Choice in education: A controversy of paradigm significance

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Choice in Education:
A Controversy of Paradigm Significance

A Thesis
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
Education Secondary Option

by
Donald Gordon Wegner, II
May 1992
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Statement of the Problem

There are an enormous number of people proposing changes in education. The pending choice/voucher initiative in California resulted from a polarization of thoughts about how education should function. Perhaps more troubling than the debate itself is that few have articulated a knowledge of educational knowledge which is a demonstration of historical, political, and philosophical reasons of why we have public schools at all. The ensuing research is an effort to retrace the steps of education and utilize this information in making conclusions regarding this debate. Structure is provided in the analysis of education's history and, presuming people research the historical dynamics, they may yet reach dissimilar conclusions regarding the choice issue.

Procedure

A quantitative analysis was performed which incorporated, primarily, inferences from a variety of political, philosophical, educational, and historical resources. As the principles gleaned from the resources were examined, careful attention was paid to the possible application of these to an analysis of the a priori of education and then applied to the current debate about "choice" in education.

Results

While this project was not designed to teach educators how to think about the choice initiative, it became a project which encourages those close to the issue to systematically analyze certain pieces of information and in the application of this,
methodically reach conclusions either different or in support of what is already thought about the issue.

**Conclusions and Implications**

While the debate about whether to adopt the choice initiative in California rages, we must be clear about what is said and how it is perceived. The contingency upon which direction to take in education should be reliant on informed articulation which is not steeped in specialized educational language for if such occurs, the public will be confused and vote accordingly. The burden of contemporary education rests weightily upon teachers and administrators and accountability is to the public. Herein rests the cry for new reforms: a segment of the public is saying education has become irrelevant, it is now time for a reasoned response which benefits those who will be given the responsibility for our future: the children.
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There are an enormous number of people proposing changes in education. At the heart of these views is a "grid" composed of varying processes of thought which, when applied, produce conclusions markedly different in nature and substance. Consensus of problem-solving ideas would be an presumptuous task yet a polarization illuminining major differences has surfaced. The pending choice/voucher initiative in California resulted from a polarization of thoughts about how education should function. Perhaps more troubling than the debate itself is that few have articulated a knowledge of educational knowledge which is a demonstration of historical, political, and philosophical reasons of why we have public schools at all. So it seems proponents and antagonists alike are verbalizing their opinions and as the debate rages, it becomes more ridiculous to suggest to the participants to stop and (re) consider the a priori of education. The ensuing research is an effort to retrace the steps of education to discover why and how we acquired a public educational system and utilize this information in making conclusions regarding this debate. It is also the attempt to challenge the way people think, and in some instances, to offend the grid some process information through. Until people have considered fundamental knowledge about education, they should be wary of the statements they make because a large public is paying close attention and misinformation could be mistaken for fact.

Structure is provided in the analysis of education's history and, presuming people research the historical dynamics, they may yet reach dissimilar conclusions regarding the choice issue. "Choice" in education is a subject about which intellectual and reasonable people can differ. "Reasonable" people use facts to examine controversial issues and these do not lead to "right" or "wrong" conclusions, yet at least in the articulation empirical data can be sighted. The least Americans should demand of the educational system is that they apply the
intelligence to formulate a responsible reaction. Vince Lombardi, legendary coach of the former superbowl champion Green Bay Packers football team believed in relearning the “basics.” On the first day of practice prior to their championship season, he held up a ball so all could see and said, “Gentlemen, this is a football.” In a sense, this research is about the fundamentals of education.

What fundamental attitudes have lead to a resonance which has deafened American politicians so overtly that they must also pay homage to choice issues? A definition of choice in education has two major components. First, there are some parents who wish to send their children to private schools, yet feel it is unfair for them to continue to pay tax money toward the public school system when they don’t “use” it. These parents are calling for a “voucher” which is a credit which can be taken to a private school and applied to that school’s tuition. The second major component is that parent ought to be able to choose the public school their child attends, which invokes a debate regarding the application of the free enterprise system of economics and its adaption to public schools. A cross section of U.S. citizens believes public education should be the savior of all social ills and, therefore, where ills exist, it is directly correlated with the equality of public education. What has infused and infuriated a boisterous segment of our political community is the “fact” that education has lead to dramatic increases in teenage pregnancy, suicide, a deterioration of moral and ethical values, and a contrary attitude about the importance of education itself. In such an indictment is woven a vast mosaic of blame upon education which is shouldered by many who have relinquished the ability to make significantly more money in the business world. Perhaps unfairly, many who regard education as their “mission” are now held accountable for all past and present “sins” committed while choice activists lobby local and national politicians to legitimize their actions.
Those who overtly oppose efforts by public school personnel should not be held in contempt nor should the education community be too hasty to criticize many who are adamant about this matter. Professionals in education should note that when parents confront issues affecting their children, things are said by parents which, in some instances, defy their own logic. It should be noted that emotionalism has played a major role in the birth of the choice movement and the drive to abandon some public schools in favor of others or altogether, is rampant. The use of “abandonment” is purposely applied because those leaving public institutions because they are “fed up” represent less people available to tackle problems existing in the public educational system. Teachers, administrators, and support staff will readily admit that public education has numerous problems, yet what distinguishes these from choice activists is they have chosen to work within the system to correct the ills.

If those who remain in public education are going to achieve what the founders of this educational system set about to accomplish, a stifling of the aforementioned emotionalism must be achieved. Once accomplished, unhindered progress can be realized toward ascertaining the extent and limits of responsibilities of educational institutions and parents. Before understanding between angry parents and educators occurs, each must accept respective responsibilities and must be made accountable for their actions. The emotional arguments has, thus far, lead only to defensive postures on either side. Reconciliation must be realized before significant steps are made because for “better and worse,” public education and the problems in existence will not disappear as long as literacy remains a critical concern in our society. One way to approach the “responsibilities” issue is to examine the roots and mission goals set forth for public education at its inception. Once completed, apply this as the purpose of education and attempt to delineate the responsibilities
of the collective educational system as well as the individuals working within this system.

Before a comprehensive understanding of the contemporary status of education in the United States is realized, it is necessary to examine the dynamics of political philosophy which gave birth to cultural values within this country, the paradigmatic thinking process, the history and purpose of education, the "progressive" era, and other critical issues which have shaped education throughout the years. If the choice movement in the United States and California is to be dissected and understood, it is important to examine the anterior and understand the system many have come to abhor and attempt to expose defects in those elements which gave birth to the system we have inherited.

Many in education have an ambiguous vision of what education ought to accomplish and, therefore, are confounded if asked to articulate basic questions about the fundamentals of their profession. Fundamentally, educators are unaware or have forgotten about the original purpose of public education and, furthermore, lack the time to pursue such questions because of vocational pressures. Educators ought not to be criticized too quickly for not having such information at hand, for seldom is there a need to articulate such and it is a rare day that such conversations occur in the staff luncheonette. Excuses aside, we are living in an age which generations following may consider genuinely revolutionary. If choice becomes legislation, it will represent a conversion to a new destiny, a new method to arrive there, and it will usurp the previous a priori of public education altogether. To complicate the esprit de corps of contemporary education, teachers who cannot articulate details about the foundations of America's educational system will be ill-suited to formulate explanations which defend the system in which they work. To explain the metamorphosis in contemporary
educational thought, the process of paradigmatic thinking must be understood because this has dictated the transition leading to choice initiatives throughout this nation.

**Education: In the Midst of Paradigmatic Change**

An explanation of the process of paradigmatic thought seems esoteric when in a discussion contemporary education. The reason this method of thought is worth examining is because, whether the participants in the choice debate realize it or not, they have applied a new way of thinking which is evident as varied views are expressed. It is clear that those who are lobbying for and against choice in education view the issue in an either/or proposition. Specifically, once sides were chosen, there was no room for coexistence. Some may be surprised to know that many in public education are not opposed to private or parochial education. The fact remains that as long as young people are educated, according to their individual needs, it makes little difference to many where this occurs. What is troublesome for public educators is that choice initiatives, as they are currently designed, will all create additional losses in public school revenues. This country and, California in particular, are attempting to run a comprehensive educational program on a skeletal budget while serving students from over 100 different places of origin. What motivates people to leave public education for alternatives and have they viewed the macro impact of alternative modes of education? More importantly, has the impact to the individual child been realistically evaluated by those both leaving and remaining in public education.

The study of phenomenology is, as the joke goes, about as much fun as viewing a submarine race in the fog, yet once the thinking process is understood, perhaps reconciliation can occur between proponents and antagonists in the choice issue. An understanding of education and the process of revolution is contingent on
the “school” of thought from which they are derived. The acceptance or rejection of educational interpretations are, in fact, a reaction of the reader to the philosophies which have informed the translator. The philosophical schools are “meta-disciplinary” in nature which means that respective schools of thought may be simultaneously applied to politics, philosophy, history, business, farming, and education. Thomas Kuhn spent the majority of his life thinking and writing about the epistemology of science. Traditionally, theorems concerning science were dependent on two opposing theories each of which attempts to definitively explain some phenomenon. Kuhn asserts that such an approach, whereby two theories must be dialectic in nature, is obsolete. Kuhn contends that science is a field in which one paradigm exists at a time which, alone, best explains a particular phenomenon. The amalgam of Kuhn’s work has lead to a unique view of science as well as a world-view which has implications within varied disciplines including education.

Few will doubt the importance of Thomas Kuhn’s work in the philosophy of science. Since the publication of The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, prodigious debate has arisen about his ideas in sundry disciplines. Kuhn seems to make observations about how epistemology and its application in the world is conducted yet is vicariously accused of being “relativistic” as though he formulated a covert philosophy which is “evil” in nature. Indeed, those who so accuse Kuhn confirm their own paradigm verifiable by their own community and, in so defining Kuhn’s philosophy, the critics confirm the paradigmatic aspects of his world view for in their method of criticism, they are bound to their own paradigm. My interest in Kuhn centers upon analyzing his epistemology for two reasons. First, the ethos of epistemology is one of primary concern of Kuhn. Kuhn’s philosophy is that science’s epistemological authority resides not in a rule - governed method of
inquiry which yields results, but the scientific community which obtains results.

Central to his thesis is the idea of a “paradigm.” Kuhn admits his use of the term is
equivocal and vague and the following lists of meanings help illumine Kuhn’s major
nuances of the term:

1. Paradigm as Weltanschauung.
2. Paradigm as theory.
3. Paradigm as pedagogical tool and educational goal.
4. Paradigm as gestalt.
5. Paradigm as constitutive of nature.
6. Paradigm as what members of a scientific community share.
7. Paradigm as a disciplinary matrix.
8. Paradigm as shared exemplar.

A paradigm is a universally recognized scientific achievement (i.e. like
Newton’s scientific work) which, temporarily, provides model solutions for a
community of practitioners and is an operational way of viewing the world while
providing the rules of the game. The aforementioned defines a community or
“school” and provides the ultimate locus of the scientific communities’ rational
authority. Paradigms also include conceptual and methodological rules and
presuppositions which provide norms for “normal” science. Of secondary
importance, while Kuhn specifically derives his epistemology from observations of
the scientific community, applications are meta-disciplinary. His thesis of
paradigms and anomalies provides a grid through which occurrences in education
can be explained. Following an analysis of Kuhn’s epistemology, and explanation
will ensue pertaining to choices in education.

“Normal science” is dominated by a universally accepted paradigm which is
regarded as unalterable and immune from criticism and is a period during which one
paradigm rules. A period of crisis occurs when an inordinate number of anomalies are introduced. A new paradigm may result via propaganda and its contingency rests upon the acceptance by the community which accepted the previous paradigm. The primary aim of normal science is to work within the paradigm as a puzzle solver by gathering facts, predicting new areas of theory (e.g., “reformulating” the paradigm), and by articulating the paradigm so ambiguities are resolved and precision increased.

In normal science, anomalies are approached in ad hoc fashion, yet when numerous anomalies surface, a crisis occurs. Anomalies alone do not constitute a crisis for there must be an alternate paradigm present which is often invented by one who is new to the field and, presumably, open to viewing data in a different way. “Crisis” often leads to scientific revolution which can be described as a paradigm shift but a shift does not occur in a textbook where revolutions are viewed as a natural outworking of normal science. There is nothing natural or normal about revolution and, in fact, revolution ought to be a rarity since it forces tremblers at the foundations of the phenomenon it affects. With this perspective, scientific progress is viewed as a cumulative movement or process wherein new paradigms replace the old through verification or falsification. Paradigm shifts involve a conversion; a new way of seeing the data which may contradistinguish the culturized community. Observations of the data and criteria of assessment are paradigm dependent and excludes external standards upon which to choose between paradigms because standards themselves are a product of paradigm. Paradigms are incommensurable and, therefore, there is no neutral algorithm for paradigm choice. An alternate way of comprehending scientific revolutions is a gestalt switch or change in world view.

According to Kuhn, neutral facts are nonexistent and different people with
different paradigms see different things while looking at the same object. Paradigms, therefore, do not differ with respect to a scientist’s interpretation of observations fixed in an absolute state by the nature of the environment and the perceptual apparatus. There is no “given” or “sensory experience” which is fixed and stable because observations or measurements scientists undertake in the laboratory are not the “given” but rather “the collected,” that is, they are predetermined and interdependent with the associated paradigm. How do people, in general, acquire knowledge of the world which is built into language? This happens by a process of culturalization into the paradigm.

Before continuing, three further issues should be mentioned. First, Kuhn claims his viewpoint cannot be reduced to solipsism, that is, new paradigms represent a usurpation of the old. The presumption is that acceptance or rejection of data occurs in the scientific or linguistic community and not atomistically by individuals; s. Second, questions of truth, falsity or verification (e.g., understood in terms of the old paradigm of the philosophy of science.) are not considered relevant to Kuhn. If “truth” as a label has any value at all, it is intra-theoretic. Third, Kuhn leaves room for anomalies to play a role in paradigm conformation. The traditional way to understand paradigms in science is to view two competing paradigms as two ways of explaining the same facts. The accepted paradigm will be the one which more adequately explains those facts. Kuhn’s view, in light of the aforementioned, is problematic because it assumes one set of scientific problems, one world within which to work on them, and one set of standards for their solution. Kuhn presupposes that two paradigms are commensurable but incompatible vis a vis the data.

Kuhn frequently describes paradigm incommensurability in terms of a gestalt switch., and uses this comparison to illustrate that as two line on a paper can be
viewed now as a duck, now as a rabbit, two scientific paradigms involve a transformation of perspective. Thus, a shift involves a transformation of vision which “makes one suspect that something like a paradigm is prerequisite to perception itself.” There is no external standard provided by the data with respect to which the switch of vision can be demonstrated. Nature, or the “given” is itself paradigm dependent and, in fact, the concept of absolutes constitutes a paradigm because such are recognized by the community. It should be noted, at the risk of redundancy, the external factors (e.g., existing outside the empirical world) is discounted since they are not verifiable though the scientific process.

Before proceeding, a brief summation is in order. First, Kuhn believes there are no neutral facts or data. Observation is theory-laden and our perception of the world is not a perception of a mind-independent “given.” The “world” we see is determined by theories about the world. Two different people with different paradigms or theories see different things. Ptolemy saw a sun which revolved around the earth while Copernicus saw a stationary sun. Each viewed two different worlds because they ascribed to different theories. Second, rival theories or paradigms (e.g., Newton’s views of mass, space, and time verses Einstein’s) are incommensurable which means they cannot be compared with each other to see which is more rational or closer to the facts. There are no theory-dependent facts and there are no theory-independent criteria which can be used to decide between two theories. Different theories describe different worlds and have their own internal criteria for rationality. Third the rational authority of science does not consist in a rational method of investigation but in a community of practitioners. Scientists are a culture of people and they arbitrarily set up the rules for what will and will not count as rational and what is rational for one culture is not necessarily rational for another. The distinction between “rational and objective,” and
“irrational and subjective,” is an arbitrary distinction. Forth, the history of science is not a story of later theories refining and extending earlier ones as science converges toward “truth.” Science is a history of paradigm shifts (e.g., successive replacements of one theory by another). Current theories are no more rational or true than earlier ones, rather, they represent those the community of scientists accepts.

Whatever criticisms have arisen concerning Thomas Kuhn’s philosophy concerning the structure of science, intellectual communities must consider its complexities for they represent a calculated attempt to explain the process of epistemology in a concise manner. Furthermore, Kuhn’s philosophy has grown paramount because its applicability transcends the scientific community. Contemporary educational problems in the United States can be solved more handily once the process of thinking which informs opinions is understood. Contemporary opinion concerning choice in education suggests several phenomena occurring simultaneously. First, initial signature efforts in California reveals that many people are confused enough by the issue to avoid signing petitions allowing choice initiatives to appear on the official ballot. Second, those who have tirelessly wished public education to be subsumed under the pressure of the “mass exiting” to private educational facilities are discovering that the “community” still endorses public education and, perhaps, mistrusts the alternatives. Finally, those who work both inside the public educational system as well as those who are concerned about this system, are viewing the voucher initiative the same way one would observe some who have tried, in vain to kill a mosquito with their hand, and resorted to a hand grenade. For some, the voucher system is an extreme direction and, as a remedy, sorely lacking because the new system suggests a plethora of problems which are currently non-existent.
Some are hailing the choice initiatives, which have surfaced in many regions of the United States, as revolutionary. The problem is that Pampers just came out with a revolutionary diaper, Tide with a revolutionary laundry detergent, and Idaho farmers just developed a revolutionary potato! The word revolutionary, has become commonplace and, therefore, a relative term applicable at any time for any purpose. A problem with the solutions sought by choice activists is that they apparently seek to improve public education by taking away children who would, otherwise, attend public school. Before a system is allowed which will reduce the attendance of public schools, several questions must be answered. First, with each student who exits public institutions, there will be less revenue with which to educate those who remain in the public school system. Second, will the allowing of the aforementioned imperil the current public education system by creating less money per student than we currently have available? Third, is the creation of a voucher system in the best interest of this nation? Finally, as we examine the original purpose for education in America, does the ability to vacate public school buildings in favor of choice alternatives upset the fundamental foundations of public education itself?

While the children of this generation and those forthcoming must remain at the fore in the decision making process, what about the public school educators who are left with fewer students, fewer materials with which to work, and no merit pay system to reward those who, by their extraordinary abilities, are attracting students considering private institutions? The voucher system will create greater competition threatens the ability to attract teachers into the field of education itself during a time when they are most needed. Teachers working in a public educational institution, will be cognizant of the fact that waiting lines outside the door of the school in which they teach indicates that other schools are inferior. It takes
minuscule mathematical knowledge to calculate that the school I teach at in the future depend on federal and state test scores, entrance success for those who applied to colleges, and other such criteria. The school, accordingly, develops distinctives based upon objective test criteria which distinguishes it from other area schools. For teachers in schools which are deemed “superior,” demands for higher “merit” pay may ensue. “Merit” pay, which is a pseudonym for pay based upon ability rather than years of service, has innate problems which are intra-school related. If teachers develop a distinctive curriculum program such that students score considerably higher on respective “achievement” tests, teachers will hesitate to coordinate efforts with their peers because a teacher’s pay is dependent on their uniquely created curriculum and those within education who espouse merit pay as a cure—all ought to reconsider this option. Those who opt for alternatives to public schools should consider the impact to this nation if this type of system is introduced! While some choice activists are bemoaning test scores and other “problems” with public education, they lack solutions to these and are attempting to create a financially advantageous way to leave. The problems in contemporary education, according to Kuhnian thinkers, is that the anomalies which have moved many to develop a system of vouchers and one system of vouchers is a risk to national security. We now must turn to the values in American society which paved the way for public education. To thoroughly understand these, an examination of America’s political roots will be offered.

America's Political Foundation Produced American Values

“When in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume, among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the
laws of nature and of nature’s God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation. We hold these truths to be self-evident; that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; that, to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that whenever any form of government become destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or abolish it, and to institute new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness...”
(Ceaser, p. 639)

The Declaration of Independence is the most eloquent political document in American history and, arguably, one of the most profound written in history. For sixteen days Thomas Jefferson worked in seclusion to author what became the most articulate description of the highest values in American society. In a democracy where power is derived from the “consent of the people,” power is contingent on the opinions of those from which political power comes. The stabilizing factor in a democracy rests in the citizens of that country. Whereas stability in many governments resides in their military might, a new method of securing stability had to be formulated by those living during the formative years of America’s democracy and thus the public education system as we understand it today evolved. It should be noted that nowhere in James Madison’s fastidious notes of the Constitutional Convention debates was public education spoken of nor is it mentioned in the Constitution or the Declaration of Independence. Public education became the conduit by which a literate society could function best within the democratic
framework. We shall begin this section with an analysis of the quoted selection of the Declaration of Independence and then suggest reasons why public education was formulated as a direct result of the document which gave birth to the values under which we live in America.

To begin determining why, in view of the preamble of the Declaration of Independence, it was "necessary" to develop a public educational school system, the component parts of this section must be understood. The longevity of democracy has its foundation upon the will of the people governed. The particular organization democracy adopts is secondary to the preeminent purpose of government: to protect the natural rights of each citizen. The Declaration provides a clause allowing citizens to eradicate unjust governments yet how will people know when "...it is necessary to dissolve the political bands which connect them..." unless they possess the faculties with which to make that judgment? The duration of a democracy rests upon "...the consent of the governed..." which, in an illiterate society, is problematic. Perhaps the most important inclusive words in this portion of the preamble are "...the consent of the governed..." because this necessitates participation of the citizens and there is a persistent, passive indifference in government participation in this century! Cynics claim that those who have a "stake" in politics should participate and those who don't should remain at home on election day. The comment by the cynic, unfortunately, is widespread even though each person has a stake in this country's future. The fewer who vote the less representation some sectors of our population will have. In view of the fact that political power in democracy is contingent on the will of the people, what level of literacy is most desirable? The definitive answer is the "highest" which necessitates access by all and this is why citizens have the equal right, opportunity, and responsibility to receive an education.
In book 5 of his works *Politics*, Aristotle tackled the subject of how the legislator could most effectively preserve a regime. The questions Aristotle answers are: what are the numbers and kinds of causes of revolutions in general; what causes are peculiar to each kind of regime; out of what into what do regimes usually change; what are the safeguards of regimes in general and of each kind in particular; how are these safeguards put into effect? The first and most fundamental cause of revolution is identical with the primary cause of the difference of regimes: namely, the different conceptions people have of justice. The characteristics which secure regimes in general are the opposite of those which lead to their destruction. The fundamental cause of security in a democracy is justice. The legislator should know what institutions in a democracy preserve, and which destroys a democracy.

According to Aristotle, the greatest of all means of securing the stability of regimes *is education*. There is no use in the best possible laws and institutions if the citizens are not trained in their use! A good education, according to Aristotle, produces citizens who are self-disciplined with respect to their real interests, and not self-indulgent with respect to their pleasures. (Cropsey, pp. 122-123)

Since it has been established that the study of American values are tantamount to a comprehensive understanding of the *a priori* of education, we must examine the Europeans who informed the "founding fathers" of principles they used and adapted democracy in our country. John Locke was a scientist who graduated from the Westminster School of London. He was well read and scholarly in physics, medicine and chemistry, and later became a private physician and secretary to Lord Ashley, later Earl of Shaftesbury. His works in philosophy were influenced by the liberalism of Shaftesbury and opposed the sympathies of the English kings Charles II and James II. On two separate occasions Locke left the country to avoid government censure. In 1690, he published his *Two Treaties of Government* under
the rule of William and Mary. Like Thomas Kuhn, Locke’s interest were rooted in science and he was a member of the Royal Society, a prestigious scientific community, which admitted scientists of notable fame. It wasn’t until his mid-forties that Locke’s attention turned from science to politics. His genius was his achievement of merging science and politics into a “new science.”

As a pure philosopher, John Locke was the first to emphasize epistemology, the study of how we know things. Locke denied Des Cartes ideas of human nature, (e.g., Des Cartes believed all people were “naturally” or innately evil) and instead argued for a description of human nature based upon tabula rasa which means “empty slate.” He pioneered empiricism, declaring that the mind at birth is tabula rasa, that there are no innate ideas, and that ideas come to us through our senses from the material world. Locke thus developed a science-oriented way of conjecturing which opted for limited, but immediately usable, knowledge of everyday reality. The faculty of comprehending enables people to know and to desire, but what is known is determined by the ideas their environment allows to enter their mind, and what is desired is determined by objectives this environment supplies to a few native instincts. The second faculty is the will, and its exercise consists in choosing desires for realization where they conflict. He urged people to test their theories with practical experiments and thereby used the scientific method as a speculative process. In Locke’s Two Treatises of Government, he regarded government as a social contract among people to submit the rule of a sovereign. He advocated civil liberties and insisted a rulers’ powers were never absolute and that a ruler should be overthrown if he violated the “natural rights” of people. It was this assumption upon which the overthrowing of James I in the Glorious Revolution was justified.

The collaboration of science and politics delineated the end of the Middle Ages
and the introduction of the Age of Enlightenment. During this new age, empiricism was granted equal prestige as faith was during the Middle Ages. Empiricism's foundation rested upon experience or facts supported by the scientific method. From faith to reason, the intellectual climate changed and this wrought changes in all facets of life by defining a new world view which allowed for no phenomenon outside the senses. During the year of the Spanish Armada in 1588, another scientist, Thomas Hobbes, was born who later formulated a contradicting belief about human nature which was informed by his unique acquaintance with The Glorious Revolution. In his youth, Hobbes apprenticed for Francis Bacon and became acquainted with Galileo, who postulated that the Earth rotated around the sun, and Des Cartes who associated the term abscissa for the x-axis and coordinate for the y-axis in geometry. Hobbes became infatuated with math at the age of 40 when he encountered an open book at a library for aristocrats. Hobbes' first great philosophical contribution was the explanation that the world around us is best explained through mathematical terminology. Hobbes used not a mathematical but an axiomatic method in determining his anti-philanthropic explanation. Hobbes' second greatest philosophical contribution was the conclusion that the universe, as a whole, is a mass. He postulated that if the mass isn't in motion and is undisturbed, it will lie doormat forever. The same is true for the counterpart: if a mass is set in motion, it will remain in motion unless something hinders or obstructs its path.

As a philosopher, Hobbes offered personal justifications to explain what life is, and he concluded "Life is but a motion of limbs and the heart is a spring, nerves so many strings and joints, wheels giving motion to the whole body." (Bronowski, p. 197) As well as trying to explain life, Hobbes tried to define God, "God has no generation, and spirits, as having no manifest properties or phenomenal aspects." (Bronowski, p. 207) Hobbes postulated that if there are observable motions in the
heavenly bodies, there are causes which explain such phenomena. Furthermore, 
humanity, as a reflection of the universe, must operate in a similar fashion or, a 
chain of cause and effect. He conjectured this from his work in the science 
laboratory. For example: if chemical “A” + chemical “B” causes reaction “C,” this 
represents a “causality” relationship. Additionally, the experiment, if properly 
duplicated, will consistently produce similar results and so the scientific method 
produced predictability and stability. One of Hobbes’ works, the Leviathan was a 
book explaining that absolute monarchy is the best way to organize political life 
because this system enabled governments to levy sufficient control over their 
citizenry. The implication of Hobbes’ political schema was that evil nature and the 
collective society was prevented from regressing to the “state of nature” by 
governmental inertia. A secondary implication was that the masses ought to be 
controlled by a more sophisticated body who rules over the country.

One of Hobbes’ concerns as he acquired an interest in political philosophy was 
the makeup of the nature of people. Hobbes was informed of the unalterable innate 
nature of people by his observations of the actions which culminated in the 
beheading of Charles I and he subsequently concluded that people are naturally and 
incorrigibly evil. Furthermore, he concluded that if people were left alone to rule, 
their evil nature would irreversibly return them to the “state of nature” in which 
people lived an immoral life which was “brutish and short.” He concluded that 
governments ought to be sufficiently large enough for the leader to exert 
extraordinary means of control to assure that society would be kept in check from 
the ever present lurking evil nature which awaits and seizes each opportunity and 
threatens to disrupt civilization. While this description of Hobbes’ human nature 
seems exaggerated, the effect mostly reflects the attitude conveyed by him in his 
 writings.
The period of time in which Thomas Hobbes and John Locke lived influenced their particular beliefs about the composition of the nature possessed by all people. Whereas the beheading of Charles I during Hobbes’ life led him to decry the world as an evil place, Locke witnessed The Glorious Revolution and surmised that people desire to live peaceably while protecting their natural rights. With no bloodshed during the ousting of James II, Locke concluded that people had the right to eradicate any government which suppressed the natural rights of individuals. John Locke’s political philosophy was used by the American ideologues, as paradigm and this paved the way of extinguishing anomolitic political theorems. Until recently, however, the paradigmatic quality of Locke’s views have not been used as a rationale for distinctly American values which, in turn, created the need for a public school system for its citizenry.

Much detail has been offered regarding both Thomas Hobbes and John Locke including environmental factors which assisted each, respectively, in their pursuit and vision of the nature of people and consequent regime in which people could coincide with others in a political system. Generally, the writings of both Locke and Hobbes were in the tradition of the European liberals who were the first proclaiming that equality under the law was a natural right which each person possessed by nature. The fact that the environment of this liberal ideology informed Locke and Hobbes of their political philosophy is a confirmation of Kuhn’s paradigm theory which means the language of liberalism was inculturated and was thus spread to the remainder of Europe in one form or another. Europeans were not the only benefactors of the aforementioned liberal ideas. Those who agonized at the Constitutional Convention were actually debating the legitimacy of Locke’s view while those opposed used varying positions formulated by Montesquieu, etc.

The fundamental principle distinguishing liberalism from the monarchical
regimes under such kings as Charles I, was that all people, including government officials, should be equal under the law and accountable to the same. This point of equality was not argued at the Constitutional Convention, yet the role law should play in our society has been in flux since the early 19th century. Those who fought in the Revolutionary War were fighting America's first cultural war because they attempted to establish a new *a priori* for government. The rule of monarchs led to instability, chaos, and wars because monarchs were accountable to none. It was the desire to escape the instability of the monarchical system which led to the establishment of a government under the law instead of hereditary personages. As remarkable as the structure was for the government they established, it began to lapse quickly.

It was under the monarchical system, which granted rights in a vicarious manner, that numerous class wars ravaged in the form of civil and other wars. It was due to class conflicts which caused the beheadings of kings and other conflicts. The liberalist political philosophy sought to eradicate class and religious distinctions as the cause of wars by proclaiming all citizens equal under the law, and the subsequent value of education became a viable conduit by which to dissuade the class conflict as well. In theory, many of the destabilizing factors present in the old monarchical system were removed by replacing kings with laws. It was precisely this ideology the founding fathers adopted and by this adoption gave credibility to John Locke's writings. Having set a political system in motion under the rule of law, there was little else to do but participate in the new system.

The United States remained unified in purpose because it was unified under the law until the early 19th century. The branch of government intended to uphold the rule of law, the Supreme Court, took a different view of law than those who formulated the system which gave breath to this body. The Court case which began
the lapse of the United States back into the very system from which it was fleeing, though in a different form, was Marbury vs. Madison.

"John Marshall, who wrote the majority opinion in the decision, stated that it was the duty of the Supreme Court alone to decide whether or not the other branches of government - the legislative and executive - were acting contrary to the Constitution. Thus, if Congress passed a law, which in the opinion of the Supreme Court justices was repugnant to the Constitution, the Supreme Court could void that law. The legal term for this doctrine is judicial review, and it is the bedrock of the power of the Supreme Court and the lower federal courts. This case is also the foundation for the study of constitutional law in legal education. By placing the ultimate source of constitutional authority in the hands of the Supreme Court, the Court has, in effect, become the living or speaking Constitution in an evolving sense."

(Whitehead, 1982, pp. 54-55)

Once law was dependent on interpretation (e.g., law had no value until it was interpreted by the Supreme Court), law itself became as instable as lives were under a monarchical government. Marbury vs. Madison was the precursor of many Supreme Court decisions which confirmed the Court a status it was never supposed to attain! The Supreme Court was originally created to be insulated from political opinions so they could make decisions based upon law not community consensus as the other two branches were required to do. Instead, they became the enforcer of community values by stating that their interpretation of the law is more significant than the letter of the law. In other words, laws are given meaning only after the community (e.g., the Supreme Court) interprets them. The opportunity for division,
therefore, instead of being class - oriented, is law oriented.

The result of Marbury vs. Madison and subsequent Court cases, has meant the United States has digressed into a country reliant on the interpretation of law rather than the rule of law. As Kuhn inferred, the language of the community has brought about the paradigmatic quality which has subjugated the rule of law to community values. The resultant danger rests in the fact that since community values change, because they pay homage to the loudest voices, the a priori of this country is usurped. Marbury vs. Madison represented the beginning of this countries divisive decisions, the amalgam of which, has led to a country possessing more reasons for disunity rather than unity. Many have observed that contemporary America is wrought with havoc because, with so much division, there remains little basis for unity. It is in view of these details that vouchers must be considered because, regardless of the merit either side expresses, the issue has become but one more divisive characteristic in American society.

What is particularly troublesome about friends and foes of public education is that they are considering change to a “institution” which teaches citizenship and trains the next generation of Americans. Should a mistake ensue over the preservation or restructuring of public education, attitudes and contents of what it means to be an effective citizen of the United States could synonymously change. Government in America was formulated as an experiment to discover whether a new nation could be formed not by military mite, but the reasoning faculties of a group of people.

"It has been frequently remarked that it seems to have been reserved to the people of this country, by their conduct and example, to decide the important question, whether societies of men are really capable or not of establishing
good government from reflection and choice, or whether they are forever destined to depend for their political constitutions on accident and force. If there be any truth in the remark, the crisis at which we are arrived may with propriety be regarded as the era in which that decision is to be made; and a wrong election of the part we shall act may, in this view, deserve to be considered as the general misfortune of mankind.” (Jay, p.33)

Many democratic and non-democratic regimes were conceived in military conflict whereas the final American structure of government was the result of “reflection and choice.” Where military mite determines government structure, it also defines the method of maintaining that government. In America, reflection and choice determined governmental structure and, therefore, the method of maintaining this type of government is dependent on these. The future of the experiment, as Alexander Hamilton described in Federalist Paper number 1, hinges on what occurs in public education because what gives substance to the minds of the young today determines the actions of adults tomorrow. It becomes easier to make an informed judgment now that we have ascertained the rudiments of the American regime, yet attention must be applied to discover how education took root in America, how the different groups vying for educational power differed, and how public education began in America.

The History of Education

The history of public education must be understood in terms of the values which were distinctly American, yet born in Europe. It should be of little surprise that the educational system eventually adopted by the United States was derived from a European example. From the colonial period until the early 19th century, there was great diversity in education because there were no state or federally
controlled public schools for children to attend. During this period, education was available through a variety of means including private sectarian and non-sectarian institutions, and home tutoring. As a European-influenced institution, American education is as a combination of dominant philosophical thought which were present in Europe coinciding with the early development of the American political system. There are four major periods European history which directly influenced the development of education in America. After mentioning these, an ensuing analysis the distinctives and the educational organization implicate in each.

The first period we shall examine is the Renaissance, which emphasized the "well rounded" individual and offered a liberal arts emphasis. This was an era of intellectual and artistic brilliance many believe are unsurpassed in European history. People living during this time in Europe took a renewed interest in the ancient writings of the Greeks and Romans who were advanced in philosophy, art, and architecture. To many, it was evident this new age was markedly different than the "dark and gloomy" Middle Ages preceding it. Actually, ideas did not suddenly spring up at once, nor were ideas so suddenly radical that a new name, (e.g., Renaissance) needed to be given to a new era. Nevertheless, new ideas which would not have been accepted during the Middle Age did surface and these combined to antagonize the religious orientation of the Middle Ages. The distinctive ideas which arose were about life and humanity - individualism, secularism, humanism, materialism, and hedonism.

The Renaissance began in Florence, Italy in the late thirteenth century and spread to the rest of Italy - particularly Rome - and then to northern Europe, where it developed somewhat differently. The expressions of the Renaissance spirit are readily evident in the art, architecture, paintings, and writings of this period. Society itself was transformed by Renaissance attitudes in education, politics, and
philosophy, and in northern Europe, new ideas of social reform developed. Although some were disheartened by the transformation which the Renaissance brought, benefits were realized in the elevation of nature as intrinsically beautiful. Inventions such as the printing press as well as writing in the vernacular of the people, (e.g., rather than Latin which was understood by the elite in European society) contributed to the rise in literacy throughout the continent. One negative aspect of this period was that the prestige of women in society greatly diminished and, while education and literacy rates increased for males, the same could not be said of females during this time. In politics, the Renaissance produced an approach to power and the state which historians often call “new monarchies.” The best known and most popular theoretician of this school was the Florentine Niccolo Machiavelli. Its most able practitioners are the fifteenth - and sixteenth - century monarchs of France, England, and Spain. In Italy, the city - state system led to wealthy and independent cities which were creative yet vulnerable to invasion and control from the outside by powerful Spanish and French kings. With the Renaissance came a revival of interest in ancient learning and a recognition of value in this lifetime (e.g., a non - spiritual, secular approach) and, without the help of God, society could be perfected as could the morals and ethics of individuals. For many living both then and now, the Renaissance ushered in a new society which was decidedly antagonistic to religion. The new philosophy of the Renaissance was a reaction to the Middle Ages because “too much” emphasis was placed on religion, and people became too “other world - oriented” such that life on earth became most intolerable.

The second period of time was called the Protestant Reformation and the resulting emphasis in education was the development of religious and moral character. Specifically, the Reformation was a religious period which did away with
the religious unity Europe had enjoyed for hundreds of years and it ended in several political changes. By the sixteenth century, the call for religious reform had been heard before but with a renewed fervor, ended, this time, in social revolution. There were several problems existing in the church which encouraged moral and administrative reform. Indulgences payments, (e.g., the granting of the forgiveness of sins in return for money paid to the Catholic church) thrust Martin Luther into a personal quest to change the doctrine of this church. In his personal studies Luther had come to the conclusion that salvation could not be earned by good deeds or indulgence payments, but only through faith. The belief of Luther became the cornerstone of Protestantism and eventually culminated with Luther and the German nobility revolting against Rome. Religion was the topic of everyday conversation, at this time, much as the pursuit of promotions within corporations dominate our conversations today. Imagine someone who was able to write a series of letters which so indicted the business world that people had to suddenly switch jobs because it was discovered that making a profit was “evil.” Martin Luther’s challenge to the church, therefore, brought with it social change which touched all aspects of life in Germany and, since this protest spread throughout Europe, the entire continent was affected. The pope and the emperor, as separate powers and allies, represented religious, political, and social unity in Germany and the rest of Europe. It also meant that people living in such an environment defined their security by the measure of unity between those entities, so when Luther challenged but one, all three came into question. Luther’s protest brought about the collapse of Germany and threatened the collapse of other governments throughout Europe.

Another Protestant reformer living in England was influencing organized religion and was to have a greater impact in Europe than Martin Luther. John Calvin developed a harsh and dogmatic religion which spread from Geneva into northern
Europe, including England, and Scotland. England eventually became the political center of Protestantism. Initiated by Henry VIII, the English Protestant Reformation was initially motivated by the personal and political interests of the king himself. Generally speaking, Protestantism developed and spread for economic and political reasons as well as religious ones. In the end, Protestantism meant greater spiritual freedom for some individuals, but spiritual disunity and disorganization for Europe as a whole. In England, Scotland, the Scandinavian countries, and elsewhere, it contributed to the power of the nation and thus meant a further political division of Europe, while in Germany it slowed down the movement toward nationhood. Reformationist thought - at least in Luther’s case - demanded universal, compulsory, state - controlled education in order that religion should be national and God’s word available directly to all.

A third period of time later affecting education in America, the Enlightenment, also had a distinct agenda in mind pertaining to the emphasis of education. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries people began to change from an “overly religious” world - view to one which was largely secular. One of the primary impetuses of this movement was rooted in the development of scientific knowledge and the willingness of people to grant it status which exceeded religion. It wasn’t until about 1500 that the medieval world - view, first developed by Aristotle, was supplanted. Aristotle taught that a motionless earth was at the center of a universe made up of planets and stars in ten crystal spheres. The belief in the Aristotelian world - view rested principally on “faith” since no scientific method had been applied which could legitimize this postulation. Because of this reliance on faith, the study of astronomy was considered a branch of religion. Nicolaus Copernicus was the first scientist who, through the use of the scientific method, proved that the earth revolved around the sun. Europeans slowly began to reject Aristotelian -
medieval scientific thought yet what was most significant about this development was that a new theory based upon observations had been formulated and verified with a basis in natural laws instead of the notion a mystical faith. Many concluded that if faith was not required to understand astronomy, then the existence of God Himself ought to be questioned—science hadn’t proven His existence. It was Isaac Newton who later formulated the great scientific synthesis: the law of universal gravitation and this was the culminating point of the scientific revolution.

Newtonian science was not a practical or useful body of information which could translate into to higher wages so its initial significance was intellectual rather than practical. The sublime substance of Newtonian thought was that everything was studied with more scrutiny and, therefore, it promoted critical thinking. For a society which was accustomed to a religious orientation, faith suffered what seemed to be its final blow. Newton and the scientific community suggested that nothing was to be accepted on faith; everything was to be submitted to the rational, scientific way of thinking. The overemphasis on a critical examination was applied to all institutions including the church, politics, and education. The critical examination of everything was the program of the Enlightenment and the accomplishment of the philosophes, a group of thinkers who propagated the new world-view across Europe and the North American colonies. The philosophes were writers and philosophers, among them Voltaire, Montesquieu, and Diderot, who produced books and articles which influenced all classes and whose primary intent was teaching people how to think critically and objectively about all matters. The education the philosophes promoted was empirical in nature, that is, the most desirable education teaches how to think critically via the scientific method. The philosophes were reformers, not revolutionaries. Their “enlightened” ideas were adopted by a number of monarchs who sought to promote the advancement of knowledge and improve
the lives of their subjects.

The utilitarian movement was not a distinct period in European history, rather, it was a principle rooted in the work and thinking of Francis Bacon and John Stuart Mill. The teachings of utilitarianism holds that the best society is one in which there is the greatest amount of happiness for the greatest number of people. The chief purpose of education is to bring people closer to this social idea. Careful attention to the content of the curriculum can develop the proper balance culminating in high ethical and moral standards. The method of discussion focuses on improving an individual's self-esteem and allows for free discussion and a personal discovery of "truth." The most difficult task in this educational formulation is to combine the duties of a responsible citizen and make them the natural desires of people who develop into healthy, productive, citizens. Compulsory elementary education for all and higher education for those who can benefit will greatly assist the aggregate society to achieve maximum happiness.

The distinct movements mentioned represented a radical and potentially revolutionary world view, that is, each period listed gained its name and resulted in a new direction in art, philosophy, political science, and education. Because those working within each movement worked purposefully to establish a new agenda, they also sought ways to preserve their work and educational systems developed in conjunction with these to ensure the longevity of the respective movements. The idea of placing public education in the hands of the government was inherited from the Prussian government which used state-owned, controlled, and operated public schools for political and social purposes. As we have already noted, where political governments are born of military might, the military must be maintained to prolong the existence of that country. In the United States, a new government was based on an "experiment" to discover whether a national
constitution could be derived by "reflection and choice." (Jay, p.33) Where public education is provided in governments in which natural rights and basic freedoms are not respected, education becomes a means by which to carry out a sinister political strategy. Where public education is begun in countries in which natural rights and freedoms are the highest value of the society, public education is a principle means by which the government is maintained. The history of American education is the embattled effort to ensure that the nation, founded on the preservation of the natural rights of its citizens in a limited government, could be maintained indefinitely. It is also the history of some interest groups and individuals who differed in their views in how best to accomplish the aforementioned while others fought for personal visions which were limited in vision and formulated for personal, not national interests.

Common schools were the original public schools to appear in the United States and were located in New England as well as adjacent areas where New Englanders had migrated. These schools were initially founded in the formative era of the Puritan commonwealth for the purpose of transferring the Calvinist Puritan religion from one generation to the next. The Reformation replaced the authority of the pope with the authority of the bible and, therefore, literacy gained a new importance in America. The Puritan leaders were impressed with the public schools created by Martin Luther and the German princes as a means of teaching religious doctrine and ensuring social order in the Protestant states. Additionally, Harvard College was founded in 1636 as a seminary and to ensure future enrollment, it became necessary to create a number of "feeder" schools producing the quality of academics which would allow students to succeed at this newly established institution.

It was in Massachusetts that public education was born and until about 1818, both private and public education coexisted in this state with little friction. In fact,
had it not been for the fact that there were too many delinquent children roaming the streets of Boston, a move to expand the public sector would not have arisen. Public education, as we know it today, did not begin until the 1840’s and it was due to the tenacious efforts of educators. In March, 1845, the Massachusetts Legislature voted to appropriate $5,000 in matching funds to the $5,000 raised by Horace Mann and his Unitarian colleagues to build two normal schools. In describing the dedication ceremony at one of the schools, Mann wrote this in the Common School Journal (October 1, 1846):

“What constituted the crowning circumstances of the whole was, that the Legislature, in making the grant, changed the title or designation of the schools. In all previous reports, laws, and resolves, they had been called “Normal Schools.” But the resolves for the erection of the new houses, it was provided that these schools should thereafter be known and designated as State Normal Schools, - the State thus giving to them a paternal name, as the sign of adoption, and the pledge of its affection.”

Thus, with a single grant, public education was under the control of the state, and local control was subjugated because funding no longer was provided locally. It is this moment in history that choice activists state that education in America began floundering and that it even began to become more illiterate!!

Since the voucher system seeks ways to leave public school institutions, it is necessary to examine why education came under the control of the government.

Purpose as Limits: A Demarcation Point of Educations Responsibilities

“After an unequivocal experience of the inefficacy of the subsisting federal
government, you are called upon to deliberate on a new Constitution for the United States of America. The subject speaks its own importance; comprehending in its consequences nothing less than the existence of the UNION, the safety and welfare of the parts of which it is composed, the fate of an empire in many respects the most interesting in the world. It has been frequently remarked that it seems to have been reserved to the people of this country, by their conduct and example, to decide the important question, whether societies of men are really capable or not of establishing good government from reflection and choice or whether they are forever destined to depend for their political constitutions on accident and force. If there be any truth in the remark, the crisis at which we are arrived may with propriety be regarded as the era in which that decision is to be made; and a wrong election of the part we shall act may, in this view, deserved to be considered as the general misfortune of mankind.” (Jay, p.33)

According to Aristotle the greatest of all means of securing the stability of governments is education. There is no use in the best possible laws, constitution, and institutions if the citizens are uneducated! A good education, according to Aristotle, produces citizens who are self-disciplined with respect to their real interests, and not self-indulgent with respect to their pleasures. If the point remains ambiguous, it should be deliberately stated: where governments have been born of military strength, its longevity depends on it and where it has begun by “reflection and choice,” its longevity depends on education which citizens need to continue in this capacity. When democracies cease to have relevance to the majority, as measured by voter participation, a vortex is formed and what will fill it is a government less noble, less educated, and ill-equipped for a virtuous lifestyle.
There is empirical evidence that Americans eligible to participate in government are choosing not to and are, thereby, not interested. There is a synonymous disinterest, among parents, in the education of their children measured by open house attendance. The frightening aspect of the previously mentioned facts is that the media bemoans a 40% turnout at the political polls, while ignoring a 5% parent turnout at open house. The symptoms of a country on the verge of collapse includes these two elements plus the subjugation of the family. Aside from the institutions of family, education, and government there exists no ingredients more important to the preservation of a society.

Many counter such indictments stating that today’s lifestyle is so hectic. My parents attended school functions and I doubt there has ever existed a generation where “rest and relaxation” were the pillars of society! Yet the majority of blame for a “deteriorating” public educational system is placed squarely on the shoulders of educators while substantive proof of such allegations is yet to surface. Since we all share the responsibility for future generations and wish that social ills be corrected, it is necessary for parents and educators alike to shoulder a reasonable responsibility for society at-large. To determine the responsibility of the public educational system, it is necessary to determine the purpose of this enormous system and once detailed, the purpose determines the limit of responsibility which is reasonable to expect by the public. If, after determining the extent of public education's responsibility, it is deemed unacceptable, a revolution in education, or new paradigm in Kuhnian language could be in order.

The supreme purpose of public education in America is to equip the next generation in the abilities of “reflection and choice” for if they are not, the present government will dissipate and the alternative will be a degeneration of the collective of society. The degeneration of the mind will leave a vacuum which must
be filled and it remains to be seen whether another Adolf Hitler can capture the fancy of a populace again! The birth pains of a confused society are evident in the increases in violent crime among the young, embodied in the organization of gangs, which now threatens to capture the souls of elementary school-age students right down to the kindergarten level! These elements represent the worst scenario of what occurs when education is devalued; society digresses into what Thomas Hobbes described as the “state of nature.” In Hobbes’ work *Leviathan*, he describes the “natural” state all people are in, without organized government. The state of nature is a society in which there are no laws and, therefore, no moral codes of ethics which provide boundaries for behavior. In such a society, one person must kill another before they are, themselves, killed. The state of nature is a life Hobbes describes as “short and brutish” and a society with such characteristics is unstable because “every man has the right to everything.” Established societies organized with sufficient government may, at any time, lapse into the state of nature. Hobbes recognizes the degenerative qualities of government in which no one infallible rules and can, subsequently, lapse into partial or total anarchy.

As abhorrous activities continue, many are at a loss to explain how America arrived to this point and how to solve the predicament now that we find ourselves here. Unfortunately, like the frog who unknowingly remained too long in the slowly boiling water before it was too late, America has been overwhelmed by the onslaught of violence and a sense of hopelessness. Traditionally, adults are pessimistic about the abilities of the young to lead the country of the future, yet there are real differences between generations past and the contemporary society in which we live. While today, deviant behavior includes a rash of killings never before witnessed and victims no longer go home to “sleep it off,” they rest ten feet under. Because we are living, not in the past, but in this
generation, it is our responsibility to solve contemporary problems, for we are accountable to our children for our persistence to alleviate or slow the deterioration of society. It seems as if our society is in a state of entropy described in the Second Law of Thermodynamics such that we are moving from order to disorder, and the disparity between these has never been greater.

If it is now established that education must equip students in the abilities for reflection and choice, there is a standard by which to judge the effectiveness of a school, teacher, and curricular program. If it is found that a local school district meets with the standards, they ought not be held in contempt for deficiencies which are found from school to school. An illustration which will assist in this idea will be helpful.

Educators have participated in what the counseling profession terms “enabling behavior” too long. To explain what this term means, in a home in which a spouse beats their mate, enabling behavior means the victim, by virtue of the fact that they remain in the same living quarters, actually encourages the beating to continue.

What often happens in a counseling session is that the victim is told to give the abuser the ultimatum: discontinue the beatings or I will leave. Teachers have been beaten too long because they have enabled parents to become passive participants in their child’s education. The public educational system is organized such that the only requirements for the parent or guardian is to have a home address, and get the child out of bed in time to board their bus to school. The child is sometimes eligible for a breakfast and hot lunch, and the school either provides automatically or the following services are provided at no extra charge for those eligible: the school, correct classes, and teacher are chosen, vaccinations, grades and poor work notices are sent home, safe transportation to and from school, open houses and other meetings for the parents to meet school personnel, special placement for “under”
and over “achievers,” paper, pencils, candy for doing good work, bumper stickers, skating parties, and even tissues. In San Bernardino, California, some parents have enrolled their elementary school aged child in a program which requires children to wake up at 5:00 A.M. to catch a bus in time for them to be at school at 7:00 A.M.! Upon arrival, students participate in various activities, attend regular school, and then attend the same program in the afternoon until 5:00 P.M. Many children in this program don’t return home until 7:00 P.M.

By providing so many services, many of which are indirectly related to education, some parents have reasoned that their participation in education is unnecessary because everything runs “smoothly” without them. Educators have allowed themselves to shoulder the majority proportion of rearing young children and have thus “enabled” passive behaviors for some parents who prefer to pursue other priorities. These same parents are among those who don’t attend open houses, special “parents nights,” who won’t respond to poor work and failure notices, yet scream loudest when junior either doesn’t graduate or drops out of school by their freshman year in high school. Since educators often point to the broken home while parents blame incompetency, I propose a systematized method to correlate parent participation in public education to statistics including: number of days the child is absent in a school year, grade point average, SAT scores, and drop out rates. Parent participation in five school activities per academic school year should be required by federal law. Upon completion of respective activities attended by parents, a federal receipt is issued to the parent by the school and must be attached to federal income tax forms each year. As an incentive, a $1,000 tax deduction is allowed (up to five during the school year) per receipt.

Choice activists view a successful public education with as much enthusiasm as someone searching for a “pearl in the garbage.” Some dissatisfied parents want the
freedom to send their children to any institution they wish, yet have they neglected to consider the crippling effects of the loss of revenue to those left behind. Will this reality threaten the security of this nation because, as much as we may wish to blame public education for various problems, it will be far less effective with less money. The most troublesome of the accusations is that educational personnel are incompetent and this requires attendance at another institution.

A Fork in the Road: John Dewey's Progressive Reforms

Thus far groundwork has principally been laid to imply that a distinct public educational system arose to preserve the type of political system originally conceived by those who produced the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. John Dewey, like Thomas Kuhn, has been accused of formulating some covert philosophy meant for harm because he suggested a new method by which to operate a society. The consequence of Dewey's philosophy has lead to the further legitimization of the state school designed to educate people who seek to serve the collective society for the welfare of humanity. In theory, this means that the individual, in the perpetuation of the "state - consciousness," must submit themselves to the collective - that is, the state. Newton Edwards, a professor of education at the University of Chicago, has summarized this theory supporting modern public education. He writes:

"Public education is not merely a function of government; it is of government. Power to maintain a system of public schools is an attitude of government in much the same sense as is the police power or the power to administer or to maintain military forces or to tax... The primary function of the public school, in legal theory at least, is not to confer benefits upon the individual as such, the school exists as a state institution because the very
existence of civil society demands it.” (Edwards, pp. 23, 24)

The legacy of John Dewey continues to be of preeminent importance in public education during the 20th century. Dewey was an intellectual who studied philosophy, history, and psychology, and applied his knowledge in these fields to education. Dewey was personally opposed to the individualism that the American political system fostered and views education, as both a preserver of government, and a conduit to be used as an instrument of change. He argued for a collective view of one’s position in society such that people act, not according to their desires and self-interests, but for the mutual benefit of the aggregate society.

What makes Dewey’s approach to education relevant to the issue of choice in America is that he opposed the abilities of free thought, if it lead to actions benefiting the individual and not the collective community. What Dewey actually attempted to do, according to critics of Dewey, was to create an alternative world view which, in principle, was consistent with communism. What makes this potentially vexatious to conservatives is that generations of students have now been educated in the Dewey’s educational environment who staunchly believe that, for the sake of the collective good, the traditional public educational system is best. On the other hand, proponents of the choice system believe that the original formulation of America’s government contained elements of free enterprise and, whether one speaks of economics or education, the letter and spirit of free enterprise should inform our thoughts about educational reform. Dewey’s method of thought was a watershed which has lead to thinking and re-thinking the public educational system from the time his methods were adapted to education. The choice movement is an outgrowth of Dewey’s method of thinking because choice activists believe a new system ought to be encouraged to benefit the collective society.

With the progressive agenda firmly at the helm of educational reform in the early
20th century, the idea of autonomous/local education was no longer a possibility. What frightens choice proponents most about the progressive movement, is that its structure reinforces state control of education. Though the example is extreme, and few of the choice activists would go so far as to say that our system is fast duplicating Hitler's Germany, state control of public education is a voracious fear of this group. Accordingly, the complaint is that not only do states control what is learned, but where children should learn, how many days in a calendar year are sufficient to learn state curriculum, and how many years constitutes a reasonable time frame to learn that which the state deems important.

In California, the educational bureaucracy has increased school accountability which, for the choice group, represents increased state control. Actually, the Framework published by the California State Department of Education represents state response to concerns by parents and state legislatures who wished to improve education in this state. Choice activists watch in horror as Bill Honig, State Superintendent of Public Schools in California, and his staff restructures California's curriculum which instructs and attempts to hold teachers personally accountable to the letter of the Framework. The arguments on either side have merit and should be given equal attention. Some in the choice organization oppose the current system because the state Framework is too rigid and "forces" emphasis or de-emphasis about topics within disciplines which conflict with their coalitions priorities. For instance, in science many choice activists deplore the teaching of evolution as fact and prefer it to be either excluded altogether or taught contiguously with other "theories." A perceived threat by proponents in the choice movement is that by placing the power of what is taught in the hands of the state, the most influential power culminating in how our children think has been removed from the parents. If Dewey's theory is carried out, what the state must teach is for the
collective good, in other words, in any given era specific values are vicariously accepted or rejected and these determine societal standards of morals, etc. With the Dewey approach, strict adherence to tradition is subsequently ignored because the reliance on such is an antiquated approach to educations' evolving dynamic qualities. What determines "acceptable" values for a given society in any era is determined by the collective value system created by 50.1% of the people or the group which is most politically affluent. "Throughout these years, (e.g., the world from the 1920's) the power of the State to do evil expanded with awesome speed. Its power to do good grew slowly and ambiguously."

(Johnson, back cover)

In California, a possible dilemma for those who have vigorously worked toward Dewey's definition of the "collective good," is that curriculum is designed to meet the educational needs of the most diverse population of any state in the United States. The Framework is perceived by choice activists as a means to control not educate the populous, as if it were an evil leviathan. This point is debated ardently because, regardless of intentions, the fact remains that the state created the Framework and continues to levy extensive power over children. State control of education began out of the need for funding public schools and remains in this position because the state continues to have necessary tax revenues to support public education. In consideration of the state Framework, outcomes of this curriculum are both positive and negative. On the positive side, teachers are provided with numerous, highly structured curriculum resources to utilize, commensurate with class and individual dynamics. Secondly, with the given content for each discipline, the teacher is free to focus on the method of teaching rather than both the method and content of what is to be taught. An additional benefit persists because California is a very mobile state and families moving intra-
state will have a smoother transition from school to school because each is teaching the same curriculum. Those working in the California education system are hardly in a lock-step sync in curriculum approach. Teachers who criticize the Framework have two primary complaints. First, in a given discipline, the emphasis of the Framework may contradict the perceived importance by the professional concerning the respective curriculum content. Second, some teachers believe the Framework is too dictatorial and the teacher, as a professional with expertise in a discipline may find this system censorious.

The emphasis of the “collective” good encouraged later reforms under the guise of The Civil Rights Acts and a Supreme Court decision, Brown vs. Board of Education, which lead to the desegregation of public schools. Dewey’s method of thought encouraged a relativistic viewpoint of education in which nothing was to be taught because it is traditional, but because it supported the collective good. According to Dewey, “...intelligence is fundamentally conditioned by the collective thinking of other men; the mind is not a ‘private’ phenomenon, it is a social phenomenon.” (Peikoff, p. 5)

Civil Rights and Education: A Noble Vision Turned Educational Chaos

The value of reviewing the process of desegregation in public schools is because principles innate to the process may once again surface with the choice initiative proposed in California. Many questions must be answered before choice in education is adopted. During the 19th century, slavery continued to thrive in a nation where all people were recognized as equal by nature. In the Deep South slavery existed because it fit a regional definition of the “collective good” and it was culturally “proper.” What Southerners failed to realize is that slavery cannot exist in a nation where the natural rights of each human exceeds the local biases (e.g., the “need” for slaves) and that a definition of the collective good must be
dictated by principles as well as efficacy. Both proponents and antagonists in the choice issue must accept responsibility for assuring that their agenda and personal definition of the collective good considers the whole society. Additionally, each must be sure that their personal desire and corresponding policies coincides with the benefit of the entire society both now and in the long term. Precious few rationales on either side of this issue have articulated a comprehensive impact their side will have on various ethnic and cultural groups, possible economic casualties, and impacts to both families and communities. The “White House Conference on Education” met merely to discuss increased spending by the federal government in public education, yet this small committee and the decisions made continues to have lasting significance. Mere talk of choice initiatives and corresponding policies may seem insignificant, yet the affect(s) could be monstrous in later generations.

In terms of Thomas Kuhn’s paradigmatic philosophy, there are two sources for paradigmatic change which occur in education. The first, which are intra-educational, include varying teaching techniques (e.g., “open classroom”), methods of teaching, etc. The profession of education can be likened to a living organism which passes through a developmental continuum; because, educational needs vary generationally and regionally. The second source for paradigmatic change, and the one to which we will now turn, are derived from extra-educational sources. These factors profoundly impact education and include demographic changes, and political policies originating at the local, state, and federal level(s). The initial significant extra-educational policy was the funding of public education by the state of Massachusetts in 1845. This was a paradigmatic/revolutionary change which eventually became the normal function of states and, as time progressed, it became a responsibility of the state to underwrite public
education. Within approximately one hundred years of the first state contribution to public education, the Supreme Court was to issue a verdict with aftershocks leading to increased federal funding of education, the Civil Rights Act (1964), and busing to achieve federally desired integration quotas.

Before specifically relating the aforementioned to the current choice/ voucher initiative proposed in California, John Dewey's world-view of the collective good should be revisited. Dewey's philosophy was a deliberately relative phrase and its ambiguous nature allows each generation to devise their own definition of the collective good respectively. In Dewey's formulation, the scope of the collective good was to span the entire society and was to have been all encompassing. Difficulties arose, particularly in the Deep South, with applying this world-view to education because the state controlled local laws as well as educational policies which together rendered discrimination against blacks in the classroom and society. The Civil Rights movement was, in part, a reaction to localized visions of the collective good which conflicted with citizens Constitutional rights. In several southern states the "collective good" meant segregated learning institutions and as of the 1962-1963 school year, only .4% of black school children were attending integrated schools in the 11 states of the Deep South, with Alabama, Mississippi, and South Carolina maintaining complete segregation except in colleges. (Morris, p.838)

It has already been stated that education is not mentioned in either the Declaration of Independence or the Constitution, but it grew out of, and in support of, the principles each contained. In the south, numerous laws remained which departed from the basic principles of these two documents and they resulted in a segregated society and educational system. Black and white children were not allowed to attend the same school for the same reason they were segregated in other
public meeting areas. The Supreme Court decision in Brown vs. The Board of Education of Topeka (1954) opened a Pandora’s Box of federal regulation of public education. Such involvement by the federal government represented a new paradigm change since they could wield more influence than local districts and states because they had enormous revenues to invest that the public school system desperately needed.

Between November 28 and December 1, 1955, the federal government held the “White House Conference on Education.” During this conference, attention focused on educational goals and needs, teacher training and recruitment, and financing schools. In a majority vote the committee favored the proposition that the federal government should increase its financial participation in public education. The emphasis of influence was to create policies favoring federal influence. This action by the federal government was not to be misconstrued as an altruistic attempt to buttress state educational programs. The timing of this conference is significant because, following the Supreme Court decision in Brown vs. Board of Education, the federal government applied the committee’s recommendations to assist in the desegregation of public schools. Initially, the Supreme Court decision had little impact, indeed, few would have predicted the significant changes which would alter education beyond the immediate decision.

To gain a complete understanding of the significance of Brown vs. Board of Education it is necessary to understand a synopsis of another Supreme Court case which predates this by 58 years. In 1896, a Supreme Court decision in Plessy vs. Ferguson rendered the doctrine of “separate but equal.” Impetus for this doctrine stemmed primarily from Southern states which were reliant on the cotton harvest for their economic well-being. The North was largely industrialized and attitudes about the legitimacy of slavery were quickly changing toward emancipation and
since this region of the country was industrialized, they had no need for slave labor for their wealth. The continuance of slavery, therefore, was endorsed by the South who defined their “collective good” in light of this condition. According to the “separate but equal” doctrine, blacks and whites could be separated in train cars because the facilities in which they were confined were physically “equal.” The argument favoring segregating schools dated to the 1896 Supreme Court decision because as long as school facilities (e.g., the physical environment) were deemed equal, the “separate but equal” doctrine was satisfactorily applied and discrimination wasn’t a consideration. In Brown vs. Board of Education, the Court ruled that not only was the doctrine of “separate but equal” unconstitutional, the physical separation of people, on the basis of skin color alone, constituted inequality. Thus, in a single decision, the “collective good” had been redefined from a narrow regional definition in the South to an all encompassing one which considered the impact of segregation for the aggregate society.

The argument in favor of upholding segregation of schools was that as long as the facilities (e.g., the physical environment) were equal, “separate but equal” was satisfactory applied. The Court ruled that not only was the principle of “separate but equal” not equal, but federally enforced busing followed as a ruling of the Court to ensure racial “desegregation,” and the arguments favoring desegregation were informed by a redefinition of the collective good with an emphasis on sympathy rather than jurisprudence. This point just made is important because as long as a Court ruling found a basis in a new vision of the collective good rather than in jurisprudence which would have desegregated educational institutions for other reasons, this left the door wide open for other such rulings which brings us to the debate of choice.

Following the Supreme Court case, Brown vs. Board of Education (1954), the
White House Conference (1955), and the Civil Rights Act (1964) the federal agenda in public education was realized. The Civil Rights Act contained the following provisions which directly affected education: (1) to bar discrimination in public accommodation, (2) authorizing the Attorney General to initiate suits to desegregate schools or other facilities. The effects of federal funding of schools was that by December 1966, 4,653 out of 7,072 school districts in 17 Southern states met compliance measures. It became evident that a means for desegregation had to be available since the policy was in force and busing resulted from the instruction from the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare because without the means to carry out desegregation it was useless. In fact, the federal policy regarding desegregation actually restricted the desegregation process so long as busing wasn't provided. (Morris, p. 529)

Culminating with the Civil Rights Act, a paradigmatic change in public education was set in motion. In relation to proponents of the choice/ voucher system initially, state funding of public education was deplorable because the means by which to change local education is increasingly ambiguous. Choice proponents wish to undermine state control of education with the ability to choose public or private education and they achieve the support of the current Administration, in part because the Administration wants to please a growing movement calling for paradigmatic change and, in part, because of the associated loyalty afforded the Republican party to which the majority of the choice proponents belong.

The proponents and antagonists in the choice/ voucher debate are really engaged in a discussion about whether to overhaul the definition of education's collective good or to start over. Arguments are compelling on either side, for one argues that too much state control has led to a fundamental breach of freedom as we value it,
while the other believes the undoing of the present system will degenerate it to a pre-civil rights era of elitism. The debate rages because of the contradistinguished views of the collective good and whether the adoption or non-adoption constitutes a paradigm-like policy for the future of American education. The Supreme Court decision, Brown vs. Board of Education, led to a paradigm shift in education and, with the prospect of a choice/voucher system in California, a paradigm shift of equally staggering proportions may occur.

**The Social Consequences of the Broken Home: Can Education Survive?**

One of the many accusations made toward educators is that the parent knows what is best for their child. No educator would argue openly with the parent on this issue, yet the presumption behind such a remark is that teachers are “out to lunch” when it comes to the intimate knowledge required to fully educate young people. The following represents information the average parent doesn’t learn about, not because they are ignorant or naive, but because, like it or not, some students act one way at school and another at home, and/or will divulge information to peers and teachers but not to parents. In so stating, public educators stand in the vulnerable balance between being better prepared to understand a child in terms of the broad category of youth culture verses the ability to communicate better with an individual child. The parent and educator will benefit if they work as a team while utilizing the specialized knowledge of each to benefit everyone involved. The information which follows, about music in particular, is meant for both parents and educators to use to help reach a growing segment of society who listens to more music than television, homework, and recreation combined. The information is not meant to be sensationalized, though for the first-time reader of such information, the attachment of Heavy Metal music and “satanism” may be a bit far fetched!

A girl turned to display her “T” shirt which read “Youth Gone Wild.” Has
today’s youth “gone wild,” and if to wild they have ventured, how far must educators and parents journey to recapture them? Have students alienated the traditional public educational school system or has the system alienated those it was intended to serve? Whatever the “real” answer, teenagers will not take the initiative to bridge the cultural gap which currently exists. To the degree that a cultural gap continues to widen, so does our ability to teach an entire generation of youth. Parents and educators must move beyond mere awareness of trends which affect our youth, we must become culturally literate because students are committing a generational genocide through drug abuse, Heavy Metal, the occult, and suicide.

At its origin the U.S. was connected by a common political, economic, social, family religious, and educational heritage. The aforementioned were interdependent strands of a mosaic binding an amalgam of ethnic, racial, and culturally diverse people into an impenetrable community. Contemporary America is witnessing the emergence of the individual and special interest groups interested in raising to prominence a selected strand of the mosaic while ignoring the interdependent nature of the particulars. The collective result of those petitioning for choice in education is an “unraveling” of the whole and the revelation that our government heeds the demands of such groups. If the instability of one of the strands is a barometer of our governments effectiveness, then many politicians deserve impeachment. A coordination of public policies unifying the institutions of family, government, and educational institutions for the purpose of ensuring the physical, psychological, social and economic wellness of our youth, family and community is overdue.

A feeling of community has permeated our society since its inception several levels. The most important were the immediate and extended families including mother, father, brother, sisters, grandmothers and grandfathers, aunts uncles, and cousins. At another level, neighbors were often best friends who visited and
helped when needs arose. Throughout history, times have been unpredictable, but a community of immediate and extended families, neighbors, and church friends provided the necessary emotional and physical security. “Community” is the sense of connectedness attaching individuals to groups of people and, in turn, a whole society, who are genuinely concerned with their well being. Without a sense of belonging, people and the societies in which they live become physically, emotionally, and psychologically insecure and developmentally impaired. The damage experienced by young people who don’t have a secure feeling of community is particularly acute. Former generations of youth were buoyed by the security their personal community of concerned family and friends but today’s youth are often left on their own. The Second Law of Thermodynamics states, “All things move from order to disorder” and is applicable to the cosmos, material objects, and human institutions. The United States was founded upon the universal principle of human equality. The existence and success of governments depend on how well the natural existence of equality are upheld through public policies. When individuals natural rights are preserved, the community and country are preserved.

Each generation has their own definition for the “good old days.” For adults who endured the depression of the 1920’s, the good old days were lazy Sunday afternoons spent with grandmothers and grandfathers, aunts, uncles, and cousins at ice cream socials. For those older, the good old days consisted of many hours in the corn or wheat fields, praying for rain and thanking God for the plentiful harvest. Can we objectively judge the quality of life and education in previous generations. or were they neither better nor worse - just different? Through a variety of generational distinctives, there was a common thread of “community” which wove its way into the 18th, 19th, and early 20th centuries.

Efforts to maintain a sense of community within the educational system ended in
1954. The United States Supreme Court acting on pseudo - psychological reasoning rather than jurisprudence finalized their verdict in Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka, et. al. that busing was necessary for children to attend integrated school programs. For the first time entire communities were torn from long established neighborhoods and, as a baby torn from a mother's womb through abortion, the American society is suffering from irreparable psychological, social, and emotional consequences.

As our generation reminisces the good old days of friends walking hand in hand to neighborhood schools, we mourn the death of community. Today we visit immediate family members annually and some don't know the names of their nieces and nephews. Our neighbors on one side each arrive from work at 8:00 p.m. and the other neighbors are contemplating their second divorce. For many, week days are spent transporting children between divorced spouses or day care facilities, microwaving fast dinners, and spending "quality" time with children because "quantities" of time are not available. Our generation has developed a distinctive self - centered phraseology such as "stressed out," or "emotionally drained," among others. Adults stress the importance of "self" esteem, and a good "self" concept and seldom are the needs of other people mentioned unless the "self" is judged gratified. "Without families, churches, and communities, the individual is preeminent. There is no pursuit of the common good." (Focus, p.16) Today, the individuals vicarious needs supersedes the needs of the collective society to such an extreme, that if it became necessary to dissolve the government as we now understand it, it might be pulled off and rationalized with psychological jargon.

A by - product of the increased importance of individual pursuits over community needs is a new cynicism among contemporary youth because they don't feel they are a priority. Expressions of this cynicism are evident in lyrics of heavy
metal and rap music, drug use and abuse, suicide, and a high dropout rate. At a time when divorces have reached epic proportions, the federal government offers little support for exasperated families. Political policies, in fact, contribute to the continuing deterioration of the family structure. One blatant example is the tax exemption amount allowed for families with children which lags dramatically behind the inflation rate since the 1950’s. The problems in education do not originate in the political arenas, rather in troubled homes. At a time when children are moving between divorced homes, the “conservative” segment of our society expects our youth to “just say no,” while struggling “druggies” find sparse or no social programs to aid them.

Psychological research indicates that when adolescents are habitually asked to make adult decisions, emotional damage occurs. Today’s youth are required to adjust to an extraordinary high peer death rate from suicides and drug overdoses, and many live in two homes because divorced parents decided it is more convenient for children to live out of a suitcase than they. For the first time in our nation’s history, there exists an inertia which confounds our youth and parents alike. It is the educators responsibility to articulate the dynamics affecting students so they can equip them with the necessary problem-solving skills to ensure their success.

In previous generations, close-knit families, friends, and school mates teamed to give children a sense of high expectations. As recently as 15 years ago, if all teenagers living on a city block finished high school, then to do otherwise meant social disaster. The death of community has left today’s youth with little positive peer pressure, emotional and physical instability, and the pursuit of whatever feels good has become the norm. Today’s young despair the future and, consequently, education has become a farcical exercise not because the system has failed but because of the perceived devaluation of education which occurs in the home. One
of the aftereffects of this generations cynicism is a dramatic increase in the dropout rate among students under the age of sixteen. Educators are aware of the menacing trends in education but perhaps the most bewildering has become a new “American tradition”: dropping out. Dropping out of school is not a low socioeconomic problem nor is it a “minority” problem. Dropping out of school affects our whole society because those who drop out must drop “in” somewhere whether it is the welfare system or the overwhelmed prison system we all pay for another’s freedom to leave school. In today’s school system, students of varied racial, ethnic and economic orientations combine to create new amalgams in their hopes and aspirations for the future. While educators prepare students for the “information age” a “virus” threatens to usurp our collective vision of a new literate society. Children no longer dream of a personal future of hard work and a college degree but are busy tapping their feet to new “Heavy Metal” babble heard during lunch or gasconading about a promotion to “lead trainer” at McDonalds.

If dropping out is so prevalent, we need to examine anew the at-risk groups and the characteristics of those belonging to them. Have educators and educational researchers identified all of the major at-risk groups and do identified groups continually change? How many at-risk categories are added annually? To understand our youth, one must study the music they play. Chris and his confidant just finished their lunchtime dose of Slayer from their “hit” album “South of Heaven.” I notice each is a bit moody and who wouldn’t be after hearing a song like “Cleanse the Soul”:

“Body that rest before me with every dying breath spellbound and gagged I commence your flesh to dirt. Body that lay before me in everlasting death entombed in abscess to rot and lie stinking in the earth."
Empty alter awaits its victim stained glass windows black candles burn the midnight oil incense fills the night. Observing trance awaken state lying still unknowing reciting the passages of time prepare for the impaling. Deaths an art flesh and earth never part a power of the mind Death shines on the air of silence a ritual of endless time. Purged of your dead body sacrificed of your life unearthly ritual sealed in fire enter the kingdom of desire.”

( Slayer, “Cleanse the Soul”)

With Slayer’s message deep within, I attempt to engage Chris and the rest of my “metalheads” (e.g. people who listen primarily to Heavy Metal music), in Eastern European affairs. Imagine, in our youth Elvis and his pelvis were feared while he sang “.... don’t step on my blue suede shoes.” Traditional rock and roll is puerile compared to Heavy Metal! With every verse, Heavy Metal music tempts impressionable teenagers into a romance with Satan (or at least Slayer), and placates any fear of death. A “culture of apathy” is pervasive among the young and is recognized by liberals and conservatives alike and Heavy Metal, while not the cause of, is a contributor to this phenomenon. (New Republic, pp. 7-8)

Music alone can mesmerize listeners into otherwise unattainable stages, add words and music can be a lethal weapon capable of damage beyond repair. P. Merriam, anthropologist and author, wrote, “There is probably no other cultural activity which is so all - pervasive and which reaches into, shapes and often controls so much of human behavior.” (Let’s Talk Rock, p. 13) The late Jimi Hendrix mad a statement which every educator and parent should be aware of: “You can hypnotize people with music and when they get at their weakest point, you can preach into their subconscious minds what you want to say.” (Let’s Talk Rock, p. 9) Plato wrote in the Republic, “....not all poetry and music is apt to make men
good citizens in general and good warriors or guardians in particular. Therefore the poetry and music not conducive to this moral - political end must be banished from the city.” If both Plato and Hendrix are correct, it is incumbent that educators understand the music of today’s youth. Many believe that rock is the cause of teenage drug abuse, pregnancies, suicides and alcohol abuse but the problems teens face are more complex than merely listening to a rock musician and committing a regrettable act. My personal experience with “metalheads” is that lyrical messages of Heavy Metal acts as a filler for a vacuum created by passive or uninterested parent(s).

The most popular contemporary youth music is Heavy Metal which can be historically traced back to the psychedelic ‘60’s when it was called acid rock. In the mid ‘70’s, hard rock entered a period of remission. By the 1980’s, Heavy Metal came back to compete with Punk/ New Wave music. Eventually Heavy Metal became synonymous for all types of hard rock. Generally speaking, Heavy Metal may be divided into three broad categories: Glam, Corps, and Black Metal.

Glam (short for glamorous ) or party metal music are some of the biggest selling albums in the world today! The attraction of party metal is fun and fantasy yet, in reality, this music attracts many who are looking for an escape. The “party” attitude of this music emphasizes freedom and young people having difficulty in accepting who they are find a special solace in the escape this music offers. The “party” attitude is not al bad, for not all youth are carried into an abyss of moral decay, yet for the vulnerable, this music provides a fun - filled world of sexual pseudo - acceptance and mindless release. The most popular party metal band is Def Leppard who became the first band in the history of rock music to sell seven million copies each of two consecutive albums in America. In this sense, they are bigger than the Beatles. Other party metal bands include Bon Jovi, Guns N’ Roses, Poison,
and AC/DC.

The newest brand of Heavy Metal to emerge in the 1980's was a melting pot of hard-core Punk and no-frills metal mania. Metal-Corps is also called thrash metal, speed metal, hard-core or punk metal. The community of Metal-Corps wears torn blue jeans, T-shirts with their favorite rock bands, denim jackets, and black leather. Metal-Corps bands aim their angry contempt and political criticism at institutions like government, education, the church, the record industry, and parents. The key symbol for the Corps is the death skull. Metal-Corps teaches that violence, pain, suicide, and death are the only things this world has to offer. The three most popular thrash metal groups are Metallica, Megadeth, and Anthrax.

The most dangerous, and least understood strand of Heavy Metal is “Black Metal.” All Heavy Metal bands are not in the occulted or satanic as many fear but those in the Black Metal strand are the exception. Black Metal rock is based upon “slasher” films such as “Chain Saw Massacre”, “Friday the 13th”, “Halloween,” and “Nightmare on Elm Street.” Black Metal concerts feature skulls and skeletons, simulated slashing, stabbings, and decapitations. Some drink blood or gnaw on a few bones. Some groups incorporate occult imagery, satanic rites or references to magic. This dark angry music focuses on death and violence, and a love for blood and gore. Many of Black Metals fans discount the occult reputation by stating it is merely part of the “show” and contend bands performing the music don’t really believe in the “stuff.” While some Black Metal bands are hypocritical the real issue is the actual impact of the image on the people who attend these concerts.

Black Metal bands like Slayer have an enormous impact on youth who tune into their lyrics. Bob Larson in the host of “Talk - Back,” a daily radio talk show, heard by millions, which addresses contemporary youth issues. In his book about the subject of satanism, he quotes a conversation with David who listens to Slayer
religiously, “When I was young, Slayer brought satanism into my life. It's because of their music that I worship the devil. Their lyrics introduced me to Lord Satan. They made me what I am. The words of their songs are the most important thing to me.” (Larson, p. 10)

I recently removed a student from my classroom who rarely completed required assignments. He often slept in class, and paid little attention to personal hygiene. He frequently wrote lyrics of Black Metal music and satanic symbols that “metalheads” enjoy drawing. At a conference with this student’s mother, I showed her an example of his handwritten lyrical sheet with artwork. The parent replied, “Oh yes, he does those (drawings) all the time.” The precursor to Heavy Metal, “acid” rock was bad enough, but the blunt obnoxiousness of Black Metal is of a different nature. Consider the lyrics by the Black Metal group Venom: “... I drink the vomit of the priests, make love with the dying whore. I spit at the virgin you worship and sit at Lord Satan's left hand.” (Venom, “Possessed”) Venom also features a member named Abbadon (after the evil demon of Revelation in the Bible) who sing, “In League With Satan,” “One Thousand Days in Sodom,” and “Live Like an Angel (Die Like a Devil).”

Black Metal appeals to a generation of youth who live in a country obsessed with individual “rights.” Vicarious rights and freedoms are granted the populous without regard for the good of the community. What distinguishes freedoms granted to youth and adults is that with freedom, adults have power, the young do not. Today's youth longs for power yet it is not attainable. In the words of one youth regarding this issue, “What is there to live for? We’re going to live for today and do what we want. There’s no future.” (Larson, p. 115) Black Metal offers youth both freedom and power and therefore fulfills that which society withholds. The power Heavy Metal offers is, perhaps, the key to its prolonged popularity.
An article appearing in the L.A. Times (October 19, 1988) entitled “Dead Pets To A Human Sacrifice” recounts the brutal murder of a teenage boy in Carl Junction Missouri. The teenage murderers later admitted to listening exclusively to Black Metal music and stated, “Maybe it was all the drugs and suggestive music while I was on drugs.... maybe they planted something in my head.” This statement supports the previously made quote by Jimi Hendrix. Dr. Paul King is assistant professor of child adolescent psychology at the University of Tennessee. King studied musical preferences compared with conduct disorders in adolescent patients with drug and psychiatric problems. The following summarizes his research: nearly 60% of chemically dependent youth designated Heavy Metal music as their musical preference and these admitted to a preoccupation with their lyrics. A teenager already saturated with negative feelings can draw inspiration from Heavy Metal music which affirms antisocial and drug-addictive behavior. King concludes that “music which speaks directly to young people about sex, violence, and suicide may be a serious public health problem.” (King, 1988) This comment by King affirms Plato’s quote about the power of music.

**Choices and Vouchers: The impact upon Education**

In California, voucher proponents are collecting signatures to qualify a parental choice initiative for the November ballot in 1992. It is the opinion of some that this bill will undermine the public school system and for this reason, most public school teachers, administrators, and support staff stand opposed with a coalition of like-minded individuals. In California, vouchers only cost $2,600 yet if a “choice” initiative is passed, it will cost schools' $10,000 per student annually. The reason for the disparity in the aforementioned figures is three-fold in nature. Initially, schools will lose $5,200 in ADA because the child no longer attends public school. Second, the cost of the voucher, $2,600, is deducted from available public school
money. Finally, the initiative states "savings" from the voucher will be excluded from total school funding guaranteed by proposition 98 which means another $2,600 is lost bringing the total to over $10,000. The California initiative has been vicariously cited as unconstitutional and/or discriminatory. The "constitutional" question is derived regarding public funding for parochial schools and whether this violates the constitutional separation of church and state. In actuality, concerns have surfaced in both religious and non-sectarian sectors, for if vouchers become law, federal and state school officials will be required to regulate curriculum because funding from each of these sources will be used to continue school operations. A similar initiative measure proposed by the Pennsylvania Legislature was defeated in January 1992 because in the opinion of legislators it violated the church/state clause. The claim of discrimination stems from the stipulation that a "scholarship redeeming school" cannot exclude students based upon ethnicity, race, color, or national origin.

A movement has enraptured America and can be captured in a singular term: choice. Across America self-proclaimed conservatives and pseudo pro-moral values' coalitions have indicated, "enough is enough." American public education has become, for some, an untamable leviathan whose very existence entraps impressionable children because it restricts the educational institution they may attend. Those crying "choice" generally mistrust public educators, even though teachers are attempting to reach those who cannot speak English, who have found drugs and lost themselves, or who are innately confused because their peers have attempted to commit suicide. "Choice" is a pseudonym for escape, for those who so proclaim have voted for an alternative to public education. For choice adherents, problems found in public education are innate with the system which "stifles" choice and thus imprisons generations of children and parents alike.
The choice - voucher initiative proposal would award a voucher, or "scholarship" for any student who leaves the public school and enrolls in a private school. The scholarship is a check which would be sent to the private institution the student enrolls in and, therefore, the student never receives a scholarship per se. Those who oppose this initiative claim that private schools are trying to get a piece of the school revenue pie which will amount to a hefty sum if achieved. The initiative prohibits the state from establishing any requirements in scholarship redeeming schools as of October 1992 and the teachers in such schools will not be required to have a California Teaching Credential or a college degree. In order to pay for the vouchers, public school funding will be radically cut and those teachers in scholarship redeeming schools would have no retirement system except Social Security and Medicare. If the initiative passes, tax - subsidized private, religious, and other "scholarship" receiving schools will be permitted to discriminate on the basis of religion, gender, physical handicaps, or academic abilities. In other words, the gains made through such legislation as the Civil Rights Act (1964) will be nullified. These schools will have the purgative to accept students who conform to a value/ academic oriented standard which can range from complex philosophies to annual income.

Since the Civil Rights Act (1964) was already mentioned, it should be pointed out that there is a high probability that pre - civil rights discrimination could reemerge among students in this state. As voucher recipient schools accept those students meeting their vicarious entrance standards, they isolate those who do not qualify. Many believe those most likely not to qualify will be the students of ethnic origin primarily due to the excessive rates which will be shouldered by the parents in spite of the scholarships. In a state such as California, the possibility of further ethnic tension may not be worth the risk because teaching may center upon a
homogeneous - ethnic premise. The choice voucher initiative is sponsored by ExCEL, or Excellence through Choice in Education League, an organization comprised of proponents of private schools. Upon hearing protests from the public, dissent grew in ExCEL; shortly afterwards, one of the board members announced their consideration of resigning and opposing the initiative. One reason for such dissent is due to ExCEL’s reputation for dishonesty. In January they named the dean of the USC School of Education Gilbert Henschke as supporter, when in fact he denied ever supporting the initiative.

The man responsible for the voucher initiative in California is Joe Alibrandi, a high-tech defense contractor who attained an affluent and politically powerful lifestyle. Alibrandi was chairman of the committee, when the California Business Roundtable refused to endorse choice/vouchers. The Roundtable was Alibrandi’s starting point in his crusade against the public education system. The sole purpose of Albranid’s initiative is to take California’s educational funds and siphon billions of dollars into private schools; guaranteeing skyrocketing profits for private school entrepreneurs. In the state of California, about 531,000 students presently attend private schools. If the choice/voucher initiative is passed, California taxpayers will have to pay over $1.5 billion whether or not even one student leaves a public school in favor of a private institution. Over half of the families with students in private schools have annual incomes over $50,000 consequently this proposition would, in fact, subsidize the education of this state’s most affluent families.

To understand fully reasons why the choice debate has swept the country, a look at one city already availing the choice option is required. In Milwaukee Wisconsin, hundreds of children began attending non-sectarian schools with the state paying up to $2,500 of their tuition costs. The reasons given are compelling and demand
the attention of us all regardless of our personal biases. In Milwaukee, 97,000 students are enrolled in the public school system. The aggregate grade point average for the entire system is 1.62 (D+) and for black students the average GPA is 1.35; and almost 50% of the total student population drop out before graduating from high school. Robert Peters, a principle at Custer High School in Milwaukee said, “It’s nearly impossible to get rid of a teacher unless he or she is involved in a criminal act. A teacher who sexually abused a female staff member was fired in 1987, but only after 20 months, $11,000 in costs and a 13 - day hearing.” These public school statistics contrast one example which seems to be prevalent among most private schools. Urban Day School is a private school which boasts of a 98 percent graduation rate from high school and 50% continue to various colleges. Donations and fund - raising allow Urban Day to charge only $650 per year and parents must perform 20 hours of volunteer work or pay an extra $300. ( Wall Street, p. 11)

The California choice/ voucher initiative was created initially for private school entrepreneurs and supported by California’s upper class. It does little to curb the number of high school dropouts, improve the performance of students in the public educational system, or get public schools more teachers. The public school system will be greatly imperiled if this initiative is passed.

The history of education remains stagnant while how one perceives it is relative to those using it. So it is with other dynamics concerning the choice/ voucher initiative. Irrespective of ones political or religious orientation, which has contributed significantly to the debate about choice matters in public education, the dynamics surrounding debates can be reasonably argued among those working within and outside the public educational system. This has not been an embarkment to support or defend public education yet for reasons primarily attached to national
security, this researcher has come to the conclusion that vouchers and choices threaten not only the educational system but the political system which gave birth to the world’s finest educational system. A thread woven through the mosaic of reasoning both for and against choice in education is that educators and others associated with education, must have foundational information concerning educations a priori before an intellectual response can individually or collectively ensue. Educators should not imagine that a cursory study of a common educational history should lead to a synonymous conclusion, for if an entire segment of our profession becomes “lock step” we will follow, in blind pursuit, others making decisions on our behalf.

Possible discontent among choice/voucher activists should be heard and answers provided as well as an opportunity to make needed reforms which will benefit students. This is not an endorsement of choice, rather, a suggestion which disembodies the defensive posture most in education have harbored toward this issue. From its inception, “free” public education has, in nature, remained constant for students have been enabled to attend neighborhood schools. It is difficult to change a system which has endured a Civil War and two World Wars, prosperity and depression, disenfranchisement and equality. The “winds of change” in contemporary education threatens to supersede tradition - for some these represent needed change, for others they are “progressive” measures, yet for a significant portion of society they remain ambiguous or upsetting. Whatever position individuals and interest groups take, the primary responsibility of these various positions is to provide honest factual information; to handle this matter in a “atypical” political fashion with no hidden agenda, no lies, and no rhetoric designed to mystify. The stakes are much too high for the generations following, for what is really occurring is, in Kuhnian language, a potential revolution and we dare not
blunder in deciding what direction the educational system takes in America.

What specific responsibilities should the parent reasonably be expected to shoulder considering today's "busy" lifestyle? Let me begin by listing a few recommendations: The parents will:

1. Encourage their child to complete all homework every night.
2. Not allow more than 30 minutes of television viewing each day after all homework has been completed.
3. Send their child to school each day with pencils, paper, textbooks, and tissues.
4. Make sure their child has an organizer in which they will write due dates for all homework assignments.
5. Plan to attend at least five school related functions, designed for parents, per academic year.
6. Encourage themselves to do the same activities their child does during the school year including an evening regiment of reading, television deprivation, and organizing their daily schedules.
7. Send their child equipped with enough manners so they know when to say "thank you," and "please," and the ability to discern between right and wrong and the ethics to follow through with it.
8. Not allow their children to miss up to 20 days each semester. (even though some California school districts allow for this)
9. Tell their child that a poor work notice from a class means they may lose their license, television privileges, and/or their life.
10. Monitor the amount and quality of music their children listen to at home.
11. Speak with their child, without interruption, for 1 hour each
evening.

12. Eat breakfast and dinner with their child each day during the week, and all meals together on weekends.

13. Speak with their children about sex education topics. (Contrary to popular belief, educators are not responsible for this!)

The above can be accomplished, and it is a parent who has the ability to evoke these in a child before they walk in the door of the elementary class room, not the teacher!

While the debate rages, we must not subjugate ourselves to a fog of emotionalism that some insist on the premises of their decision making schema. The contingency upon which direction to take in education should be reliant on informed articulation which is not steeped in specialized educational verballage for if such occurs, an abandonment will follow by the very people whose involvement we have cried out for since public education first took root: parents. The burden of contemporary education rests weightily upon teachers and administrators and accountability is to the public. Education in the 1990’s and beyond cannot be a replication of the system as it has existed since the 1800’s for it must flex with changing social, economic, political, and religious dynamics or it risks irrelevancy. Herein rests the cry for new reforms: a segment of the public is saying education has become irrelevant, it is now time for a reasoned response which benefits those who will be given the responsibility for our future: the children.
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