't be crackheads and stuff around White people neighborhoods." Maggie, a white student, challenged Dorene and Kia: "Shiiit. That ain't true. It's crackheads and trash and stuff in my neighborhood, too!" The class then delved into a discussion about race and class when Kia challenged Maggie in asserting that "it's different though. Y'all got silver spoons in y'all mouths. Y'alls dads got companies that y'all can work at and we gotta start from the bottom. It's different when you don't got money" and two white students, Maggie and Lisa, insisted that they were poor, too.[152] Thus, the class took one Nas song and, using it as a text, used it as a platform to discuss why Black neighborhoods are in the state that Nas, Doreen, and Kia describe. They were also able to have a discussion about differences in poverty among racial lines - the whole while, learning about each others' experiences in a space where they felt comfortable to challenge each other and the world that each of them experiences through the lens of hip hop culture.

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[152] Ibid., 73

In order to facilitate sharing among students, Hill arranged the students' desks in a circle to imitate a rap cypher. In the cypher, everyone stands (or in this case, sits) in a circle equidistant from the center of the room. Traditionally a cypher is a space for two or more rappers to trade lines or dancers to show off their skills. The key is that everyone gets a chance to participate equally and be affirmed by everyone else in the cypher. Emdin explains, "in its basic format, one person at a time is at the helm of the cypher, while the other participants nod, cheer, and give each other affirmations in the form of oohs and ahhs when something profound is said."[153] Equality is figuratively and literally present in the cypher. In the paragraphs that follow, I will investigate Emdin's use of the cypher as a way of shifting classroom relationships away from teacher-student hierarchy and towards a classroom built by teachers *alongside* their students.

Emdin uses the cypher in his classrooms for multiple reasons. First, he observes the cypher in his own life as a neoindigenous urban student and in the lives' of his students - he brings the cypher into the classroom as a form of culturally responsive hip hop pedagogy. Second, he sees the cypher as a potentially equalizing space where students are able to speak their minds in a way that they might not feel comfortable in the classroom of school *and* a space where their words are equally valued. He also views the cypher as a space where students of different backgrounds, academic interests and levels of achievement, and varying engagement with the classroom can come together in a way that they might not otherwise. And finally, he calls on the cypher as a knowledge-producing space for both the teacher and his students. Once again, knowledge of the student is the first step towards other goals, in this case creating a less hierarchical classroom and building relationships between students and with their teacher.

The cypher is a space where the teacher invites disruptive knowledge of their students in order to change the classroom. Moreover, this is another level of cypher wherein students learn

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[153] Emdin, 64

to care for the classroom as a public space. Emdin suggests a "cogenerative dialogue" or "cogen" as a form of educational cypher. Cogens are "structured dialogues" of five students about the classroom's inner workings that require "the belief that everyone who will participate brings tremendous value to the dialogue, because each has a unique perspective and vantage point."[154] Again, hip hop pedagogy as a form of critical pedagogy begins by affirming the experiences and knowledges of the students. However, the cypher is also radical in that it must include students with subaltern or devalued knowledge of the classroom - students who do not engage in class, with low grades, or students who act out and disrupt the flow of a lesson - as well as their foils. After gathering this unique group students by way of a special invitation to advise the teacher, Emdin sets the rules for the cypher:

1. No voice is privileged over another, or 'everybody eats, everybody speaks'
2. One person speaks at a time, or 'one mic'
3. The cogen results in a plan of action for improving the classroom [...]
4. The cogen is not an extension of the traditional classroom but a dynamic learning space that reimagines what happens in schools.[155]

The cypher is already egalitarian in nature due to the cypher's physical structure, the 'one mic' rule, the fact that students can opt in or out as they please, and the trust that they are given to make concrete changes in their classrooms.

Once the cypher begins, the teacher explicitly tells the students that they are essentially in charge of the classroom from here on out. They create a name or "tag" for themselves to establish a group identity, again invoking hip hop culture in the interest of group cohesion and investment in the cogen.[156] The teacher tells the students that he is coming to them, as a board of experts, to help him solve a classroom problem. In this first cogen, he presents the problem, although in future cogens the students will decide what problem they want addressed. This first

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[154] Ibid., 57
[155] Ibid., 73
[156] Ibid., 74

issue is, importantly, one that students can address within the first cypher, so that they can begin to see the results of their meetings right away. For example, the teacher will ask students how

The teacher might ask students what he does that the students appreciate or that helps them learn. They might answer that they like when the teacher gives them a five minute stretch break in the middle of a lesson and suggest that he do so regularly. For every class on, the teacher will implement the students' suggestion; more importantly, he will subtly acknowledge the students who suggested this improvement when he does so by nodding to them, placing a hand on their desk, or smiling at them. Thus, he reinforces the secret and special nature of the cypher while showing the students that they have the power to change their classroom - that he is, indeed, implementing their suggestions. When the teacher models the behavior that the students want or implements it, they begin to see that they have power in and through the cogen. The cogen repeats at a set time over a meal or snack, and the teacher continues to implement the students' suggestions in the classroom for discussions that he prompts and issues that they identify.

The teacher certainly wields of a great deal of power in the cogen, at least initially. He decides who participates in the initial group and sets the agenda for the first discussion as well as the rules. However, this exercise of authority is necessary for the cypher to reach its most equitable stages - which are, in effect, every stage after the teacher implements the students' first solution. Emdin suggests that the educational cypher has impacts beyond individual satisfaction, allowing students to "become empowered in the classroom and comfortable with talking to each other about their own learning" in the ways that they practice in the cogen.[157] As they become empowered, they also open the door for other students to join the cypher and have a say in the classroom. The steps for expanding the cypher are as follows:

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[157] Ibid., 76

1. One student in the cypher invites another student to join
2. The student who invited another student is asked to opt out of the cogen and take on an exciting role in the classroom (like video recorder)
3. The group meets again, without its fifth member, and begins generating plans. The cycle repeats again.

Students can experience an escalating scale of agency in their classrooms, rather than a decreasing one, while allowing other students to cycle into the cypher and have their voices heard. Rather than kicking one student out of the group in order to make room for another, the student who leaves takes on an even more important and prestigious role in the classroom. Thus, the student takes further ownership of one of the initiatives that the cypher planned, cultivates their sense of power in the classroom, and expands the cogen, which they are already invested in. Eventually, the cypher has none of its original members besides the teacher, who is continuously implementing student suggestions into the classroom. Meanwhile, he has assembled a team of student leaders with different roles who engage with the classroom via these new responsibilities.

The students reap a number of benefits from the cypher's efforts to create a more horizontal classroom power structure. First, they receive concrete affirmation that their input in the classroom matters when the teacher implements and subtly acknowledges that he is implementing *their* solution. The classroom becomes a student-driven space as well as one shaped by the teacher - moreover, it becomes a public space that students are co-creating and caring for, rather than a "bank." They also engage in community building with other members of the cypher who, Emdin notes, are students of different positionalities in the school who they might not otherwise engage with. In this implementation, the students become agents of change in their classroom not as individuals, but as a community. These students are brought together by the excitement of being part of the teacher's secret committee, and can come to see themselves as a team of changemakers in the classroom. Finally, they take responsibility for their fellow

students when the time comes for them to cycle out of the cypher and appoint a new member - engaging their networks in the classroom to create new ones via the cogenerative dialogue.

Hip hop pedagogy also holds the power to investigate reality and create change beyond the classroom. One example is Ruth Nicole Brown's "Saving Our Lives, Hear Our Truths," or SOLHOT. SOLHOT is an after school program for Black girls in the Urbana-Champaign area of Illinois that has its roots in critical feminist hip hop pedagogy, Freirean critical pedagogy, and the work of Zora Neale Hurston. Claudine Taaffe, who studies engagement with black girlhood through the arts, describes SOLHOT as follows:

> "SOLHOT is an arts-based, afterschool program for black girls dedicated to creating a space for them to speak the stories of their lives out loud through text, photography, dance, and performance. . . In the program, black girls from the community work in partnership with mostly college-aged female students in an engagement of an activity-based curriculum centered in themes that the girls deem most important"[158]

Like Emdin's cogenerative dialogues, SOLHOT sees being together as a process rather than a said and done part of community building. It brings together community members, college students, and middle school students to discuss topics that the girls deem most important, including "the many hurtful ways that they have been categorized, their involvement in programs within the juvenile justice system, as well as the social problems they face, from police brutality to physical violence at the hands of the law, among peers, or loved ones."[159] Unlike cyphers, the dialogue in SOLHOT's programs tends to focus on problems beyond the classroom or school, asking ontological questions about what it meant to be a black girl in the world. Thus, participants cultivate a care for their worlds that stems from their positions in their communities.

After discussing problems in their communities, the girls that Taaffe observed decided to take an approach of visual ethnography to document what their everyday lives, communities,

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[158] Ruth Nicole Brown and Chamara Jewel Kwakye, eds., *Wish to Live: The Hip-Hop Feminism Pedagogy Reader*, Educational Psychology: Critical Pedagogical Perspectives, Vol. 3 (New York, NY: PETER LANG, 2012), 255
[159] Ibid., 215

struggles, and victories looked like. Each girl received one disposable camera a week for the

duration of the program and tasked with taking photos that represent "home, love, beauty,

community, and what it looks like to be a black girl growing up."[160] After developing their

photos and looking at them together, they used the photos as prompts to discuss what they

wanted to change about their communities and express their feelings through poetry, dance, and

song. These discussions and artistic expressions culminated in an art show at the Krannert Art

Museum in Chicago called *Necessary Truths: Reflections of African American Girlhood.* They

displayed their art and, in doing so, prompted community conversations about the issues - home,

love, beauty, community, and their lives - that the pictures were taken to address. Thus, the girls

who participated went through a process of identifying their place in their communities,

documenting that positionality, and sharing it with the world. In this way, they demonstrate their

commitment to changing and shaping their community and dedicate themselves to doing so

through knowledge of their experiences as black girls.

Critical Pedagogy as Caring: Implications for Schools as Democratic Spaces

There is hope for schools as democratic spaces in each of these examples of critical

pedagogy as caring - even in a time of neoliberalism. As discussed in the previous chapter,

neoliberalism erodes the democratic potential of public schools. It robs schools, and more

specifically, teachers and students, of the ability to be political beings concerned with questions

of power and hierarchy, instead enforcing a focus on adding value to oneself through education.

It insists that citizens respond to challenges or crises in the education system as individuals rather

than communities. It eliminates dissent and obscures how power operates in institutions like

schools. To conclude this chapter, I will discuss the ways in which critical pedagogy, as a praxis

of care, combats the drive towards individualization, economization, and complacency regarding

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[160] Ibid., 257

power structures in the classroom and community towards a radically democratic vision of schooling.

Take, for example, the political nature of these examples of critical pedagogy. The students in Marc Lamont Hill's class may certainly have been concerned with earning their diplomas so that they could work and make money for themselves - indeed, the class was part of an after school program where students older than eighteen could earn their GED or high school equivalency diploma. However, their discussions ventured beyond concerns about passing the class in order to enhance their efficiency or competitiveness. The students engaged in debate about the intersections of race and class in their neighborhoods and how they see that intersection in their homes. They discussed topics like abortion and sexism, drawing on personal experience terminating pregnancies or experiencing harassment. And they discussed the pain of lost love and abandonment by people that they loved. I argue that there is little connection between these moments of shared vulnerability and a desire to enhance one's value for personal gain - that was not the aim, nor is it the outcome, of Hill's or Emdin's lessons. Instead, their classrooms encouraged personal sharing in order to build community and collectively improve the classroom for students. Indeed, this is an example of a caring classroom *because* it allowed for these moments of vulnerability that neoliberal rationality cannot comprehend or condone. Hill cultivated a community of vulnerable learners who achieved a number of political ends. They reimagined the school as a place to discuss their personal triumphs and pains while connecting those experiences to the broader movements of exclusion, sexism, racism, and classism in their lives. What's more, they politicized their education by connecting it to systems of oppression and repression.

These moments of shared vulnerability are one way that the school can cultivate community rather than the competition so central to a neoliberal world. When teachers welcome personal experience into the classroom, they allow students to connect with each other based on commonality or curiosity. And as Emdin shows, critical pedagogy asks students to take charge in the classroom in a way that builds cooperation between them. Rather than asking that the individual responds to a crisis regardless of whether or not they have the resources to do so, critical pedagogy forms cyphers and cogenerative dialogues where students can collectively identify problems and take a shot at solving them. This need not be a harmonious process; rather, it encourages students to speak their minds and craft solutions as a class. They are effective precisely because they are collectively conceived and implemented; as individuals, the students are likely unable to affect the change noted above through educational cyphers.

Thus, if neoliberalism says that schooling is for the private purpose of investing in oneself to become a more competitive individual, critical pedagogy says that schooling has a public purpose, be it in our classrooms or our communities. Consider the students who participate in Saving Our Lives, Hear Our Voices. As an after school program that aims to affirm and discuss the lived experiences of black girlhood, its goals are clearly not just economic. Although the leaders or "homegirls" certainly seek growth in their students, they do not do so in order to create competitive economic citizens. Rather, they aim to cultivate political personhood in the girls, to create citizens who can identify their place in the world and how they can transform that world when it ignores their lives. They ask black girls: who are you, and who are your peers? Who is your community, and what do you love about it? What do you want to change about it? How can we change those things that we don't like? It is an inherently public

project as it asks students to engage with public things like community, peers, and responses to structural advantage and disadvantage.

Finally, neoliberalism eliminates dissent and obscures the ways that power works, whereas critical pedagogy cultivates dissent and asks how power moves inside and outside of the classroom. Think, for example, of the ways in which students in Hill's class felt empowered to "co-sign" or "challenge" their classmates on the issues that the texts/songs discussed. Once it was clear that the classroom was a safe(r) space to discuss their lives, the students engaged in debate and dialogue about issues of race and class in particular. Similarly, SOLHOT uses the lens of black girlhood to discuss how participants interact with the world based on their differing power based on race, class, sexual orientation, and a host of other factors. As Freire argues, to practice critical pedagogy is to unveil reality itself through intense investigation. Critical teachers are not content to create students insulated from analyses of power - instead, they create spaces like Hill's classroom or like SOLHOT, where students cultivate a trust that allows them to discuss power.

Each of these points inches us towards the dream of radical democracy as discussed in Chapter One. There are certainly elements of liberal democracy in critical pedagogy, as theorists like Ellsworth point out. For example, an emphasis on dialogue and dissent often makes marginalized students' experiences fair game for debate. However, I argue that hip hop pedagogy in particular reveals critical pedagogy's potential for cultivating radical democracy as a practice of care. Hip Hop pedagogy takes a cultural text or element - one of Lauryn Hill's songs, or the cypher - and uses it to locate structural advantage and disadvantage in the school and society. As a continually debated and never fully reached end point, working for radical democracy is not dissimilar to the continuous reality-uncovering work of Freirean critical

pedagogy. As a process rather than a discrete goal, critical pedagogy allows for new knowledge, new findings, subaltern expertise, and the discomfort of shifting perspectives rather than the analytic pursuit of one objective truth. This is true of radical democracy as well, in which conflict and questioning is constantly necessary.

Chapter 3 - Throw My Hands / Say This is People Power:
Community Organizing for Public Schools

If critical pedagogy creates possibilities to care for public things like schools, communities, and issues of power, what does caring look like as action outside of the classroom? In this chapter, I will explore community organizing in schools as one way of extending the care that critical pedagogy cultivates for the school as a public and political space and education as a public good. Organizing is a departure from traditional parent involvement such as volunteering in classrooms, helping teachers with grading, or supervising field trips. It is also distinct, for students, from learning civics via mock voting or lessons about the branches of government. Organizing is fundamentally about building power, not simply helping in the classroom or learning about politics as something that adults make happen while students can only pretend to vote or debate. Educational organizing is different than lobbying or advocacy efforts because it "refers to the actions of parents and other residents of marginalized communities to transform low-performing schools toward higher performance through an 'intentional building of power.'"[161] Crucially, organizers today often build power in order to resist neoliberal education as outlined in previous chapters. Key here are the ideas of transformation and building power. Rather than assisting their children or one classroom, organizers seek fundamental change in educational *systems* - that is, they aim to change schools for *all children.* They do so by building power - uniting with other community members, creating collective agendas and goals, and analyzing power relations in their educational landscape.

Beginning with an understanding of community organizing as a political and grassroots concept, I will argue that community organizing can transform actors into a different kind of

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[161] M. Elena Lopez, "Transforming Schools Through Community Organizing: A Research Review" (Harvard Family Research Project, December 2003), http://wiafterschoolnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Transforming_Schools_Through_Community_Organizing___A_Research_Review_Lopez.pdf, 2

citizen than *homo oeconomicus* - it might at least modestly cultivate citizens as *homo politicus*. This is particularly urgent in an era of neoliberalism in which budget cuts, corporate takeover, privatization, and devolution as discussed in Chapter One threaten schools. An examination of community organizing in schools thus allows for a direct investigation of the citizens, communities, and power in and around them in a time of crisis, particularly how they build the power and relationships necessary to care for the school as a public thing. In the chapter that follows, I will discuss what community organizing is, why those invested in changing schools use it as a strategy, and what it has done in schools. I draw on three examples of parents, students, and communities organizing for public education to argue that community organizing brings relational, public, and communal caring practices to schools that can transform them towards democracy.

What Is Community Organizing?

My knowledge of community organizing comes from Marshall Ganz's model, one that the current professor developed in the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, California's United Farm Workers Movement, and President Obama's 2008 presidential campaign. Drawing on this model, I define community organizing as a broad and versatile strategy of building power through mutually accountable relationships. While not every case study that I discuss in this chapter explicitly utilizes Ganz's model to build power, I will use his method to establish a basic understanding of community organizing because it is a well respected and widely used model of organizing.[162] The model is based on five organizing practices: storytelling, relationship building, team structure, shared strategy, and measurable outcomes.[163]

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[162] Sasha Abramsky, "A Conversation With Marshall Ganz," *The Nation*, February 3, 2011, https://www.thenation.com/article/conversation-marshall-ganz/.

[163] "Ganz-Marrakesh-Training-Guide-.pdf," accessed March 27, 2018, http://communitylearningpartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Ganz-Marrakesh-training-guide-.pdf.

Ganz is well-known for his book *Why David Sometimes Wins: Leadership, Organization, and Strategy in the California Farm Worker Movement*, where Ganz details his work with the United Farm Workers and Cesar Chavez. His main argument, as illustrated by the title of the book, is that sometimes a smaller, seemingly less powerful person or group - David - can overcome the giant power of another - Goliath - by organizing. This is the belief that "strategic resourcefulness" allows the seemingly disadvantaged to gain power by taking what they have and turning it into what they want.[164] But strategic resourcefulness does not imply a simple asking and taking or a singular focus on cunning strategy. It is not only important that David was able to defeat Goliath, but *why* David wanted to defeat Goliath, what in his life and character called him to that action, and with whom he acts and why. Taken together, these questions form a public narrative, an essential piece of Ganz's model that is a strategic form of storytelling that allows organizers "to access values that equip us with the courage to make choices under conditions of uncertainty, to exercise agency."[165]

Ganz's model is an inherently relational one. For Ganz, relationships begin with a knowledge of self that becomes a public "story of self." Organizers reflect on their lives - particularly challenges, choices, and outcomes - to discern why they are called to work in and with their communities. What were the turning points in their life that lead them, for example, to campaign for Barack Obama in 2008? What experiences with injustice angered or inspired them and made them want to act? Their stories reveal values and tap into emotion in a way not dissimilar to the stories that students tell in classrooms that utilize hip hop pedagogy to foreground their knowledge.

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[164] Marshall Ganz, *Why David Sometimes Wins: Leadership, Organization, and Strategy in the California Farm Worker Movement* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 13
[165] Marshall Ganz, "Public Narrative, Collective Action, and Power." In *Accountability Through Public Opinion: From Inertia to Public Action*, ed. Sina Odugbemi and Taeku Lee (Washington D.C: The World Bank), 273-289, 284

Relationship building relies on one-on-one meetings and house meetings among organizers and between organizers and potentially interested community members who might become organizers themselves. This step has three goals: cultivating trust, exchanging interests, and parting ways with a mutual commitment to a shared cause. It allows organizers to identify leaders, garner commitment, exchange resources, and find common values - all in the interest of creating change through a team. What's more, it establishes an early "story of us," the part of Ganz's public narrative that asks not why *I* am here but why *we* are here. One-on-ones cultivate interest in the community project and identify individual strengths in a way that leads well into building an intentionally structured team. Building the values and experiences that organizers reveal during one-on-ones, teams are based in shared values and common purposes - thus, teams are more than strategic or structural tools but communities in and of themselves. They have a shared purpose, a clearly identifiable constituency, and goals that will help them realize their shared purpose. Having identified these elements, the "story of us" emerges via collective challenge, choice, and outcome.

The final element of Ganz's public narrative is a "story of now," or a story of action that answers the question: what will we do about the urgent problem that confronts us? It does so by drawing on the resources and values that community members as individual "selves" and as a collective "we" have articulated through their stories of self and us. The story of now is, like the preceding stories, not one of despair at an insurmountable challenge. Rather, it lays out an achievable and concrete strategy for overcoming that challenge by seizing power for themselves. It asks how we can take what we have and turn it into what we want - who has the power to give us what we want and how we can get it from them. Will you hold a meeting with certain stakeholders? Organize a boycott or strike? Create a mural or other art that shares your message?

Within these actions, the "we" works to ensure that these are achievable tasks and that the organizers will know when they succeed or fail. Ganz summarizes the story of now: "It's the story of a credible strategy, with an account of how, starting with who and where we are, and how we can, step-by-step, get to where we want to go."[166] And when the story is effective - when it provides hope that we can really create change - it calls new "selves" to join the effort.

Care is implicit in every part of public narrative - the story of self, story of us, and story of now. In the story of self, organizers delve into their experiences, challenges, and choices in order to reveal the values that guide to their sense of justice. They not only identify *what* they care for - i.e., food justice, economic justice, racism, - but why. In order to form a story of us, organizers draw on this "why." As in cyphers, they thus exhibit care for other organizers' values and life stories by seeking to understand the members of an organizing team as people with values and motivations, not just individuals who might bring certain skills that add value to the team. Finally, and most interestingly, the story of now identifies shared values through care for relationships between organizers *in order to mobilize campaigns that are practices of care for public things*. For example, parents organize by sharing stories of their children's struggles in schools, building relationships around an imagined improvement, and care for the school as a public and political place by organizing to create that change.

Organizing is therefore a method of building power for a variety of ends, be they seeking justice, returning to a nostalgic past, changing things just slightly via reform, or myriad other goals and outcomes. However, as noted in the beginning of this chapter, community organizing is not the only method that individuals and communities use to affect change. Those interested in change choose community organizing rather than relying on lobbying, looking to advocacy groups, or simply doing nothing for a number of reasons. The first lies in the very definition of

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[166] Ganz 2011, 287

community as connected to each other in a way that is important to each participant; community organizing relies on the premise that knowing each others' needs will inspire mobilization. When faced with injustice, an understanding of what challenges the group faces inspires the community to act because of a "sense of shared fate."[167] Organizers cultivate this sense of shared future even as the healthy community constantly negotiates its shared identity and future.

Defining Community

Community organizing therefore builds upon existing communities and cultivates new ones via relationship building. But what is a community - how do we know if we are in one, and at what point does a group of people become more than a set of individuals? This question is essential to community organizing. It defines who the organizers are and, because the organizers are intimately involved with the challenge that they seek to overcome, what issue they address. Given the outline of organizing above, I argue that community is rarely a static phenomenon but one that is in a constant process of creation and contestation. This is to say that a community is not necessarily something that one stumbles upon but something that individuals come together to constantly create and change. It is often defined as either geographical or interest based, and is thus dynamic as people move in and out of places and interest groups.[168] Yet many theorists go beyond identification or location to identify the emotional dimensions of community. Peck, for example, defines community as follows:

> [A community is] a group of individuals who have learned to communicate honestly with each other, whose relationships go deeper than their masks of composure, and who have developed some significant commitment to 'rejoice together, mourn together,' and to 'delight in each other, make others' conditions our own.'[169]

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[167] Warren and Mapp, 20

[168] See Hamon 2004, Barker 1999, Bernard 1972

[169] M. Scott Peck, *The Different Drum: Community Making and Peace* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1998), 59

The affective dimensions of community are particularly useful in community organizing as it acknowledges the relational aspects of community; community does not simply exist but is something that is "learned" through one-on-ones, autobiographical storytelling, and intentional outreach.

What's more, such definitions open possibilities for this analysis to connect communities and care as they suggest vulnerability and informed commitment among individuals towards a common end. Seeing communities in this way resists tendencies to define community as homogenous or consensus-based, instead characterizing community based on its attempts to form relationships among and across difference. As noted above, community organizers build such relationships via stories that tap into emotions to help identify and build collective values. By making space for emotions, communities come to articulate their values together. While care can be done in more or less homogenous contexts as in the case of Tea Party organizing, Ganz's model allows organizers to see the possibility that relationships based in emotional vulnerability can bring people together across difference. Thus, a definition of community as a group of individuals who communicate to the point of vulnerability (when sharing crucial choice points in their lives, difficult decisions, and the emotions associated with each of these), as in a story of self, and who commit to each other towards common ends suggests organizing as an affective practice of caring. They are not individuals in an atomized or neoliberal sense, but individuals in the sense that they constitute a community based in shared values, goals, and vulnerability when they are "connected to each other and . . . recognize those connections as significant in their lives."[170]

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[170] Warren and Mapp, 19

Disrupting Power In Schools Through Organizing

In the disempowering landscape of neoliberalism, wherein individuals are politically passive and power operates as *power over* one another or power translated through institutions, organizing allows for a vision of power *with* or power *to*. While neoliberalism itself is not power over, it may facilitate hierarchical power relations in school. As De Lissovoy and Cedillo note, neoliberalism articulates power through the insidious process of control.[171] In schools, this means shifting the power to make decisions to business and political elites. By characterizing schools as "economic institutions tasked with producing human capital in the context of globalization," they exert control in the interest of "streamlined management allowing for efficiency and accountability."[172] To create efficient and accountable schools, neoliberalism exerts power over teachers, students, local administrators, and parents such that the local knowledge of each is no longer important to running a successful school. Instead, schools rely on the knowledge and needs of the market to create the kinds of citizens - economic citizens - that a global market requires.

In this process of control via power over, neoliberalism obfuscates more democratic forms of power in schools through its construction of the individual. As noted in previous chapters, neoliberalism changes citizens such that they are no longer concerned with politics, but solely concerned with the market. Schools are key sites of production for competitive citizens as today's students go to school to "produce and perform" rather than to inquire, question, or imagine, thus reinforcing hierarchies of power and achievement in society writ large.[173] Education is not a practice of inquiry but one of competition, both with oneself and with a

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[171] De Lissovoy and Cedillo, 1

[172] De Lissovoy and Cedillo, 2

[173] Noah De Lissovoy and Stacia Cedillo. "Neoliberalism and power in education." (Encyclopedia of educational philosophy and theory: 2016): 1-6.

collective "other." Given that individuals are all entrepreneurs under neoliberalism, students also compete with themselves to earn a higher return on investment, make themselves more marketable, and add to their value as a worker or potential investment. Crucially, this construction of self makes social solidarity or collective action simply unintelligible. [174]

Community organizing is a key site of resistance to neoliberalism because it creates possibilities for forms of power that neoliberalism cannot comprehend and thus actively extinguishes. These are *power with* and *power to* rooted in values. Power with suggests that collective action, not domination, can create change - that collective action has the power *to* change a community. Organizing cultivates this understanding of power, in part, with a "grow your own leaders" ethos.[175] Ganz defines leadership as "accepting responsibility to create conditions that enable others to achieve shared purpose in the face of uncertainty."[176] The development of leadership is central to organizing because organizing presupposes that everyone can take responsibility for their place in the movement *and* for the movement as a whole. This is a fundamental rejection of neoliberal constructions of self as the individual is called to cultivate power in others rather than just their own capacity. What's more, they do not build leadership through organizing skills to make themselves more marketable or competitive, but to exercise *power with* for collective change rather than individual gain.

Leaders develop leaders in community organizing; it is not the job of the leader to dictate roles and responsibilities, nor is their role a necessarily authoritative one. Rather, the leader creatively responds to the uncertainties of organizing by cultivating leadership in others. When

[174] Ibid.
[175] "Alinsky for the Left: The Politics of Community Organizing," Dissent Magazine, accessed April 2, 2018, https://www.dissentmagazine.org/article/alinsky-for-the-left-the-politics-of-community-organizing.
[176] Nitin Nohria and Rakesh Khurana, eds., *Handbook of Leadership Theory and Practice: An HBS Centennial Colloquium on Advancing Leadership* (Boston, Mass: Harvard Business Press, 2010), 19.

faced with changes in circumstances, challenges from opponents, or new opportunities, concerned citizens may very well defer to professional advocates or interest groups. However, community organizing insists that these individuals can and must act for themselves and enable others to do the same, building *power to* enact change and *power with* each other. In the case of the school, this means that those directly connected to schools - teachers, students, and parents - are leaders, not outside agencies or actors. Thus, organizing builds capacity within a community rather than relying on outsiders or professionals to solve a problem or implement a solution. Rather than turning to institutions that have power *over*, it builds communities where individuals exercise their *power with* each other to affect change. It is informed from the ground up and, at its best, sustains itself as leaders are constantly locating and encouraging leadership in others.

Communities identify leaders via relationship building, as discussed above. This includes telling and sharing one's story of self - in other words, being able to articulate a sense of call. Leaders understand the values that bring other individuals to a cause or movement and empower them to put their values into action. This is the second reason why communities organize themselves: organizing roots power in values. Indeed, community organizing aims to "assert new public values, form new relationships rooted in those values, and mobilize the political, economic, and cultural power to translate these values into action."[177] Values are essential to each and every part of the organizing process because that process begins in uncovering what is important to community members. As a collective process, organizing often reveals values that are quite the opposite of neoliberal values of efficiency, marketability, and competitiveness. As I will demonstrate in the examples that follow, these values might include collective wellbeing, equity, and justice. In many cases, such values also reveal a desire to harness power collectively rather than surrendering to the mighty power *over* of those who resist organizers' efforts.

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[177] Ibid.

Organizing is thus a constant process of translating values into action rather than simply seeking a reallocation of goods or services, redirection of funding, or an action that seeks change without attention to the values that such a change implies or advances. As voluntary efforts motivated by "moral claims," community organizing speaks to the heart of a community as well as its urgent needs.[178] When organizers appeal to the heart, they create hope that organizing might realize deeply held morals, values, and beliefs. And when organizing succeeds, it does so on the level of the soul in a way that other efforts often do not.

By working on the level of the soul, organizing creates possibilities for a moral reckoning with the root causes of that with which the community is angry, dissatisfied, or harmed. This reckoning imagines community-based change as more than a reallocation or movement of resources and more than simply meeting goals but as a space of knowledge and healing. Grace Lee Boggs, the organizer, author, and philosopher known for her work in Detroit, argues that radical change requires imagination rooted in "rebuilding, redefining, and respiriting."[179] Implicit here is a call to understand what must be rebuilt, redefined, re-imbued with spirit, and why. She uses her home, Detroit, as an example. Boggs observes Detroit's history of deindustrialization, environmental degradation, drug trading, and policing by a majority white force to explain what led to rebellion in 1967 and beyond. Detroiters Uniting, a "coalition of community groups" across the city, gathered to address the disintegration of their city "socially, politically, morally, and ethically" thus addressing head on the causes listed above.[180] By rooting their analysis in such problems, the group did two essential things. First, they collectively came to understand the forces that had toppled Detroit as a beacon of industry - namely, racism, global capitalism, and

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[178] Ibid.

[179] Grace Lee Boggs and Scott Kurashige, *The Next American Revolution: Sustainable Activism for the Twenty-First Century* (Berkeley, Calif.; London: University of California Press, 2012), 73-4

[180] Ibid., 110

depopulation. In so doing, they addressed the powers over that controlled their city and rejected this control in the interest of power with each other ad power to imagine a world beyond this control. Second, this understanding allowed them to begin the work of searching for and constructing alternate worlds in Detroit as a "space to begin anew" - this includes imagining urban schools and cities as places that value the authoritative knowledge of students of color so that they can transform their world, as Boggs did in her transformative Detroit Summer collective.[181] Despite the ways in which neoliberalism makes non-competitive selves nearly unintelligible, these Detroiters organized themselves to imagine a world beyond competition and efficiency and towards shared power in the interest of collective wellbeing.

Community Organizing In Schools

Parents, teachers, students, and communities are therefore organizing in the context of neoliberalism. Their work is a crucial way that parents are responding to an environment in which education is increasingly privatized, parents are forced to compete with each other for spots in charter schools, and education itself is meant to it an economy rather than parent and student values. Organizing is a crucial model to combat this move towards neoliberal education because it combats individualization, devolution of responsibility, and, often but not always, privatization and the role of corporations in public education. Organizers play key roles in resisting for profit management companies or private school vouchers that threaten the autonomy and viability of public education; in other instances, community members seize the ever-growing opportunities to establish charter schools that imagine education that reflects specific community

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[181] *Detroit Summer*. http://boggscenter.org/html/detroit_summer.htm. Accessed 25 Apr. 2018.

values.[182] Organizing is also an attractive option for parents and communities in particular because it suggests a "new paradigm of school reform" wherein "the connection between schools and communities is central to school change."[183] Rather than existing outside of the school or only within it as far as volunteer work, help grading, or assisting students at home, education organizing by parents and other community stakeholders formally asserts the broader community's investment in and right to be heard by schools. It imagines the school as a place that reflects community values rather than the chance to maximize a student's return on investment.

What's more, educational organizing provides a promising level of sustainability and accountability to change in schools. Organizing in schools has unique challenges including high levels of bureaucracy, a significant resistance to change, and turnover among student organizers and their parents as students move through and beyond schools. However, the leadership practices of organizing as detailed above offer some hope for a more sustainable model. In this case, sustainability refers to the longevity of school reform. If educational organizers successfully build their base by identifying and cultivating leadership, they can look forward to a continued seat at the table regarding decisions about their community schools. Importantly, this only happens if organizers engage not as nebulous individuals only interested in a better education for their children, but as individuals with a stake in changing systems and thus the educational experience for *all* children in their community. This group works to hold those with power - superintendents, legislators, administrators, and the like - accountable to the

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[182] Kavitha Mediratta and Norm Fruchter, *Mapping the Field of Organizing for School Improvement: A Report on Education Organizing in Baltimore, Chicago, Los Angeles, the Mississippi Delta, New York City, Philadelphia, San Francisco, and Washington D.C*, 2001, https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ed471052, 10-11.
[183] Eva Gold and Elaine Simon, "Successful Community Organizing for School Reform: Strong Neighborhoods, Strong Schools" (The Indicators Project on Education Organizing, n.d.), http://76.227.216.38/assets/1/AssetManager/Gold_E_CCC_Strong_Neighborhoods_Strong_Schools.pdf, 38.

community's demands as they are made and over time. Thus, organizing groups "serve as an external force to keep up the momentum for improvement over time and with a changing cast of players . . . [by] maintaining a strong base of constituents, acting as external monitors, and creating a generation of school staff committed to the new paradigm of schools." [184] At their best, they ensure that the school reflects their values rather than the economic needs of the nation or their students' marketability.

In this vein, I turn to community organizing as a practice of care, specifically a democratic feminist ethic of care, for the following reasons. The first and most obvious is the clearly relational aspect of community organizing as outlined above as well as the fact that these relationships are built on listening to other community members' lived experiences. The second is community organizing's "story of us," which I interpret as creating a "greater capacity to care for . . . collective purpose."[185] Developing shared purpose in organizing requires the "disruptive knowledge" discussed in previous chapters, but of a different kind: it is knowledge of students, but also of schools, and of communities.[186] And because the story of now - or call to action - is built on the shared values in a story of us, organizing imagines and, at its best, enacts power *with* others and the power *to* create change collectively rather than power *over*. What's more, building relationships towards realizing a shared goal in schools asserts that those involved in the school care for the school as a place where power operates - a political place. Finally, youth educational organizing presents an exciting opportunity to move schools away from competitive mentalities towards more mutualistic, relational, and caring ones that allow students to care for each other by inviting and acting upon disruptive knowledge of their peers.

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[184] Ibid., 32
[185] Joan C. Tronto, *Caring Democracy: Markets, Equality, and Justice* (New York: New York University Press, 2013), xii
[186] Engster and Hamington

Critiques of Community Organizing in Times of Neoliberalism

Because this project concerns neoliberalization in schools, it is important to note some theorists' critiques that community, and community organizing efforts, in particular, are complicit in neoliberalism's spread. Educators, parents, and students have organized towards a variety of ends that address the issues of neoliberalism in schools as discussed in Chapter One, including the privatization of education, failure to address students' social and emotional needs, and systemic push out of students of color and low income students. DeFilippis, Fisher, and Shragge, for example, argue that many community organizations are examples of devolved social responsibility. In other words, they are adaptations to the neoliberal state's insistence that states, localities, and even individuals must cope with issues (like failing public schools) that they simply do not have the resources to address. Educational organizing, they would argue, is just one example of such devolvement. Rather than seeking to dismantle neoliberal rationalities of investment in the individual, devolvement of responsibility, or the creation of economic citizens, these communities adapt to a new role under neoliberalism. In this role, they attempt to fill in the gaps that government leaves behind, thus maintaining "the supremacy of the market as they promote decentralized forms of collectivity distinct from the state."[187]

Within this devolution of responsibility, DeFilippis, Fisher, and Shragge suggest that community efforts are both "too ambitious and too modest."[188] They are too ambitious because they often focus on the extreme local, thus mislocating the source of their issue as originating solely in the community. If their issue comes from local problems and has local roots, organizations can make grand promises about solving a problem because they assume that they must simply address deficient characteristics of the community rather than the broader contexts

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[187] DeFilippis, Fisher, and Shragge, 100
[188] Ibid., 168

in which that community exists. This view also takes a deficit view of the community itself. At the same time, the authors argue that community efforts are too modest *because* of their focus on the local. This leads them to downplay "the potential role community-based efforts can play in changing the larger political economy," focusing instead on local manifestations of large-scale injustices like neoliberalism.[189] When providing only "modest relief" by focusing on local injustices, communities put themselves into a further bind by creating avenues to blame the community for "their own poverty and marginalization."[190]

The rest of this chapter will discuss connections between education organizing and care and investigate whether organizing might reinvigorate schools towards democratic ethos and practice in the face of neoliberalism. Rather than abandon community organizing as a concession to neoliberalism or too little, too late, I believe that the examples that follow demonstrate a remarkable ability to address the concerns of *Contesting Community* and win real, material gains for communities that desperately need them. This is true for a few important reasons. The first is that education organizing has won concrete gains for students, as I will discuss below. Secondly, my view on the value of organizing aligns with Cesar Chavez's reflections from organizing farm workers:

> It is bigger, certainly, than just a strike. And if this spirit grows within the farm labor movement, one day we can use the force that we have to help correct a lot of things that are wrong in this society. But that is for the future. Before you can run, you have to learn how to walk. . . If we can even the score a little for the workers then we are doing something.[191]

Although organizing may lead to localized gains, this does not preclude the possibility of a larger vision of justice. A teachers' strike, parents pressuring school boards, or students staging sit ins

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[189] Ibid.

[190] Ibid., 170

[191] "Chavez: The Organizer's Tale -- Ohio Citizen Action," accessed April 4, 2018, http://www.ohiocitizen.org/about/training/chavez.html.

in their hallways may be local acts, but they grow a "spirit" of organizing and align the soul with long-lasting visions of justice. Educational organizing has value no matter its size, I argue, because it reminds us that the school can be a place of learning how to care for justice or to cultivate one's democratic citizenship. It is key to cultivating care as part of democratic subjectivity in neoliberal times. This is learning to walk before learning to run. What's more, education organizing seeks to address systemic inequality rather than individual students' or schools' needs by nature, thus appealing to a broader vision of justice than traditional parent involvement or bureaucracy in schools.

Community Organizing and Care

In order to investigate community organizing as a potentially caring practice, I will turn to two examples of education organizing. The first demonstrates ways in which existing local organizing groups can spur educational organizing by providing a structure for building interpersonal relationships as well as relationships between institutions. The organization that I focus on is One LA, a "network of diverse religious and non-profit institutions across LA County committed to building relational power and exercising that power to strengthen our communities and bring about a more just society."[192] One LA is part of the Industrial Areas Foundation, a national network of community based organizations including schools, churches, and unions. Their victories include pressuring school districts to recognize Jewish and Muslim holidays in Virginia, restoring millions of dollars in after-school funding in Maryland, and organizing Catholic congregations in Texas to prevent elementary school closures. I will focus on one specific victory won by One LA as chronicled in *A Match on Dry Grass: Community Organizing for School Reform,* wherein parents organized to reduce the impact of pollutants on their children and their schools. This example demonstrates the caring nature of relationships in community

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[192] "One LA-IAF," One LA-IAF, accessed April 6, 2018, https://www.onela-iaf.org/

organizing in three ways: the organization's deference to parent knowledge, the solidarity of faith-based organizations, and the cultivation of communities based on trust.

Joaquin Sanchez, a lead One LA organizer at Fernangeles Elementary School, began the campaign with a series of one on one meetings with administrators and house meetings with parents. At house meetings, Sanchez "asked basic questions about their experiences at the school and in the neighborhood and the challenges and pressures they faced as families" through which parents began to realize that many of their children suffered from respiratory problems.[193] Parents set out to identify the source of their students' twice-than-average rate of asthma and found it in active landfills and waste management sites within blocks of the school. The house meetings demonstrate One LA's "power before program" principle, which insists that "One LA generates its organizing agenda from listening to its leaders' experiences instead of imposing a one-size-fits-all organizing program as a 'silver bullet' for schools and communities."[194] Thus, house meetings allowed parents to identify a concern and begin developing creative solutions.

Over a year of house meetings, a core group of parent leaders emerged with a plan of action to stop the expansion of landfills surrounding Fernangeles. In this case, care emerges in the details of their action. One LA invited knowledge of the community and based their approach on this knowledge. They did so not only by deferring to parents' identification of a problem but by facilitating parent goals rather than running the show once community members had identified an issue. Thus, parents were able to demand and receive an Environmental Impact Report from Waste Management translated into English and Spanish so that they could engage parents who did not speak English. Their public meetings were held in Spanish with English

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[193] Warren and Mapp, 76
[194] Ibid., 73

translation and relied heavily on "personal stories about how the dump affected their families."[195] With the help of One LA, parent organizers engaged local Holy Rosary Church and Mary Immaculate Church, conducting one on one meetings and building relationships with clerics who brought their message to their congregations - and when the time came to pressure city council, these congregants packed the meetings alongside parents, students, and teachers who successfully pressured Waste Management to drop its bid.

Parent organizing makes sense given the expectation that parents care for their children. However, One LA's ability to build relationships between institutions suggests an expanding public and solidarity-based care for students via the identification of a collective purpose. In this case, collective purpose came in the form of ensuring student health and safety. This collective purpose was a rejection of the power *over* that corporations like Waste Management can exercise over schools under neoliberalism - particularly for already vulnerable populations like the first and second generation immigrant students of color at Fernangeles.

By engaging parents and community based on their investment in the health of students, One LA performed care in two ways. First, as noted above, they deferred to parent knowledge rather than dictating an issue or approach to organizing, thus affirming the necessity of parents' knowledge to create change. Sanchez's organizing demonstrates care as "a form of inquiry," as we see above through One LA's "power over program" principle.[196] By asserting their care for students as more than individual actions like traditional parent involvement, these parents assert that "struggles occurring within and throughout care relations" are just as political as the limited conception of "politics" as a formal and elite activity. [197] Crucially, the parent organizers made clear the ways in which political and private spheres are connected. As Maureen Sander-Staudt

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[195] Ibid, 78
[196] Engster and Hamington, 282
[197] Sander-Staudt, 272

notes, "political regimes are inhabited by individuals enmeshed in familial relations that are simultaneously inward and outward focused in a variety of ways. Private relations can both inhibit and bolster the political agency of caregivers in more formal contexts."[198] By asserting seemingly private concerns as public issues, parent and community organizers guaranteed a public care that neoliberalism disavows.

By mobilizing the private relations between parents and children and shaping them into formal organizing relationships, this campaign asserted that Fernangeles Elementary School was a political place, one wherein power circulates and can be built - and one where companies like Waste Management exercise their power. By basing their organizing efforts in the school - i.e., recruiting parents as the core organizers - Fernangeles became a political rival to Waste Management. Finally, as noted in Hamington's definition, "caring entails openness to the possibility of personal disruption, risk, and emotional involvement" all of which were present in the One LA campaign against Waste Management because of the parents' caring relationship with their children. Thus, One LA's campaign was one of care from the start, but it also further cultivated care by building relationships, deferring to parents, and ultimately asserting the school as a political institution alongside community partners.

Community Organizing and Caring Democracy

The rest of the chapter will evaluate a specific example of education organizing using Joan Tronto's theories of caring democracy and "caring with." Tronto begins from the basic premise that to care is to "express our deepest convictions" through relationships.[199] She resists defining care by the moral qualities of which it might be composed because this focuses on the caretaker's performance, thus obscuring "concerns of unequal power among caregivers and care

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[198] Ibid., 274
[199] Tronto, x

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receivers."[200] In the paragraphs that follow, I will describe the efforts of the Boston Youth

Organizing Project and its affiliates to campaign against Question 2 in Massachusetts, a 2016

ballot initiative that proposed raising the cap on charter schools in Massachusetts. I will map the

movement of their organizing through Tronto's five steps in the processes of care: caring about,

caring for, care-giving, care-receiving, and caring with. I will ultimately argue for the radical

democratic potential of youth organizing in light of this fifth stage, caring with, wherein student

organizers aligned their caring response to protect their education and that of their peers with

"democratic commitments to justice, equality, and freedom for all."[201]

     In 2016, Massachusetts' cap, or limit, on the number of charter schools in the state came

into question with Question 2. It proposed giving the state's Board of Elementary and Secondary

Education the authority to approve up to twelve new charter schools each year for an indefinite

number of years.[202] Opponents of charter schools quickly mobilized against measure despite

their opponents' $23.6 million campaign in favor of the referendum. They argued that charter

schools, "supported by public funds but operated by private interests," negatively impacted

funding for existing public schools, accountability to their students and families, student

discipline outcomes, and equitable enrollment practices along race and class lines.[203] Students

were particularly concerned about the funding cuts that would come with new charter schools

and the ways that these funding cuts would impact their opportunities to learn. Erik Lazo, for

example, mobilized his peers at Snowden International School after realizing that his Japanese

class and the school's International Baccalaureate program would likely be cut if Question 2

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[200] Ibid., 36

[201] Tronto, 23

[202] Gintautas Dumcius, "Here Are Your Mass. Ballot Questions for Nov. 2016: Charter Schools, Marijuana, Farm Animal Cruelty, and 2nd Slot Parlor," *Masslive*, July 11, 2016, http://www.masslive.com/news/index.ssf/2016/07/here_are_your_mass_ballot_ques.html.

[203] Ella Mahony, "Public Education Can Win: An Interview with Carlos Rojas Alvarez," *Jacobin Magazine*, n.d., https://www.jacobinmag.com/2016/12/charter-schools-massachusetts-question-2-public-reform.

were to pass in conjunction with proposed cuts in the Boston Public Schools budget.[204] Other students replicated his efforts across Boston, working with Teachers Union officials, the Boston Student Advisory Council, Youth on Board, the Student Immigration Movement, and a number of other organizations to plan a walkout on Monday, March 7th, 2016 in protest of budget cuts. In November, Question 2 was defeated by a wide margin due in no small part to these youth organizers.

The first step in Tronto's processes of caring is "caring about," wherein "someone or some group notices unmet caring needs."[205] That is to say, what convictions are transgressed, or what is keeping an individual, group, or thing from attaining what they need to survive? In the case of education organizing, I argue for an expansion of this definition in two parts: first, "caring about" can begin by recognizing unmet caring needs or the *threat* of unmet caring needs, as in the case of cuts to Boston Public Schools' budgets or the impact of raising the cap on charter schools. Budgets and the cap on charter schools were, at the time, stable, but youth organized based on a threat to their needs rather than an immediate deficit of caring. Second, caring about something also includes being able to look outside oneself and include others in the struggle to meet caring needs. It is therefore not only "a suspension of one's self-interest and a capacity genuinely to look from the perspective of one in need" but an expansion of that self-interest such that one can understand how others share those interests or how a group can be in a struggle together based on a common threat to common needs.

Boston youth organizers mobilized after students from Snowden International High School learned about the proposed lift on a charter cap and budget cuts at a Harvard conference.

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[204] Emily Kaplan, "This 16-Year-Old's Activism Inspired A Whole Group of Students to Stand up for What They Love," Progressive.org, October 26, 2016, http://progressive.org/%3Fq%3Dpss/16-year-olds-activism-inspired-whole-group-students-stand-what-they-love/.
[205] Tronto 2013, 23

This group of three young women posted on Facebook, calling for a walkout in order to "stand up and basically get our budget set up so that it works for us."[206] This was not a suspension of one's own needs but a recognition of them and, via Facebook, an expansion of those needs to a collectivity of Boston Public Schools students. As the post spread, students across Boston recognized a threat to their need and right to a quality and comprehensive education. Eric Lazo, for example, realized that his school would lose its Japanese program and began reaching out to the Boston Education Justice Alliance and posting flyers in his school that asked, "Do you want your voice to be heard?"[207] Jahi Spaloss, an organizer at Boston Green Academy, became involved when he realized that his school would lose science classes and extracurricular activities.[208] Thus, students recognized a threat to their needs and began to *care about* the budget cuts and charter school expansion in an expansive and inclusive way.

The second phase, caring for, is evident in students' immediate mobilization - their facebook post, flyers, and outreach to fellow students. In this phase, someone must take responsibility for the unmet caring need and "[taking] on the burden of meeting those needs."[209] Taking responsibility meant reaching out to other students, as the young women from Snowden International did immediately upon recognizing the need to save their schools' funding; reaching out to community organizations who could agitate other students as Lazo did; or drawing on existing organizing experience, as the youth from the Boston Youth Organizing Project did. Many of these students had already been trained in community organizing through the Project, and they engaged their organizing skills to take responsibility for creating change.

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[206] Mariette Ayala et al., "Fighting for the Souls of Our Schools: Understanding Youth Leadership in the 2016 Boston Student Walkout Movement" (UMass Boston, November 2017), http://mark-warren.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/UMass-Boston-Report-Fighting-for-the-Souls-of-Our-Schools-Nov-2017.pdf, 6.
[207] Kaplan
[208] "Why We Walked Out – Have You Heard," accessed April 7, 2018, http://haveyouheardblog.com/why-we-walked-out/.
[209] Tronto 2013, 34

Students moved into stage three, care-giving, when they began agitating and mobilizing. Tronto writes that doing "the actual work of care" is distinct from taking on the responsibility to do that work - this is the difference between responsibility and competence. Students gave care in two main ways through their organizing: building leadership and performing the walkout. Veteran organizers played a key role in building leadership. Rather than asserting their own expertise based on the fact that they had already been trained by the Boston Youth Organizing Project, many of these veteran organizers focused their energy on cultivating leadership in BPS students. This is an important aspect of caregiving, particularly in analyzing a feminist ethic of care and its place in democracy, because of its attention to power and its collective nature. The movement for Boston Public Schools could very well have been dominated by experienced student organizers, or even by adult organizers. However, these organizers did not leverage their experience as power over their fellow students; instead, they encouraged younger organizers to step up. Luis Navarro, a veteran organizer, explains:

> A lot of them see me as…a veteran, so they were like okay we can go to him for any questions or if we're confused or we need help…so …I was a support throughout the walkout…We were just the tools to teach them what to do in a march, what you should do, what you shouldn't do, who should be your allies, adult support just in case police officers come in contact… I decided to take my position as youth leader and give it to the youth that are younger than me and want to be in the game. So I'm kind of like retiring, giving up the "chant."

Navarro's priorities were not assuring a leadership position for himself but developing leadership in others. Thus, he paid clear attention to the power dynamics of this organizing effort, acknowledging his position of relative power based on experience and using that position to engage others in a collectively caring project rather than a top-down campaign wherein he assumed leadership based on past experience. Erik Lazo recalled that "youth organizers were given key tools that embodied and symbolized their leadership ability" including training in

public speaking, leading chants and marshaling at the walkout, training in testifying at school committee hearings, and being asked to educate fellow students about the issues.[210] Veterans demonstrated competence in care by expanding their identification of what to "care about." As noted above, student organizers identified a threat to their needs not only as individual students but as a collective constituency of Boston Public Schools students. Veteran organizers enhanced this collective caring mission by attending not only to their roles in the campaign but by building relationships and capacities with younger organizers rather than asserting power for themselves in organizing spaces.

The walkout itself was a demonstration of the students' care for their education, opportunities, and ability to learn as well as their care for each other. Thousands of students left their classes across the city and walked or took the subway to the Massachusetts State House. Students planned all of the logistics. Jahi Spaloss, a youth organizer, notes:

> There were no adults that organized this, it was completely done by youth and only youth. I work for an organization called Boston Area Youth Organizing Project. With my co-workers and some of the other student organizers who work with BYOP, we spent a week planning and collaborating on how to do things: where to meet, what chants we were going to have, how to make sure that everyone understood what this walkout was for.

The walk out was a massive demonstration of the students' capacity to organize as well as the depth of their care for their educations. Given that it was completely organized by youth, the walkouts centered and affirmed student knowledge of their schools and their experiences in schools, but also their knowledge of their home (Boston) and deferred to their ideas of what would work to have their voices heard.

As students presented their demands that the budget cuts halt, they moved into the fourth phase of caring: care-receiving. In this phase, observers ask, "was the care given sufficient?

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[210] Ayala et. al., 12

Successful? Complete?"[211] It is important to note here that although Mayor Marty Walsh

responded to the student protesters, he is not the recipient of care and thus his response is not the

one that we look to in order to decide if the care given was sufficient, successful, or complete.

Instead, we must look to the students, for their project was one of caring for each other and for

their education. Walsh met with the leaders of the walkout the following day and announced that

he was restoring most of their high schools' budgets but continuing with cuts to the Boston's

elementary and middle schools. Key here is the students' response to their partial victory as they

were both the caregivers and care receivers. With high school funding restored, they may have

easily interpreted their actions as successful. Instead, they did something remarkable: the student

organizers expanded their "circles of care" to include other issues and students.[212]

   Consider the following cases of students who led the first walkout. Gabi Pereira, a

sixteen-year-old at South Boston High School, led her classmates to the second walkout in May.

Another student, Michael Jones, broadened his commitment to education beyond Boston's

budget cuts:

> I got involved because of principles. I wanted full education for people. I wanted full
> resources, full advocacy for students also because of the fact that I want to be a teacher
> when I grow up. And I felt like the only way I can do that is by making sure that the
> resources that are here now don't get cut for the future that I'm trying to create or be a
> part of. [213]

Moving forward from the walkout, the youth organizers began "caring with" - Tronto's term for

care is "consistent with democratic commitments to justice, equality, and freedom for all."[214]

Importantly, they expanded their efforts rather than discontinuing them; they campaigned for

their younger brothers and sisters in Boston's elementary and middle schools, planned a

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[211] Tronto 2013, 23
[212] Noddings
[213] Ayala et. al., 23
[214] Tronto 2013, 23

subsequent walkout in May, and began campaigning against Question 2 as the November elections approached. They asserted a vision of democracy that worked in solidarity with others rather than working for narrow self-interest or immediate gains. Gabi and Michael worked on the No On Two campaign, seeking equity for students across the state. Gabi reflected: "I had this sense of being like a justice heroine because a lot of people weren't informed and they had kids in public schools. And I'm just like, 'You need to know about this because this is going to affect you and your family.'" Her circles of caring, like many other student leaders, expanded to include students and families in her community of Dorchester.

By continuing to organize, students generated an inclusive vision of democracy where their voices are crucial to policy decisions that impact them. Students used the walk out to challenge budget cuts, but they also marched in order to "challenge to Boston's adult-run political establishment, which they believe has chronically underfunded public schools as part of a larger assault on the city's low income youth of color."[215] The walkout pushed back against a system that made decisions without their input, often to their detriment. It brought together thousands of youth who wanted their voices heard and saw their newfound "collective power as young people" as an avenue towards representation in such decisions.[216] Gabi explained her call to leadership: "It's me talking with the community, holding all their ideas and perspectives. Any chance I get at a platform, it is my duty to make sure all their experiences are expressed."[217]

Community Organizing, Neoliberalism, and Democracy

These are just three examples of the ways in which community organizing in and for schools might resist neoliberalism. As noted throughout this chapter, neoliberalism shapes schools such that they focus almost singularly on efficiency and productivity. It cultivates

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[215] Ayala et. al., 18
[216] Ibid., 8
[217] Kaplan

economic citizens rather than political ones, transforming students into entrepreneurs who are interested not in inquiry or imagination but in gaining a competitive edge over each other. For teachers, neoliberal devolution means that they shoulder an increasingly burdensome amount of responsibility for everything from buying classroom supplies to correcting conditions of structural inequity through education. And as schools are increasingly subject to *power over*, or control, by neoliberal business and political elites, it is difficult to assert the school as a public or political place because neoliberalism makes it so difficult to identify and name power. To conclude this chapter, I will discuss the ways in which community organizing, as a practice of care, resists neoliberal individualization, devolution, and the obfuscation of power in order to imagine the school as a site of collective caring for public purpose.

A key example of this resistance is each of these examples' assertion of the school as a political place, rather than a private or apolitical one. The example of One LA's organizing to prevent waste from harming their student's health is a particularly salient example because might not, at first, appear to be an issue regarding education. Indeed, One LA is not explicitly an education organizing group, nor was it founded to organize schools. Yet the campaign against Waste Management located the school as a central site of resistance. Most importantly, they located and cultivated *parents of school-aged children* as organizers. The family is one of the most clearly and widely agreed upon examples of a caring relationship - particularly when it comes to parents and young children. By engaging parents, One LA recognized the care that a parent has for their child as more than a private endeavor confined to the home. They harnessed this care towards collective ends, asking parents what concerned them about their children's education and schools and cultivating leadership around those concerns. While they could have organized any number of parents who lived near the dumps, they centralized their organizing in

Fernangeles Elementary School, highlighting the potential of schools to become public places and communities with shared purpose. Thus, One LA asserted the political nature of caring, of parents' relationships with their children, and of schools themselves by locating parents of schoolchildren as leaders in education organizing. Moreover, they cultivated coalitions between the school, churches, and other community organizations, therefore drawing the school into a broader "public" of individuals concerned with collective action rather than atomized competition. Both examples provide hope for the school as more than a bank or a place where teachers fill children with the knowledge necessary to compete with each other; they suggest that organizing can utilize the caring relationships within schools to cultivate care for the school as a public place and communities more broadly.

Once it becomes clear that the school can be a site of collective change-making, it is necessary for organizers to locate and name power in a way that neoliberalism resists and obscures. In most cases, this means locating the source of power *over* the school and its associated community. Rather than accepting the economization of their schools as common sense or a rational step towards creating efficient and productive schools, organizers resist the neoliberal discourse that justifies austerity in their schools. Student organizing in Boston is an excellent example. Given the regime of power *over* students enacted not only by neoliberal economization in schools but also in the inherently imbalanced relationship between administrators, policymakers, and students, it would be understandable if students accepted budget cuts as in their best interest. Instead, students engaged in an analysis not only of what their educational desires and needs were but of who had the power to deny them what they wanted out of their education.

Finally, organizing actively builds the *polis* that neoliberalism dismantles by constituting relationships and spaces that did not exist previously. Relationships built through community organizing, I have argued, are caring ones - and the spaces that organizing builds are possible because they care for a public and common goal like quality education for all. At its best, organizing allows students to form social relationships of solidarity that are unintelligible under neoliberal rationalities. At the same time, it built sustainable leadership through relational practices much like the One LA campaign - large meetings of students at schools, veteran organizers who trained new organizers, and the like. While students could have deferred to the power *over* of Boston Public Schools officials and administrators, they reacted by creating new forms of power alongside each other. Critics of community organizing might view this as a surrender to neoliberal devolvement of responsibility - that is, student organizing as one example of communities attempting to fill the gaps left behind by neoliberal austerity and deregulation. However, I argue that students' efforts to resist budget cuts and the spread of charter schools in Massachusetts was instead a capacity-building project that held those responsible for devolution responsible rather than succumbing to it.

However, the collective nature of organizing does not imply consensus. I argue that the opposite is in fact true. Organizing, like radical democracy, *requires* contestation and conflict - conflict with parents who do not believe that all children can learn, conflict with administrators who seek budget cuts, conflict with corporations that impact schools, and so on. Even organizing groups themselves rely on a contestation of individual values and purpose in order to arrive at shared purpose. These are relationships in which those involved can talk about difference in order to build power. Moreover, the ongoing nature of organizing as demonstrated by Boston youth organizer's movement from budget cut protests suggests that once leadership is identified

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and cultivated, it presents possibilities for political action into perpetuity. Organizing can therefore present an opportunity to collectively build and care for the school as a public and political place in a way that encourages students and parents to reimagine themselves as changemakers in democracy.

Conclusion - Dreaming of a World:
The Continuing Power and Challenges of Caring in Schools

This thesis points to democratic feminist ethic care in schools as a practice both distinct from majoritarian ideas of care in schools and as essential towards rediscovering the democratic potential of public schools in a time of neoliberalism. Care is certainly the teacher who stays after school to tutor their students, the librarian who makes sure that all students can afford to attend a field trip, or the teacher who keeps snacks on hand for hungry students. However, as I hope to have shown, care means more than ensuring that students meet the basic requirements of survival or a minimum threshold of health and alertness in order to pay attention; it means more than attempting to fill the gaps that the teacher often steps in to fill due to the neoliberal devolution responsibility outlined in Chapter One. It is a practice of bringing questions of power and politics into the school through practices like community organizing and critical pedagogy. Care is present in schools when students have a meaningful say in what they learn and how they learn it - in what context, with what funding, and to what ends, as we saw in Chapter Three's discussion of the Boston Youth Organizing Project. Care is present in schools when teachers encourage students to ask questions about power in curriculum, in their communities, and in their lives, and when students are empowered to take action that allows them to determine what their schools look like, as we saw in Chapter Two's investigation of cyphers in the classroom.

These investigations suggest that many people can "care for" the school. Teachers, perhaps the most obvious caring figure because of their position of authority, can both demonstrate care for their students and facilitate their caring for each other. This is apparent in a number of examples outlined above: Emdin's use of cyphers to garner student feedback through culturally responsive hip hop pedagogy and his ability to encourage students to improve their

classroom by working together; Hill's use of hip hop songs as texts that both get students invested in learning and allow them to discuss the joys and pains of their everyday lives; and other efforts to bring students' lives into the classroom like bringing in photos of their families. Teachers care not only when they present curriculum that reflects student experience, as in hip hop pedagogy, but when they utilize social and cultural context in order to invite students to grapple with issues of power like racism, discrimination, and sexism as they see it operating in their lives. Parents, too, are able to politicize their care for their children by asserting the school as a site of organizing for changes that benefit students and communities, as in the example of One LA's work to ensure student health. The teacher or parent who cares in a democratic feminist sense thus allows their students and children to imagine, and perhaps enact, better worlds by constituting the school as a place where power operates and where change can begin through caring practices.

Yet this project departs from traditional understandings of care in the school by investigating the ways in which students care with and for each other; that is, by positioning the student as an agent of care. Teachers certainly constitute new relationships with their students by caring for and with them, but students do this with each other as well. This is apparent in Hill's idea of "wounded healers," which constitutes the student as so much more than a neoliberal school can comprehend. Students engage with schools not as empty vessels to be filled with knowledge that will give them competitive value, but as individuals with real and important lived experiences of pain, sorrow, triumph, and joy. Bringing their "wounds" into the classroom at the invitation of the teacher transforms the student into more than a competitive individual, but a healer and person seeking healing; it presents the possibility of connection with and among students in order to process trauma, voice discomfort, and find solidarity in their peers'

experience. Importantly, as demonstrated in Chapter Two, because this healing is based in the

students' experiences as authoritative knowledge, it also compels them to reflect collectively on

the state of their world - not necessarily towards agreement or consensus regarding what is

wrong or how to fix it, but towards a dynamic understanding of the world in which the school is

situated. And as students begin to take action through organizing, as they did in Boston, they

demonstrate a care for the sustainability of their work for justice and for their peers by

cultivating leadership in younger students rather than seeking individual power based on the

skills that they already have.

At the same time, these practices of caring take an enormous amount of effort. In

studying and understanding the context in which the school finds itself - the community, the

nation, and all its struggles - students, teachers, and parents are likely all too aware of the barriers

to potentially caring practices like critical pedagogy, organizing, and progressive change in

general. Teachers may want to bring critical pedagogy into their classrooms, but they must still

adhere to state and federally mandated core curriculums so that their students can pass similarly

mandated standardized tests. Their jobs often rely on these test scores.[218] This leaves little time

and, understandably, a disincentive for infusing the classroom with space for healing and

discussions of power that are often missing from standards like the common core.[219] And while

this thesis investigated care as more than providing a lunch or school supplies, I must

acknowledge that teachers do often spend their own money and time to meet students' basic

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[218] Rebecca Mead, "When a Teacher's Job Depends on a Child's Test," *The New Yorker*, March 11, 2015, https://www.newyorker.com/news/daily-comment/when-a-teachers-job-depends-on-a-childs-test.

[219] See Jennifer Booher-Jennings, "Below the Bubble: 'Educational Triage' and the Texas Accountability System," *American Educational Research Journal* 42, no. 2 (2005): 231–68; Richard Beach, Amanda Haertling Thein, and Allen Webb, Teaching to Exceed the English Language Arts Common Core State Standards: A Literacy Practices Approach for 6-12 Classrooms (New York: Routledge, 2012).

needs before even beginning to think about creating a critical or emotionally taxing classroom.[220]

Such work requires hours of extra time spent preparing curriculum, gathering student feedback, and adjusting that curriculum - a significant investment of teacher time when pre-written and scripted lesson plans abound.[221]

Similarly, performing a democratic feminist ethic of care requires a great deal of effort on the part of parents and students. Students are, after all, bound to the results of standardized testings as much and more so than their teachers, and may therefore question the value of curriculum that deviates from "teaching to the test." And when students engage in efforts like organizing, it may be at the cost of their grades, instead of supporting themselves and/or their families with paid work, or at a significant emotional and physical cost. Parents, too, sacrifice a great deal to engage in democratic practices of care like organizing for their children, including, perhaps, paid work, time spent *with* their children, and their own set of emotional and physical costs, especially if they find themselves organizing in addition to full time or more than full time work (as was the case with One LA's parent organizers). Burnout, it seems, is often the cost of care.[222]

This may be the case at least in part due to the structural challenges that care cannot easily overcome. Although caring for student context, for their lives and experiences, and for what they want to learn constitutes the classroom as a new and often more inviting space, it is no substitute for the structural changes that must take place in order for schools to truly become spaces where *all students* can imagine and enact the worlds that they want to create. I firmly

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[220] Ann Ness, "Teachers Spend Hundreds of Dollars a Year on School Supplies. That's a Problem. - Education Week," *Teacher*, August 2, 2017, https://www.edweek.org/tm/articles/2017/08/02/teachers-spend-hundreds-of-dollars-a-year.html.

[221] Valerie Strauss, "Teacher Slams Scripted Common Core Lessons That Must Be Taught 'word for Word,'" *Washington Post*, November 30, 2013, sec. Answer Sheet, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2013/11/30/teacher-slams-scripted-common-core-lessons-that-must-be-taught-word-for-word/.

[222] Christina Maslach, *Burnout: The Cost of Caring* (Cambridge, MA: Malor Books, 2003).

believe that the school cannot solve every ail of society, cannot pull every student from poverty or end oppression in American society. It will take massive efforts on the part of the state itself - reparations, a reinvigoration of social safety nets, and a paradigm and priority shift for politicians towards the importance of securing quality of life and welfare for all, not to mention enough funding for public schools to provide a robust and quality education - before the school can truly become such a place. My sincere hope is that care, performed in acts big and small that show the student that they are the experts in their experience, that their experience matters, and that they can create change, both uncovers the reality of structural marginalization and inspires students to act in order to change the structures and systems that systemically disadvantage them and their peers. And perhaps most importantly, care thus creates the student as more than an empty vessel, more than a competitor pitted against their peers, but as a citizen in a democracy wherein constant contestation allows them to have a say in their own learning.

Credits

The title of each chapter is attributed to the following artists, respectively: