DEMOCRACY AND EDUCATION IN AMERICA:
A PROMISE UNFULFILLED?

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ABSTRACT

Though a general consensus exists as to the democratic purpose of education in America, the particulars of the relationship have been the subject of much debate throughout the nation's history. At a time when public schools are increasingly adopting robust standards, a common curriculum, and statewide testing, is education fulfilling its promise to democracy in America? To this end, this dissertation examines the essential components of democracy in America, the type of democracy schools are presently preparing students for, and what schools in the country should be preparing students for. Analysis of these issues is conducted through the lens of three influential authors in the field: E.D. Hirsch, John Goodlad, and Linda Darling-Hammond. A qualitative case studies approach was employed, with the documented works of each author comprising the data for this research. Constant comparative analysis revealed themes and patterns that shed light on the development of curriculum, the need for educational renewal, the need for the embodiment of education as democracy in the nation's public schools, and a common core of standards. Lastly, this research looked towards the future, categorizing prospective changes in regards to the basic values, rights, school structures, learning content, and teacher training in schooling in American democracy.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

As Benjamin Franklin left Independence Hall at the close of the Constitutional Convention in 1787, he was asked what form of government the delegates had decided upon. He replied, “A republic, if you can keep it.” The challenge of the American experiment has always rested on the ability of the people to create and sustain democratic rule. At the founding of the nation, great debate centered on the ability of the people to make sound decisions about their lives and the lives of their communities. While keen to avoid the oppression of a monarchy, the Founding Fathers were equally wary of the oppressive possibilities of unchecked democratic rule responding to the whims and passions of the public. Recognizing the dangers of granting political power entirely to the masses, serious debate centering on the particulars of American democracy surrounded the Constitutional Convention of 1787 and the struggles for ratification that followed. In the end, the young nation trusted its future to its citizens under a system of representative democracy. Politically, tyranny of the masses was to be avoided through elected delegates who could filter and refine the desires of the people to create the laws of the land. Practically, however, tyranny of the masses was to be avoided through a powerful yet untested method – public education. An educated electorate, it was believed, would be able to make decisions that would further the common good. Education, in this sense, became an essential component to ensuring the success of the American experiment.

1 The term Founding Fathers refers here to the delegates of the 1787 Constitutional Convention who took part in drafting the Constitution of the United States.
In creating the nation, the Founding Fathers of the country understood that the responsibility for preparing its citizens to be leaders fell squarely on the shoulders of the government. After all, if the success of the state depended on the creation of an intelligent populace, it naturally followed that one of the primary duties of the state was to ensure that its citizens share a popular intelligence, one that would allow them to continue the virtues and beliefs upon which the state was built. To this end, John Adams argued, “Laws for the liberal education of youth, especially of the lower class of people, are so extremely wise and useful, that, to a humane and generous mind, no expense for this purpose would be thought extravagant” (as cited in McCullough, 2001, p. 103).

Today, the challenge of ensuring a strong democracy through education remains. Through the passage of time, many changes to education in America have come and gone. Society has grown in size and complexity and education has grown with it. Yet the core work of education remains the same as that outlined at the beginning of the nation. Public education continues to be tasked with fulfilling the promise of an educated populace, the promise of freedom from tyranny, the promise of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, the promise of democracy.

Statement of the Problem

In spite of the long held view of a democratic purpose to public education in America, no consensus exists as to the ways in which this aim should be realized in our public schools. The many swings of the philosophical and ideological pendulum in education have guided schooling in a myriad of directions since the nation’s founding. The progressive movement, traditional back to basics teaching, and standards based
reform are just a few of the trends in education that have guided policy making, instruction, and evaluation in the field. With each new direction, proponents have laid claim to capturing the proper method of fulfilling the purpose of education. Yet, in spite of these claims, unanswered questions surrounding the basic tenets of education in America remain. The Founding Fathers’ arguments on the ability of education to elevate the masses to a capable self-governing body rested on a kind of schooling that extended beyond the mere teaching of basic skills. Instead, to ensure an educated populace capable of democratic rule, the Founding Fathers understood that education must cultivate citizens who have all the requisite skills, knowledge, and understanding that would allow them to effectively self-govern. The particulars of the experience, however, including the curriculum and teaching methodology to be used in schools in America, were never codified in the language of the law or the writings of the time. As Bellamy and Goodlad (2008) note, “Schooling as such was not on their agenda” (p. 565). Accordingly, questions surrounding the purpose of public schooling and how these goals should be achieved continue to persist.

Given these conditions, this research investigated the public purpose of education, and the efforts to realize its goals, through the perspective of three important educational thinkers. Each of the three educators included in this study, John Goodlad, Linda Darling-Hammond, and E.D. Hirsch, have influenced the discussion surrounding democracy and education in America. John Goodlad, a preeminent advocate for educational renewal over the past several decades, wrote extensively on the topic of democracy and education in America. His insights into the cultural context of education, and his advocacy for a public education that connects students to the principles and institutions that support democratic
life, have been influential in shaping a course for improving our schools. Linda Darling-Hammond, a leading voice in education and education research, has also contributed to our understanding of the relationship between democracy and education in America. Her work on professional development, teacher evaluation practices, teacher quality and student achievement, as well as in a number of other fields, has done much to improve our grasp of the connection between research, practice, and public policy. Moreover, in line with the notion of education for democracy, her belief in the implementation of education as democracy, one that models the processes necessary for a healthy sustainable democratic society, are of note to this research. Finally, E.D. Hirsch's notion of cultural literacy has had a profound impact on curriculum and evaluation in education today, positioning democratic education as a quest for academic achievement. His advocacy for a nationally standardized set of content and skills to be taught in schools, one that is guided by notions of American culture, has helped to shape the current standards based movement in education (Shurtleff, 2014).

This study examined the positions of these educators in relation to what schools are expected to do, what they actually do, and what they ideally should do. Such an investigation benefits the public in two important ways. First, it provides stakeholders a guide through which an examination of the current state of education in America can occur. Educators are able to analyze key elements of public schooling, including the curriculum and the delivery methods, in order to determine their effectiveness. Second, the results of this analysis guide stakeholders in the future as they make key decisions regarding curriculum, leadership, and schooling. In revealing the specifics of education in the American democracy, this work can lead to better selection of curriculum materials,
as well as more appropriate measures of evaluation of student achievement and their readiness levels as they progress through the school system. Lawrence Cremin (as cited in Goodlad & McMannon, 1997, p. 13) reminds us:

I would maintain that the questions we need to raise about education are among the most important questions that can be raised in our society, particularly at this juncture in history. What knowledge should “we the people” hold in common? What values? What skills? What sensibilities? When we ask such questions, we are getting at the heart of the kind of society we want to live in and the kind of society we want our children to live in. We are getting at the heart of the kind of public we would like to bring into being and the qualities we would like that public to display. We are getting at the heart of the kind of community we need for our multifarious individualities to flourish.

**Research Questions**

As the works of Goodlad, Darling-Hammond, and Hirsch represent three interpretations of democracy in our schools, this research was guided by several key questions.

1. What are the essential components of democracy in America?

   This question sought to uncover the fundamental characteristics of American democracy through the eyes of Goodlad, Darling-Hammond, and Hirsch. Given the intent of this research to examine the relationship between democracy and public schooling in America, this served as a natural starting point for this work.

2. What type of democracy are schools presently preparing our students for?
Through Goodlad, Darling-Hammond, and Hirsch's analysis of present day education, this question provided insight into the existing goals of public schooling in America. This insight was vital to determining the present relationship between democracy and public schooling in America.

3. What should schooling in America prepare our students for?

This question aimed at the heart of the relationship between democracy and public schooling in America. In asking what our schools should prepare students for, it served at once as a critique of the present system as well as a recommendation for the future. The three educator's perspectives provided this study with a range of thoughts on the direction in which our public schools should be headed.

4. What does the future hold for education and democracy in America?

This question aimed to connect the insights gleaned through the questions above in an examination of the future of public schooling in America.

Outline of Chapters

Chapter 1 introduces the issue of democracy and education in America's public schools. It explores the disconnect between a democratic purpose for education and the lack of clear direction for how to achieve that goal, and presents the four research questions that guided this work.

Chapter 2 explores the literature on democracy. It begins with a focus on a broad understanding of the term, then progresses to exploring the issues surrounding defining the democracy that is uniquely American.
Chapter 3 examines the history of education in America, with a special focus on the relationship between democracy and the nation's schools. It is structured around four main periods identified in this study, the common school era, progressive education, the civil rights movement, and the modern reform times. Each time period's impact on the evolving relationship between democracy and education in America is explored in order to provide a foundation for the analysis in subsequent chapters.

Chapter 4 presents the methodological foundation for this study. The three authors profiled in this work, John Goodlad, Linda Darling-Hammond, and E.D. Hirsch, are introduced and the methods for examining their works are presented. In particular, the case study approach will be discussed in detail, as well as the limitations of this study.

Chapter 5 presents Goodlad, Darling-Hammond, and Hirsch's viewpoints on the research questions that guide this study. Through analysis of their published works and interviews, their positions on the essential components of American democracy, the present state of public education, and the type of democracy schools should prepare our students for are laid forth.

Chapter 6 offers insight into ways in which education and democracy can move forward in the future. Organized around a framework that examines basic values, rights, school structures, learning content, and teacher training, it explores Goodlad, Darling-Hammond, and Hirsch’s beliefs on how those areas should be constructed in education. Additionally, a critical commentary on the positions of the authors is presented, as well as my personal insight into a democratic education for the future of America.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

The Nature of Democracy

Dahl (2006) notes, “there is no democratic theory – there are only democratic theories” (p. 1). Ever since the ancient Greeks first imagined a system of self-governance, there has been no shortage of divergent thoughts in relation to definitions of democracy. Over two thousand years ago, Aristotle (as cited in Berseth, 2000) highlighted the nuances involved in defining democratic governments.

It is often supposed that there is only one kind of democracy and one of oligarchy. But this is a mistake; and, in order to avoid such mistakes, we must ascertain what differences there are in the constitutions of states, and in how many ways they are combined. (p. 146)

On its face the word 'democracy', formed from a combination of the Greek words for people (demos) and rule (kratos), seems to be an unambiguous concept. Commonly defined as 'rule by the people', it can be loosely described as a government in which the people hold ruling power. Yet this simple description masks the underlying difficulties in capturing the ideals of democracy. Indeed, each element involved in the concept of 'rule by the people' raises a number of complex issues. Held (1996) notes the following.

- Who are to be considered 'the people'?
- What kind of participation is envisaged for them?
- What conditions are assumed to be conducive to participation? Can the disincentives and incentives, or costs and benefits, of participation be equal?
• How broadly or narrowly is the scope of rule to be construed? Or, what is the appropriate field of democratic activity?

• If 'rule' is to cover 'the political' what is meant by this? Does it cover: (a) law and order? (b) relations between states? (c) the economy? (d) the domestic or private spheres?

• Must the rules of 'the people' be obeyed? What is the place of obligation and dissent?

• What roles are permitted for those who are avowedly and actively 'non-participants'?

• Under what circumstances, if any, are democracies entitled to resort to coercion against some of their own people or against those outside the sphere of legitimate rule?

Undoubtedly, the questions do not stop here. Similarly designed queries that address notions of consensus, governmental structures, personal liberties, and the like, are all important to sculpting a vision of democracy. Since Aristotle's time, philosophers, social scientists, politicians, and more have weighed in on these questions with the intent of capturing the true essence of democracy. Yet no consensus exists as to the particulars that define democracy (Apple & Beane, 2007; Crick, 2002; Karumanchery & Portelli, 2005). Indeed, as Sigel (1991) notes, although some countries desire democracy, they “often find themselves at a loss how to define it, let alone implement it” (p. 3).

Wiebe (1995) examined over sixty studies concerning democracy for his work on the cultural history of American democracy. Though he discovered that nearly all differed in important respects, he found that commonalities existed between them that
can serve as a starting point for discussions surrounding the concept of democracy. First, nearly all associate democracy with a political system of self-governance that includes elections. From there, the definitions diverge, with some focusing on what goes into the political process, others pointing to what must come out of democratic governance. On the input side, Wiebe notes that the conditions for democracy often divide into two parts. The first specifies the structure of self-governance, typically codified through constitutions, laws, and procedures. The American Constitution is an example of a document that codifies the necessary structure of democratic governance. The second input requirement centers on the citizens of the state, specifically the knowledge, beliefs, and commitments of the individual self-governors in a democracy. This input requirement ties the existence of a democracy to the existence of a set of democratic ideals within the citizens of a state. At the other end of definitions of democracy, Wiebe argues that conditions of output typically require freedom, justice, and effectiveness to be seen in democratic states. The first output requirement, freedom, generally refers to individual liberties for its citizens like those guaranteed in the U.S. Constitution. The second output requirement, justice, often concerns issues of social equity. Effectiveness, the third output requirement, refers to the government’s ability to resolve problems in a timely and effective manner. Understandably, as definitions of democracy incorporate more conditions to varying degrees, the ability to find common ground between them becomes increasingly difficult. Indeed, Wiebe laments the fact that “the subject of democracy comes to resemble a great pile of everybody’s pet concerns” (p. 2).
Democracy and Politics

Horowitz (2006) approaches the task of defining democracy from a different perspective. In analyzing the fundamental beliefs that underpin the competing definitions of democracy, he categorized them as having either a political, cultural, or economic slant. For proponents of the political approach to democracy, the concept is defined by the institutions established in a particular nation. Dahl (2005) identifies these as elected officials, free, fair, and frequent elections, freedom of expression, alternative sources of information, associational autonomy, and inclusive citizenship. Rubinstein and Adler (1991) identify the principles of majority rule and the protection of individual and minority rights as key to a democratic political culture. Sorensen (1998) describes political democracy as a government in which the following conditions are met.

- Regular, meaningful, and extensive competition among individuals and groups for all positions of power in government, without the use of force.
- Political participation for the selection of leaders and policies that are highly inclusive such that no major adult group is excluded.
- A sufficient level of civil and political liberties, such as freedom of expression, freedom of the press, freedom to form and join organizations, to ensure that political competition and participation occur.

Implicit in these definitions is the belief that democracy is a universal concept, unbound by the particulars of the region or nation in which they are found.
Democracy and Culture

For Stevick and Levinson (2007), a definition of democracy rests on the understanding of the cultural factors that impact the political environment in a nation. Supported by work such as Angell and Hahn's (1996) analysis of education in the United Kingdom, Denmark, and Japan, Stevick and Levinson highlight the importance of culture in the conception, implementation, and evaluation of democratic education. While specific political institutions are no doubt necessary for democracy to exist, they argue that the more crucial component to the establishment of democracy is the philosophical underpinnings of the people that bring forth such institutions. They write,

Democracy is not an abstract system that can be dropped into any new context and be expected to function, nor is it a set of institutional arrangements that can be evaluated satisfactorily simply by examining a flowchart in a document. Democracy is rather the product of interaction, the interaction of a system and its institutions with the cultural context and the people who make it real. (p. 2)

In essence, a democratic governmental structure without the underlying personal and cultural commitments to democratic ideals is nothing more than a democracy in name only. Bell (1996) supports this belief by asserting that democracy is the public sphere in which values are translated into public policy. Gibson and Gouws (2003) point to tolerance, recognizing the validity of the judicial process, a commitment to the equality of all people, and the belief in education as a universal right as some of the cultural factors that lead people to establish political mechanisms to promote and protect such values in a democracy. Furman and Shields (2005) argue for the assertion of the following principles in democracies.
• Respect and absolute regard for the worth and dignity of individuals and their cultural traditions.

• Reverence for, and the responsibility of individuals to participate in, free and open inquiry and critique.

• Recognition of interdependence and the importance of collective choices and action in working for the common good.

These underlying principles of democracy, Horowitz (2006) notes, are “close to the heart of American values” (p. B10).

**Democracy and Economics**

Competing theories of democracy revolve around the system's mission of securing economic equality amongst its citizens. Macpherson (1985) presents a definition of democracy as “an arrangement of the economic system which will give a just distribution of work, income and wealth in a country” (p. 35). In line with this approach, Rawls (1971) firmly places the primary purpose of democracies as working to ensure an equitable distribution of goods in society. He identifies the following two principles of justice in democratic institutions (Rawls, 1971, p. 302).

• First Principle: Each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive total system of basic liberties compatible with a similar system of liberty for all.

• Second Principle: Social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both: (a) to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged, (b) attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair opportunity.
Though he acknowledges that the reasons behind such measures are value laden, the political culture, as Stevick and Levinson (2007) might call it, takes a back seat to the purposeful approach towards distributive justice that Rawls presents as essential markers of a democracy. In this way, democracy becomes a function of securing a state ensured equilibrium in an environment where such balance would not occur otherwise. Horowitz (2006) sums up these approaches nicely when he states, “It is not so much that no child is left behind as that no adult finishes too far ahead” (p. B10).

**Quality Democracy**

In addition to identifying the required elements for a government to be called a democracy, the discourses surrounding it have also focused on the quality of the democratic experience in a nation. Democracies have been variously categorized in terms of representative versus participatory (Carr, 2008), weak versus strong (Swift, 2002), passive versus active (Criddle, Vidovich, & O’Neil, 2004), and minimalist versus maximalist (McLaughlin, 1992). In general, each of the categorizations rests on the juxtaposition of the superficial features often associated with democracy with the deeper meaning of the term. Barber (1984) laments the rise of democracies that emphasize the individual over the community, ones in which individual or private ends seem to take precedence over the public good. These ‘thin’ democracies are “concerned more to promote individual liberty than to secure public justice, to advance interests rather than to discover goods, and to keep men safely apart rather than to bring them fruitfully together” (p. 4). By contrast, ‘strong’ democracies encourage the development of a citizenry that recognizes the benefits of community life, who actively participate in
improving the public position, and who can appropriately balance the realization of individual rights with their responsibilities to the creation of a mutually beneficial civil society. This notion of a ‘strong’ democracy is built upon a theory that envisions Politics not as a way of life but as a way of living – as, namely, the way that human beings with variable but malleable natures and with competing but overlapping interests can contrive to live together communally not only to their mutual advantage but also to the advantage of their mutuality. (p. 118)

Building on Barber’s work, Gandin and Apple (2002) introduce the notion of ‘thin’ and ‘thick’ democracy, highlighting the tension between systems that focus on passive reproduction of democratic institutions with one focused on critical engagement and social justice. Carr (2008) explains, “The key concern for the thick perspective of democracy resides in power relations, identity and social change, whereas the thin paradigm is primarily concerned with electoral processes, political parties, and structures and processes related to formal democracy” (p. 118).

**America as a Democracy?**

Given this vast landscape of definitions, it is useful to limit the discussion here to the particular aspects of American democracy as they have played out over the course of the past two hundred years. This approach, as logical as it may appear, presents its own unique challenges. A number of critics have challenged the notion that the American experiment has produced a true system of democracy. Indeed, the country's long and complicated history with slavery, civil rights, and universal suffrage, to name just a few, should not be easily forgotten. In observing the contradictions within the American
Barber (1984) argued that the challenge in modern America is to create democracy “where it has never existed” (p. xvi). He argued that the limits of the liberal American democracy inhibit the realization of civic action evident in a true democracy. Barber rests his argument on an analysis of the balance between individual rights and communal responsibilities exhibited in the American system in response to conflict. Whether the conflict is perceived as a function of the scarcity of resources, as Marx and Engels advanced,² of a Machiavellian lust for power,³ or a product of what Russell viewed as an insatiable appetite,⁴ Barber argues that conflict becomes the chief concern of politics in a liberal democracy. Under this framework, he notes that the liberal democratic approach to conflict highlights the individual’s rights at the expense of the community. In line with the individualistic ideal of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, Americans, and the American democratic system, often act with notions of self-interest in mind. The limits of the American way, therefore, “are the limits of the self-preoccupied imagination” (Barber, 1984, p. 18). To combat this, he urges citizens to assume a greater responsibility for self-governance in order to bring true democracy to the nation.

Greider (1992) supports the notion of democracy in America as a yet unrealized quest. In his analysis of the power relations at work in the American political system, he diagnoses the country with a deformed democratic environment, one that has “undergone a grotesque distortion of its original purpose” (p. 12). Rather than implying that America

² See Marx, K., & Engels, F. *The Communist Manifesto*
³ See Machiavelli, N. *The Prince*
⁴ See Russell, B. *What Desires are Politically Important?*
has achieved a form of pure democracy and atrophied over time however, Grieder argues that its democratic ideals have never been realized.

Americans have never achieved the full reality in their own history or even agreed completely on democracy's meaning. The democratic ideal has always been most powerful in America as an unfulfilled vision of what the country might someday become – a society advancing imperfectly toward self-realization. In that sense, democracy is not so much a particular arrangement of government, but a difficult search. It is the hopeful promise the nation has made to itself. (p. 14)

**Competing Perspectives**

Pateman (1983) searches for the existence of democratic principles from a feminist perspective. She notes, “For feminists, democracy has never existed; women have never been and still are not admitted as full and equal members and citizens in any country known as a ‘democracy’” (p. 66). Pateman argues that feminism, and presumably other viewpoints that diverge from the traditional, established perspectives, provide democracy with its most important and comprehensive critique. The structure of the relationships in America between the sexes, or between other groups in which unequal power relations exist, calls into question the existence of a true democracy.

Similarly, Brettschneider (2002) asserts the need to reimagine democracy from the margins of society. In understanding the unbalanced power relations at work in America, she argues that the decision making tools presently in place, primarily that of majoritarianism, are undemocratic in their promotion of the majority at the expense of the
needs and values of the minority. Brettschneider explains, “our experiences in a country where minorities bear the brunt of the failures of Liberal democracy illuminate how the consequences of substituting *majoritarianism* for *democracy* are fatal” (p. 182). Instead, she urges society to critically engage with its history and social structures to create a democracy that serves more than the privileged majority. Such an account should recognize the benefits of an approach that honors race, gender, class, and culture. As Okihiro (1994) points out, the contributions of these diverse perspectives are what makes democracy in America stronger. He explains that “in fact, the margin has held the nation together with its expansive reach; the margin has tested and ensured the guarantees of citizenship; and the margin has been the true defender of American democracy, equality, and liberty (p. 175). In this light, Brettschneider leaves us with the following questions that challenge us to theorize democracy from the margins.

Can we learn to listen to each other and to those historically disenfranchised? Can we commit to making the participation of democratically inclined, marginalized communities matter among the amplified voices of the already powerful? Many minorities are likely to remain minorities. Must they be punished, overlooked, exoticized, patronized, unheard, exploited, and systemically marginalized for being so? Can we find ways to recognize, name, and challenge the primacy of elite modes and perspectives? Are we bold enough and committed enough to democratic praxis to pursue alternatives informed by the idea and practices of the historically marginalized? How can we continue to stop the crushing realities of economic, spiritual, and cultural deprivation all too common in our so-called democratic system? Will we be able to design paths to equality that do not deny
the difference of minorities and majorities, that empower all in new ways as we go along? Can we acknowledge that our solutions will be temporary without diminishing their importance to us in our day? (p. 201)

**Democracy in Action**

Nevertheless, democracy has existed in America since its founding as an independent nation. Theoretical wranglings surrounding the definitions of democracy aside, the actual happenings in the country since its establishment point towards a phenomenon that has acquired the name democracy. Since America's birth, millions of people in the country and around the world have operated under the belief that democracy exists, and that the American political system is built on the principles of democratic governance. Consequently, any attempt to define democracy must not operate solely in the theoretical realm and ignore the realities of the past and present (Dahl, 2006). Wiebe (1995) argues that the recognition of the social experiences from America's founding to the present loosen the criteria for definitions of democracy in two ways. First, it questions certain prerequisites for democracy that today we consider to be essential. For example, commitments to education, quality of living, and human rights seem to be hallmarks of democratic countries today. Yet absent formal schooling and with substantially lower standards of living in the early days of the nation, America was still considered by its people and others around the world to be a democracy. Indeed, political participation was significantly higher in the 19th century than current times (Baker, 1984). As such, Wiebe contends that input requirements of definitions of democracy should not be blind to the realities of America's past. Secondly, a recognition of history also serves to temper the
belief that democracies need to be actualized in order to be rightfully given that name. In other words, if, as Greider (1992) asserts, democracy is a “difficult search”, must the search be complete in order for a nation to be justly called a democracy? The facts of the past indicate that a loosening of this requirement is a practical necessity, given the accepted existence of democracies in civilization’s history, regardless of their level of democratic attainment. Absent this adjustment, any discussion of democracy and its defining characteristics becomes one of measurement, with one society judged to be 53% democratic and another 79% democratic. Dahl’s (2003) work “How Democratic is the American Constitution?” calls to mind one such approach. To be clear, Wiebe notes that a loosening of the criteria does not mean that observers should tolerate all deficiencies of aspiring democratic governments past and present. Instead, he argues that the acknowledgment of history “encourages us to burden the definition of democracy with just as few contemporary conditions as possible” (p. 8). Wiebe continues, “If history reminds us that democracy has been many things at many times in many places, a definition reminds us that it is not everything all the time anywhere” (p. 9).

**American Democracy**

With this in mind, we return again to the notion of democracy that is uniquely American. Dahl (2006) notes the term ‘democracy’ was not widely used in colonial times. When it was, it was associated with a form of egalitarianism that was undoubtedly controversial at a time when slavery and gender inequalities were still very much prevalent. At other times in the colonial era, Dahl points to the word used to denote what
we may term today as direct democracy, a non-representational form of government where the public is in direct control over all aspects of governance.\textsuperscript{5} Numerous examples of this can be found in the Federalist Papers, written to promote the ratification of the United States Constitution.\textsuperscript{6} Instead of the term ‘democracy’, the Framers often referred to the upstart American system of government as a ‘republic’. In Federalist No. 39, James Madison outlines his definition of the American form of democratic government.

If we resort for a criterion to the different principles on which different forms of government are established, we may define a republic to be, or at least may bestow that name on, a government which derives all its powers directly or indirectly from the great body of the people, and is administered by persons holding their offices during pleasure, for a limited period, or during good behavior. It is essential to such a government that it be derived from the great body of the society, not from an inconsiderable proportion, or a favored class of it; otherwise a handful of tyrannical nobles, exercising their oppressions by a delegation of their powers, might aspire to the rank of republicans, and claim for their government the honorable title of republic. It is sufficient for such a government that the persons administering it be appointed, either directly or indirectly, by the people; and that they hold their appointments by either of the tenures just specified; otherwise every government in the United States, as well as every other popular government that has been or can be well organized or well

\textsuperscript{5} Direct democracy is a form of democracy in which the people personally decide on policy directives, through methods such as direct voting. This is in contrast to other forms of democracy in which the people may elect representatives who in turn cast votes on policy directives.

\textsuperscript{6} The Federalist Papers is a collection of 85 articles and essays published between 1787-1788 and written by Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay. The writings supported the ratification of the Constitution.
executed, would be degraded from the republican character. (as cited in Fairfield, 1981, p. 112)

Here Madison points to two key conditions that represent defining components of American democracy. First, that the government is empowered through the will of the people, rather than through previously established means such as divine right or familial succession. Second, that the appointees charged with representing the people of the country do so under established conditions such as ones that account for duration of service and good behavior. Further reading of the American Constitution and its supporting documents reveals additional information regarding the framework of institutions and governmental structures to be established in the newly formed republic.

**American Democratic Values**

Yet, as Green (1999) and Zyngier (2011) note, an emphasis on the formal processes of democracy, without an equal eye towards the values advanced in democratic nations, does little to paint a complete picture of the intricacies involved in democracies. These elements, what Stevick and Levinson (2007) might refer to as the cultural components of democracy, play a crucial role in capturing the nature of American democracy. In his travels through a young America, Tocqueville (as cited in Mansfield & Winthrop, 2000) described how democracy has engendered amongst the people “a multitude of feelings and opinions which...has destroyed or modified all the relations which before existed, and established others of a novel kind” (p. 399). The exact nature of these feelings and opinions has been, and will likely always be, difficult to capture
(Connolly, 1983). The ambiguity in the political writings of the Framers of the Constitution has left room for multiple interpretations of the values they aimed to perpetuate in a democratic America. Bauer (1991) explains that some of this ambiguity stems from the fact that the primary texts from which our understanding of the Framers’ political thoughts are to be gleaned are not philosophical treaties. Consequently, the particulars of good citizenship, social equality, justice, and others, are rarely articulated and almost never defended. Furthermore, Ball and Pocock (1988) point out that key terms upon which the Framers built American democracy faced significant debate at the time. The lack of consensus regarding such vital concepts as “republic”, “representation”, “liberty”, and “virtue” add to the challenge of adequately inferring what the Framers may have envisioned to be the principles of American democracy.

**Education and Democracy in America**

With competing interpretations of the political thoughts that guided the creation of the nation (Bauer (1991) alone presents four distinct ones), what then are we to make of the ‘American values’ associated with democracy? More pointedly to the purpose of this work, how should an American democratic education be conceptualized? Setting aside for a moment the principles connected to the institutions and governing structures established through the Constitution, including those concerning elections, the protection of individual rights, and the separation of powers, we turn to the values education in America should promote in order to preserve and strengthen democracy in the country.
Miller (2007) argues that democratic schooling should result in an education for the paideia, one that cultivates the mind, trains the intellect, and forms the character. Westheimer and Kahne (2004) frame the issue in terms of a search to identify the type of citizen a nation needs to support an effective democracy in the United States. They argue that a member of such a citizenry possesses qualities that extend beyond those associated with being a good, responsible community member. They write:

the widely accepted goals – fostering honesty, good neighborliness, and so on – are not inherently about democracy. Indeed, government leaders in a totalitarian regime would be as delighted as leaders in a democracy if their young citizens learned the lessons put forward by many of the proponents of personally responsible citizenship: Don’t do drugs; show up at school; show up at work; give blood; help others during a flood; recycle; pick up litter; clean up a park; treat old people with respect. These are desirable traits for people living in a community. But they are not about democratic citizenship. To the extent that emphasis on these character traits detracts from other important democratic priorities, it may actually hinder rather than make possible democratic participation and change. (p. 244)

Instead of such an approach, Strike (1999) posits that certain democracies seek to promote the values of “participation, civic friendship, inclusiveness, and solidarity” (p. 61). These democracies, in line with the ‘strong’ democracies Barber (1984) champions, position democracy as an assemblage of citizens who work together for the betterment of all. Ben-Porath (2012) describes this as “citizenship as shared fate”. Giroux (2006) elaborates on this concept of a democratic community by stating:
Democracy cannot work if citizens are not autonomous, self-judging, and independent—qualities that are indispensable for students if they are going to make vital judgments and choices about participating in and shaping decisions that affect everyday life, institutional reform, and governmental policy. (p. 73)

Westheimer and Kahne (2004) advocate for schools in America to focus on developing what they term to be a justice oriented citizen, one who can critically assess the social, political, and economic structures at work in society and take steps to address areas of injustice. Kumashiro (2000) notes that such an approach would involve “education for the other”, “education about the other”, “education that is critical of privileging and othering”, and “education that changes students and society”.

**Education for Democracy**

These critical approaches to citizenship move beyond an education about democracy to an education for democracy. Knowledge of the democratic processes in America, an education about democracy, must be combined with instruction on how to be democratic citizens in the country, an education for democracy. Only then, as Kohn (1999) argues, can we transform a culture into a democracy. In the end however, like definitions of democracy itself, no consensus can be found as to the particulars of American democracy – what it was intended to be, what it currently is, and what our schools should do to promote and strengthen its position for the future. Far from being disheartened by this reality, Davies (1999) reminds us that the nature of democracy lends itself to such uncertainty.
Yet this is perhaps the nature of the beast: democracy is not a single definable entity but the broad term for a set of political processes towards the ends of justice, prosperity and peace. The role of education within these processes is similarly – and by definition – diverse and contested. Democracy contains within itself the seeds of challenge and constant questioning, and it would seem a contradiction in terms to have a national syllabus for democracy. (p. 128)
CHAPTER 3
THE EVOLUTION OF EDUCATION IN AMERICA

“No other people ever demanded so much of education as have the American. None other was ever served so well by its schools and educators” (Commager, 1950, p. 46).

Public schooling in America has a long and storied tradition. Rooted in the principles of public rule upon which the country was established, the nation's Founding Fathers firmly believed that an educated citizenry was an essential component to the success of the new form of government. John Adams explained that “education is more indispensable and must be more general, under a free government than any other” (as cited in McClung, 2013, p. 37). James Madison argued that “a popular government without information or the means of acquiring it is but a prologue to a farce or a tragedy or perhaps both” (Madison, 1822, para. 1). Benjamin Franklin stated that “we must have a system of public education; its purpose must be to educate our people in their public duties” (as cited in McClung, p. 38). While other such examples of a broad commitment to the public purpose of education can be found in the writing and speeches of the time, the specifics of public education were never formalized for the nation. The Founding Fathers said little to nothing on key issues related to public education, notably on what should be taught in public schools, how it should be taught, who it should be taught to, and how such education should be funded (Cressman & Benda, 1966). As Bellamy and Goodlad (2008) remind us, “Schooling as such was not on their agenda” (p. 565). Yet even when the Constitution was ratified and the business of running the country came to
the forefront, when schooling became an agenda item, no public consensus regarding the practical considerations surrounding the implementation of public education could be found. Much like modern times, “Americans were by no means of a single mind” (Butts & Cremin, 1953, p. 189). Many opposing viewpoints vied for acceptance, and great debate surrounded the educational issues of the day. Universal education versus education for the few, publicly funded versus private support, state control versus local, and many more issues dominated the discussion surrounding public education well into the nineteenth century (Butts & Cremin). Out of these debates, some continuing even today, and through the influence of key events in the country, an educational system unique to the nation was born.

This chapter traces the evolution of education and democracy in America. In particular, the chapter focuses on the impact the ebb and flow of history have had on the understanding of public education's place in American democracy. The shifts covered in this chapter, in public policy, school organization, instruction, and more, have done much to define the purpose of public schooling in America. Moreover, they have directly led to the educational system at work in America today. The historical review here is separated into four major periods:

- origins of public schooling - common schools (late 18th century to 1900)
- progressive era (early 1900s to mid-1900’s)
- civil rights (mid 1900’s to 1980)
- modern reform movement (1980’s to present day)
To be clear, the history of education in America is more rich and complex than that outlined in this chapter. The intent here is not to present a comprehensive accounting of the past two hundred years of education in America, nor is it meant to argue that there is a singular story to tell. Indeed the history of education and democracy in the country is a tale with many versions, impacted by geography, culture, differing perspectives, and more. With this in mind, the task here is to capture the path of democracy and education in broad terms, to look at the overall trajectory that the country has traveled in order to lay the foundation for an analysis of the research questions at the heart of this work.

The Origins of Public Schooling (late 18th century to 1900)

The story of education in America begins in the colonial period, at a time in which educational theory and practice tended to reflect European patterns. Colonists naturally copied the educational institutions that they knew best, and English textbooks and school methods were widely accepted in the new world (Pulliam, 1976; Spring, 1994). Far from being merely a transplanted educational system however, American colonial schooling benefited from the unique circumstances of the time. Those who migrated to the colonies did so for various reasons, and their differing perspectives had considerable influence on all facets of colonial schooling. Additionally, differences in climate, geography, and population affected education in the colonies. As Pulliam (1976) explains, “All schools underwent changes, sometimes slight, often dramatic, as a result of cultural forces in the colonies and the experience of coping with the American wilderness” (p. 16). These changes, and the resulting school diversity, continued through the revolutionary period.

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7 The colonial period stretches from the time of European colonization of America until the founding of the United States of America.
and well into the early years of the country. This period of time, the first era covered in this work, stretches from the late eighteenth century through the nineteenth century.

Few universals exist to describe education in early America. In the north, education was highly influenced by religion. The Christian duty of educating each child led to universal elementary education devoted to the three R's: religion, reading, and writing. In the south, where the leadership was often comprised of plantation owners, education developed around the rigid social class distinctions that existed and opportunities varied greatly based on social standing (Cressman & Benda, 1966). In the middle states, driven by a “potpourri of faiths, languages, and cultures” (Pulliam, 1976, p. 25), a heterogeneous mix of denominational, vocational, and grammar schools arose. Yet despite this diversity, the foundation for a nationwide system of education was set. The new world afforded new opportunities, and social mobility became a reality in ways that were not possible in the old world. Education was seen as a way of bettering American lives, and expectations for schooling grew (Callahan, 1956). Pulliam explains,

Long before the United States became a nation, traditions of education, including the ideas of universal schooling and public support, had been formed. Americans had already started to demand what was to become standard – better education for children than their parents had enjoyed. (p. 34)

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8 The revolutionary period was a time of political turmoil in which the American colonies rejected British rule and founded the United States of America. The period stretched from 1765 to 1783.
Illiteracy at the time of the American Revolution was by no means a social stigma. Practical concerns dominated everyday life, and there was no pressing need for reading and writing in the vast majority of the country. The young learned their livelihood through apprenticeship. General knowledge was learned through the family, church, and community. With only one white male in seven eligible to vote, literacy was not an essential component of life (Butts and Cremin, 1953). Alongside a political and economic break from British control however, the American Revolution brought forth a shift in mindset that altered the course of education in the country (Pulliam, 1976). The struggle for liberty, equality, patriotism, and freedom from tyranny, sparked new ideas for how a uniquely American education should be formed, and who it should serve. Noah Webster, later famous for his dictionary familiar to many students in American schools, argued that “For America in her infancy to adopt the maxims of the old world would be to stamp the wrinkles of old age on the bloom on youth” (as cited in Mondale & Patton, 2001, p. 22). Indeed, for the young country to flourish, for a democratic way of governance to hold true, Americans would need to be educated. The dual education system of the past, with elites enjoying a quality education unavailable to the masses, was antithetical to a democratic way of life. Moreover, the influx of new immigrants and the expansion westward underscored the urgency for a system to meet the needs of the growing country (Callahan, 1956). Over time, as a reaction to the demands of the nation and a rebuke to the old systems of education, the common school movement was born.
The Rise of the Common School

To many in America, the belief in the equality of all citizens, and their primary role in governing, implied a new system of education available to all. This new system, advocated as the 'common school', would “undertake certain important social tasks which could no longer be haphazardly entrusted to the family, the church, or even simple participation in the life of the community” (Butts & Cremin, 1953, p. 194). The common school system embodied certain traits radical at the time, yet central to successive generations' understanding of public education in our democracy. First, common schools were designed to be open to all children, irrespective of wealth and social class. Mann (as cited in Mondale & Patton, 2001) explained that its availability to all would allow education to become “the equalizer of the conditions of men, the great balance wheel of the social machinery” (p. 29). Additionally, it was argued that universal education was a natural right that would increase productivity and loyalty to the nation, and decrease crime and poverty (Butts & Cremin; Callahan, 1956). Second, common school supporters advocated a system not only open to all children, but equal to all. Schools, after all, could not be 'common' if it provided unequal education to differing groups. Third, common schools were to be supported by public funds, a concept revolutionary to many. At a time when education was chiefly a luxury available to the elite, the move to publicly fund common schools rested on the belief that mass education benefited all in society. Finally, with public support came public control over common schools. Rather than establishment under the auspices of private individuals or religious groups, common schools

9 It is important to note here that citizenship was not available to all during much of the Common School era. The 14th amendment to the Unites States Constitution, formally defining citizenship, was not adopted until July 1868.
necessitated a new system of public control to ensure that education remained free, equal, and open to all (Church & Sedlak, 1976; Spring, 1994).

**Challenges to the Common School Model**

These ideas were by no means ubiquitous. Naturally, a healthy opposition to such departures from the established methods of education arose. Opponents of common schools argued against the need for publicly funded universal education, particularly for groups that have not traditionally required, nor benefited from, high rates of literacy. For a number of reasons, they argued that “‘booklarnin' was simply not important for the great body of the people” (Butts & Cremin, p. 195). Moreover, strong resistance to the use of public funds to support common schools highlighted the still developing relationship between democratic principles and personal interests. The Newburgh Telegraph in 1846 wrote,

> To be just is always right, and justice demands that those only who need should fall under the public protection. But justice frowns upon compelling one man to pay towards the education of the children of his rich neighbors, or to go one step beyond his natural duty to his own offspring and to his country in contributing his share in behalf of the poor. (as cited in Butts & Cremin, p. 204).

At a time when the concept of a publicly funded education for all was not yet firmly established (Pulliam, 1976), persuading the public to finance universal education was by no means an easy task. Further complicating matters was the question of control over common schools. Advantages and disadvantages of state versus local authority were
debated, and again highlighted early tensions between personal interests and the notion of a common good (Callahan, 1953). Nonetheless, common schools eventually became the reality for education in America. By the 1860s, though there remained differences in how common schools were organized and maintained throughout the country, enough of a general development in common schools had taken place to say that the principle of publicly supported compulsory education had taken root in America (Butts & Cremin, 1953; Callahan; Pulliam). By the end of the nineteenth century, Mondale and Patton (2001) claim that the country provided schooling to more children than any other nation on earth. While this is difficult to substantiate, it seems reasonable to assert that a great number of American citizens attended common schools at the time.

Curriculum in the Common Schools

Like most other aspects of education in this period, the curriculum taught in public schools was a work in progress. While most Americans agreed that the common schools should teach reading, writing, and arithmetic, many argued for an expansion of the curriculum to include a broader knowledge base (Butts & Cremin, 1953, Pulliam, 1976). As a result, subjects such as geography, grammar, and history were incorporated at varying levels across the country (Callahan, 1956). At the same time, a demand for schools to teach more functional knowledge aimed to make education more directly useful. Calls for schools to focus their academic instruction towards preparing students for practical matters, such as preparing business letters and receipts, were common. So were appeals to include vocational education alongside the conventional curriculum
(Butts & Cremin, 1953). Perhaps most controversial, however, was the curricular approach to character education (Callahan, 1956). The task of training students to a high moral standard had traditionally been accomplished through religious instruction (Church & Sedlak, 1976). With a number of religions at work in America, questions arose pertaining to which religious doctrine would be emphasized in the common schools. Through much debate between opponents of different faiths, and the impact of the growing concept of a separation of church and state, schools began to adopt what Butts and Cremin (1953) term a “nondenominational morality” (p. 217).

**Discrimination in Education**

It is important to note here that through all the advancements in public schooling in America during this period, dark clouds remained over society and education in the country. Universal education was not applied universally, and the availability and quality of schooling varied widely. Slavery was prevalent for much of the century, and African Americans in the South had little to no access to education (Pulliam, 1976). In the free states, African Americans were served in segregated schools, often with inferior facilities (Mondale & Patton, 2001). For Native Americans, education was intended to civilize and Christianize the population, essentially to save them from themselves (Button & Provenzo, 1983; Rury, 2002). Tribal resistance to these initiatives was fierce, and when Native Americans attended schools they were segregated and forced to abandon their tribal customs, languages, and dress (Mondale & Patton, 2001, Hottges, 2011). Women,

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while educated in most elementary schools in the country, were largely limited to inferior secondary schools. Though the development of single gender seminaries and academies increased the availability of higher education opportunities for women, the curriculum emphasized “moral, literary, and domestic education” (Madigan, 2009, p.12). Their goals, reflecting the limited roles women had in society, were to educate girls to be better wives and mothers (Button & Provenzo, 1983). In these ways, education in these early years of the country served to promote oppression, reinforce stereotypes, and perpetuate inequality. Common schools were, as Gutek (1986) reminds us, designed to be an instrument of social control that operated by “imposing by institutionalized education the language, beliefs, and values of the dominant group on outsiders” (p. 87). Oscar Wilde once described democracy as the “bludgeoning of the people by the people for the people”. For many in these early years of public schooling in America, democratic education represented exactly that.

**Progressive Era (early to mid 1900’s)**

By the early 1900's, education in America had taken on many of the characteristics familiar to us today (Callahan, 1956). As in our current educational system, common schools of the time stretched from the elementary level through high school, a system of local, state, and federal control was in effect, and most American youth attended schools. Yet events in the country spurred great debate about the quality and direction of America's educational system. An influx of new immigrants posed significant cultural and educational challenges to the country, technological advancements changed the landscape of life in America, and the growing influence of
science on education introduced new tools of measurement to schooling in the nation (Church & Sedlak, 1976). As these issues unfolded, reformers looked towards education to respond to the changing times. These efforts, commonly referred to as the Progressive Era, stretched from the dawn of the twentieth century through World War II.

**Immigration and Urbanization**

From its very beginnings, one of the primary functions of public education in the country was to teach people to be 'American'. This assimilative function was especially important for the masses of immigrants arriving in America searching for new opportunities (Callahan, 1956; Rury, 2002). The rise of the industrial revolution and the need for cheap labor drew immigrants to the country in the millions, and while the pattern of migration had remained relatively stable early in the country's history, a new population of immigrants emerged in the Progressive Era (Pulliam, 1976). Alongside migrants from Germany, Great Britain, and the Scandinavian countries, a massive increase of immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe presented new challenges for schooling. Many of these newcomers were non-English speakers and illiterate, and some in the country viewed these outsiders as incapable of contributing anything of appreciable value to the existing American culture (Gutek, 1986). As the thinking went, the traditions and cultures these foreigners brought were not American in origin, and it was feared that their advancement in the country may serve to temper the perpetuation of American ideals. In an effort to avoid 'diluting' American values, these foreigners needed to be assimilated to the “Anglo-Saxon conception of righteousness, law and order, and popular
government” (Cubberly, as cited in Gutek, 1986, p. 180). Driven by this influx, as well as the outbreak of World War I, patriotism and the ideal of American citizenship became more important than ever before. A great movement arose to deliver instruction in English only, a departure from certain practices of the past. Theodore Roosevelt wrote, “We have room for but one language here, and that is the English language. For we intend to see that the crucible turns our people out as Americans, of American nationality, and not as dwellers of a polyglot boardinghouse” (as cited in Mondale & Patton, 2001, p.95). As in times past, schooling became a vital method by which the dominant groups incorporated the increasing number of outsiders into the established version of Americanism.

In conjunction with the rise of immigration came a growth in urbanization that had not been seen prior (Rury, 2002). By the turn of the century the west had largely been populated and the country's attention turned from agricultural to an urban industrial focus (Button & Provenzo, 1983). The concentration of large populations in metropolitan areas created a number of problems for education in the cities. As the populace increased, schools became increasingly crowded and understaffed, particularly in the slums settled by those in the lower socioeconomic class. In addition, the shock of a quickly changing urban life alienated many students at the time. Immigrants who often came from traditional societies were forced to adjust to a lifestyle where values were developing as quickly as the technological advancements of the day. Migrants from American farms and small towns sometimes faced no easier a transition to city streets and urban life. In

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the face of these challenges, the ability of schools to respond appropriately were hampered by a system developed at a different time with different needs. As Gutek (1986) notes, “much of the public school ideology had been shaped in rural or small-town independent school districts” (p. 201).

**Structural Changes in the Progressive Era**

Reformers of the time looked to transform society and education to meet the needs of a new America. They advocated for laws that ended child labor and made school attendance compulsory (Mondale & Patton, 2001). They sought to attack the ills of poverty by reshaping the physical environments in the slums (Button & Provenzo, 1983). And, above all else, they aimed to modernize the school organization and curriculum. Gutek (1986) notes several characteristics of the attitudes of 'progressive' educators of the time. First, reformers believed that education constituted an important part of broader societal reform. In addition to the task of creating good citizens, progressives looked towards schooling as an agency of deliberate social change. Like many other points in history, events of the period had a large bearing on public schooling at the time. Industrialization, immigration, urbanization, and economic instability all combined to create poor living conditions for many Americans. Education, it was argued, played a crucial role in reforming society for the better (Rury, 2002). Dewey (1900) argued that the ideal school, one where students would become agents of social change, would be the “deepest and best guaranty of a larger society which is worthy, lovely, and harmonious” (p. 28). Counts (1934) contended that “any concrete school program will contribute to the
struggle for survival that is ever going on among institutions, ideas, and values; it cannot remain neutral in any firm and complete sense” (p. 535). This social re-constructionist orientation for education stretched the purpose for schooling.

**Curricular Changes in the Progressive Era**

A second characteristic of the progressive era was the introduction of important alternatives to the traditional curriculum and methods of teaching. In line with the belief that traditional education had failed to meet the needs of students, much of these innovations carried a child-centered focus (Mosier, 1952). The Progressive Education Association, formed in 1919, offered seven guiding principles that highlights the thoughts of the period (Gutek, 1986).

- Children should be left free to develop naturally.
- Interest is the motive of all work.
- The teacher is a guide to learning and not a taskmaster.
- Pupil development should be studied scientifically.
- Greater attention should be given to everything that affects the child's physical development.
- There should be greater cooperation between the school and the home.
- The progressive school should be an educational laboratory.

From this starting point, a wide array of reforms were tested throughout the country. Dewey's laboratory schools, and its belief in learning by doing, is an often referenced
example from the period. Others incorporated project based learning, parent education, field trips, and art instruction. Though the alternatives advanced in the era are too diverse to succinctly summarize here, the willingness to experiment with the curriculum and the refocusing of instruction was an important development for education.

The Influence of Scientific Management

Finally, and, perhaps, most importantly, reformers of the period believed that the broader principles of scientific management that were popular in society could be applied to education. The utilization of this approach had a significant effect on the relationship between education and democracy. In the area of school organization and administration, efforts at improving the efficiency of the system moved education towards standardization at the expense of local control (Button & Provenzo, 1983; Franciosi, 2004). New bureaucracies in the system also increased as a result of school expansion and the quest for scientific management (Rury, 2002; Spring, 1994). For students and teachers, the drive for efficiency introduced intelligence measurement, achievement testing, and educational tracking to schooling. The notion that all students should receive the same education was challenged, and methods to identify and categorize students into a variety of educational paths were implemented. Cubberley explained, “we should give up the exceedingly democratic idea that all are equal and that our society is

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12 Laboratory schools are schools that are utilized for the training of future teachers, educational experimentation, and educational research. They are often operated in association with a teacher education institution such as a university of college.
13 Project based learning is a teaching method in which students gain knowledge by exploring real world problems and challenges.
devoid of classes...one bright child may easily be worth more to the National Life than thousands of those of low mentality” (as cited in Mondale & Patton, 2001, p. 98). Terman argued that “the abandonment of the single-track, pre-high school curriculum is in fact the first necessary step toward educational democracy” (as quoted in Ravitch, 2000, p. 139). In this sense, scientific management redefined democratic education to justify the apportioning of different schooling to different groups of students on the grounds of intelligence and ensured that education, and its rewards, remained unequally distributed (Rury, 2002). Anderson notes,

When you look at the curricula that was developed – domestic science for women, industrial education for African Americans, boarding schools for Native Americans – much of what developed under the guise of a democratic and differentiated curriculum was in fact a way to reinforce the kind of class, gender, and race prejudice that existed in society. (as cited in Mondale & Patton, 2001, pp. 112-113)

In the name of education for democracy, schooling became a vehicle through which the inequities of the time were advanced.

**Civil Rights (mid 1900’s to 1980)**

By the middle of the twentieth century, the inequality in educational achievement among white students, minority students, and women had deepened (Rury, 2002). The prevailing theory of democracy and education at work in America that emphasized social homogeneity, assimilation, and the dominance of white culture left little room for groups
outside the norm. Seeking to improve these conditions, ethnic minority groups and women focused on the right to equal educational opportunity as a centerpiece of the larger crusade for social equality at the time. The results of these efforts, including the desegregation of schools and the passage of legislation outlawing discrimination based on race or gender, represented a turning point in the relationship between democracy and education in America. This era, one characterized by a broad reaching civil rights movement, spanned the period from the middle of the 1900’s until the 1980's.

**Impact of Legislation and the Courts**

Reflecting on the period, it is difficult to begin anywhere other than with the historic legislation and court decisions of the time. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 outlawed discrimination based on religion, race, color, national origin, and gender. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 poured federal funds into primary and secondary education in an attempt to equalize access to quality education and close the achievement gap between students from low income households to those in higher income families. Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 prohibited the awarding of federal funds to educational institutions that discriminated on the basis of gender. The Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 extended equal access protection to students with disabilities. The 1954 Supreme Court decision in Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka overturned the 'separate but equal' doctrine and

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15 The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 provided, among other things, for financial assistance to local educational agencies for the education of children of low income families. This portion of the legislation and the programs that are supported by it are commonly referred to as Title One, named after the section in which the provisions are outlined in the act.
established segregation as illegal in the nation. Bilingual education programs were bolstered by a series of court decisions that upheld the need for programs for non-English speaking students. All of these events, and the grassroots movements that supported them, serve to illustrate the social and cultural changes unfolding in America at the time. Education was often a battleground for the larger forces at work in the country, and its importance in American democracy was reaffirmed (Spring, 1994). In its landmark decision outlawing segregation, the Supreme Court noted:

Today, education is perhaps the most important function of state and local governments. Compulsory school attendance laws and the great expenditures for education both demonstrate our recognition of the importance of education to our democratic society. It is required in the performance of our most basic public responsibilities, even service in the armed forces. It is the very foundation of good citizenship. Today it is a principal instrument in awakening the child to cultural values, in preparing him for later professional training, and in helping him to adjust normally to his environment. In these days, it is doubtful that any child may reasonably be expected to succeed in life if he is denied the opportunity of an education. Such an opportunity, where the state has undertaken to provide it, is a right which must be made available to all on equal terms. (Brown v. Board of Education, 1954)

Yet as important as these events were, they tell but one side of the story of education in the period. Despite the new laws and rulings of the time, schooling remained unequal in practice, and questions remained as to how schools should adapt to the changing times.
Education Inequalities Persist

Postwar America saw a sharp increase in population and a growing middle class. Reversing the flight to urban areas seen after the Industrial Revolution, many Americans migrated from large cities to the suburbs (Gutek, 1986; Rury, 2002). As suburban schools arose and began to flourish, important disparities between schools in the inner city and the suburbs emerged. While minorities continued to flock to the cities, the rise of the suburbs was predominantly fueled by the migration of affluent white families (Rury). These families, often comprised of upper middle class professionals, valued education as a means of social and economic mobility. Their commitment to schooling, and the growing tax base in these neighborhoods, afforded suburban schools financial resources often unavailable to urban schools. The resulting de facto socioeconomic segregation added to the reality of a system built upon inequities. Whites were served in suburban schools with newer facilities and more extensive educational programs while poorer minority groups were served in inner city schools that often lacked those same privileges (Ravitch, 2000). In a commentary that some might claim can still be applied today, Gutek (1986) notes that segregation by residence reduced the “‘commonness' and comprehensiveness of the public school system. The educational resources available to suburban and urban students were so uneven that equality of educational opportunity was becoming a myth” (p. 259). In an effort to desegregate these schools after the Brown decision, cities turned to busing as a solution, a practice ultimately deemed by the Supreme Court to be unwarranted. In his dissent to this decision, Thurgood Marshall warned, “unless our children begin to learn together, there is little hope that our people will ever learn to live together” (as cited in Mondale & Patton, 2001, p. 167).
In addition to the issues surrounding the white flight to the suburbs, some members of minority communities became increasingly disillusioned with the remaining unequal balance of power in education. Many hoped desegregation would bring forth a more equitable sharing of power and control over education (Wolters, 2009). The realities of schooling after the Brown decision proved otherwise. School boards remained predominantly white (Button & Provenzo, 1983). The busing of minority students to schools in white neighborhoods limited the influence of minority parents over the education of their children. Local plans to desegregate schools threatened the jobs of minority educators (Graham, 2005; Mondale & Patton 2001). And many commented on the resulting placement of minority students into lower level classes in integrated schools, essentially segregating them within the desegregated schools. These practices led Anderson to comment that “we may be undoing the separate part of it, but we at the same time are exacerbating the unequal part of it” (as cited in Mondale & Patton, 2001, p. 142).

**Weakening of American Education**

Critics of the educational system also honed in on the perceived deterioration of the quality of American education. Detractors argued that the experimentalism of the Progressive Era, as well as the great debates surrounding the 'science' of education, served to weaken American schools in relation to its counterparts across the globe. The American search for a truer democratic education in the early twentieth century, one that placed schooling in a broader societal context and incorporated what some critics deemed to be relativism, ran contrary to its function as an academic institution. While variation in
the critique of education existed at the time, several themes can be identified (Gutek, 1986).

- Curricular tampering resulted in the lowering of academic standards and levels of achievement.
- Progressive reformers distorted the purpose of schools, shifting it from primarily academic to one of multiple directions.
- Educational systems in other countries, particularly those in Europe, were superior to American schools in their adoption of national standards and institutional tracks based on students' abilities.
- School curriculum should be taught sequentially in a systematic way by teachers competent in the subject matter.
- The incorporation of diverse cultural and ethical values diluted traditional civic and patriotic ideals in the country.

Foreshadowing reforms to come, a movement to increase the quality of academic achievement in the country ensued. Spurred by the Soviet Union's launch of the Sputnik space satellite, and patriotic concerns surrounding the Cold War, school improvement was seen as a necessity to maintain America's place in the world (Riley & Stern, 2004).

**Modern Reform Efforts (1980’s to present day)**

By the 1980's, education in America was virtually universal. Almost the entire school age population was enrolled, and a vast majority of students graduated high school and continued to college (Mondale & Patton, 2001). Yet to many, these numbers masked widespread problems in the country's educational system. Economic uncertainty, growing
unemployment, and the loss of market share to foreign competitors sparked a search for explanations to these troubling developments (Ravitch, 2000). Corporate interests and public officials found an answer in public schools, accusing them of failing to produce students who were prepared to succeed in the modern world. As President Reagan argued in 1983, the nation’s educational system was “in the grips of a crisis caused by low standards, lack of purpose, and a failure to strive for excellence” (as cited in Mondale & Patton, 2001, p. 184). The reform efforts that followed, focused on creating more efficient and effective schools, again altered the relationship between education and democracy in America.

**A Nation at Risk**

The 1983 report titled 'A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform' is often credited with sparking a movement to improve America's schools with rigorous standards (Lefkowitz & Miller, 2006). The report, one Ravitch (2003) called “the most important education reform document of the 20th century” (para. 1), raised alarm throughout the country regarding the perceived weakening of America's educational system. Based on an understanding that schooling in the country should be geared towards ensuring that all students are given a fair chance and the tools to fully develop their mind and spirit, it concluded that in four key aspects of the educational process, curriculum content, school wide expectations, instructional time, and teaching, American education was severely lacking. These results, the report argued, were a function of

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16 In 1981, U.S. Secretary of Education T.H. Bell created the National Commission on Excellence in Education and tasked it with exploring the quality of education in America. The ‘A Nation at Risk’ report represents the commission’s findings.
society having “lost sight of the basic purposes of schooling, and of the high expectations and disciplined effort needed to attain them” (Gardner et al., 1983, para. 3). Though it made no formal recommendations for future educational reforms, the report's impact was startling. State after state increased their graduation requirements, lengthened the school year, and added more tests to the curriculum to combat the tide of inferiority that was supposedly dragging the country down (Mondale & Patton, 2001). Moreover, reformers adopted a strategy of change which fundamentally challenged traditional notions of the aim of schooling, the measurement of success, and the very definition of public education in American democracy.

By coupling what the authors perceived to be mediocre student achievement on national and international tests to mediocre economic performance, 'A Nation at Risk' established the aim of the educational system as marketplace success, rather than assimilation, patriotism, equity, or good democratic governance. Much like in corporate America, education in our democracy became about improving the bottom line. As the purpose for schooling narrowed, new ideas for fixing our schools, many of them borrowed from the private sector, came to dominate the modern reform efforts (Mondale & Patton, 2001). This new approach rested on three basic assumptions. First, as competition in the marketplace encouraged economic efficiency and prosperity, it was presumed that competition between public schools would result in similar increases in efficiency and effectiveness. Proposals for the privatization of public schools, the rise of charter and magnet schools, and voucher programs for students to attend private schools were all outgrowths of the belief that competition, along with the power of choice, would cure some of education's ills. Second, in an evolving world that relied heavily on
information, student success was assumed to be shaped by their knowledge and understanding of key academic subjects, particularly math and science. Consequently, state and federal reform efforts focused on creating and enforcing standards based education in public schools. At the state level, educational standards were developed that focused on what students should know and be able to do, and states implemented policies for assessing students' achievement towards those standards (Amrein & Berliner, 2002). At the national level, legislation tied federal funding to the establishment of rigorous standards for all subject areas and grade levels. Lastly, performance on standardized test measures was considered to be a good measure of learning and a predictor of future student and teacher performance. As a result of this belief, consequences were attached to the statewide testing in an effort to hold schools accountable for meeting the standards. Those who met the expected achievement standards were rewarded with accolades such as the National Blue Ribbon School award, while those who failed were punished with restructuring, public shaming, and more.

Effects of Recent Reform Efforts

The effects of these reforms have weighed heavily on the relationship between democracy and education. Kovacs (2009), commenting on the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, points out that the law, “with its hierarchical control and disciplinary sanctions, eliminates teacher and administrator autonomy and authority, negating the possibility for

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17 The National Blue Ribbon Schools Program recognizes public and private schools for their academic excellence or their progress in closing achievement gaps among subgroups of students.

18 For more on these effects, see Mathis, W. J. (2009). NCLB’s Ultimate Restructuring Alternatives: Do They Improve the Quality of Education? Educational Policy Research Unit.
recognizing, hearing, and critically engaging with diverse voices; today's public schools are undemocratic by default” (p. 12). The Public Education Network (2007), a national organization of nonprofit community groups, reported that such legislation “undermines the capacity for communities to respond to mandates for school improvement” (p. 9). Lefkowits and Miller (2006) point to the technical nature of the system of standards, assessments, and accountability that make it difficult to explain to the public. They argue that the psychometrics involved in testing, including 'norm-referenced' and 'criterion-referenced' exams and concepts such as proficiency and benchmarks, serve to “intimidate and disenfranchise, further disengaging the public from the process” (Lefkowits & Miller, 2006, p. 406). 19

What is perhaps most troubling with the current state of American education is that students seem increasingly alienated from the process of education in public schools. Students attend schools with policies and academic standards over which they have had little to no input, let alone control. At a time in which minority students may need different types of education from those born into the dominant culture (Gay, 2010); when boys may need different types of education from girls (Gurian & Stevens, 2005); and when poor students may need different types of education from wealthy students (Rothstein, 2004), to limit education to one dominant perspective seems contrary to the best interests of all involved. As Gutmann (1987) explains, “education is not democratic if citizens do not collectively influence the purposes of primary schooling nor if they

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19 Norm-referenced tests are designed to highlight achievement differences between students by producing a rank order across a continuum of achievement from high achievers to low achievers. Criterion-referenced tests determine how well students are doing based on established criteria, such as educational goals or outcomes. For more information see Bond, L.A., & ERIC Clearinghouse on Assessment and Evaluation. (1996). Norm- and Criterion-Referenced Testing. ERIC/AE Digest.
control the content of classroom teaching so as to repress reasonable challenges to dominant political perspectives” (p. 75).

Another common criticism of the current standards driven model of education is the narrowing of the curriculum in response to high stakes testing. Given federal and state mandates on Language Arts and Mathematics testing, subjects that may not be tested yearly, such as science and social studies, are frequently given less time and emphasis in schools (Berliner, 2011; Rentner et al., 2006). McMurrer's (2008) study of almost 500 school districts across the nation found that the average decrease in instructional time for social studies, science, physical education, recess, art and music ranged from a total of 28% to 35% a week to accommodate increases in time for language arts and mathematics. The impact of this reduction on education is distressing. Finn and Ravitch (2007) argue that liberal arts “are the foundation for a democratic civic polity, where each of us bears equal rights and responsibilities” (para. 12). History and literature prepare students to “challenge authority, push back against conventional wisdom and make one's own way despite pressure to conform” (para. 13). The lack of civics education, Former Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor asserts, “leaves a huge gap, and we can't produce citizens who have the knowledge and the skills and the values to sustain our republic as a nation, our democratic form of government” (as cited in Schiesel, 2008, para. 10).

Ultimately, the critique on the current impact of the standards based movement points to the basic values promoted in our educational system. Cuban (2001) asks,

In what ways does turning schooling into a consumer product, no different from candy bars and cars, undermine the common good that tax-supported public
schools historically served? Do schools geared to preparing workers also build literate, active, and morally sensitive citizens who carry out their civic duties? (as cited in Mondale & Patton, p. 182)

Perhaps these questions, and others like it, are best left to the perspective that only time affords. What we can see, however, seems troubling. The system structures currently in place in schools suggest a diminished role for the public in the reform process, something that seems to be antithetic to the public voice often identified as a hallmark of democracy. Along the same lines, the limited rights of students, teachers, and parents establish education “as something done to students, not something they do” (Shor, 1993, p. 28).

The curricular changes in public schools and the resulting impact on instructional methods, what Nichols and Berliner (2007) might call the “collateral damage” of high stakes testing, seem to emphasize short term gains at the expense of long term student success. Davies (1999) reminds us, “Democracy is one of those concepts that is difficult to define other than through its opposites. A teacher may not 'know' what a democratic classroom is, but she knows what is not” (p. 138). While we may not be able to fully understand the impact that the modern reform movement has had on democracy and education in America, can we confidently assess our current schools and know that they are as democratic as they should be?

**Conclusion**

If, as Commager (1950) suggested, no other people demanded as much of education as Americans have, a brief review of the history of public schooling in the
country reveals a great divide in what was expected of schools, and how those expectations should be achieved. At times the principal purpose of schooling seemed to be teaching citizenship and developing the qualities appropriate for a democratic society, while at other times preparation for college and future employment ruled the classroom. At times schooling was a rigid affair, while at other times education encouraged creativity and innovation. At times education wanted academic learning for only a few, while at other times it became a centerpiece in the quest for equality for all. At times education was called upon to ease some of society's ills, be they economic, cultural, or anything in between. At times schooling operated under the belief in a singular American culture, with one language and one worldview, while at others it struggled to embrace the changing dynamics of a heterogeneous society. As the assignments given to schools have shifted over time, the dilemma for public education in the country has been how to respond to the public's different and sometimes conflicting demands. Different voices have responded to these challenges, each hoping to advance education to be more modern, more effective, more efficient, and more democratic. Unfortunately, far too often, the assurances of a “better tomorrow' was, when it became today, disappointing like yesterday” (Button & Provenzo, 1983).

Today, the challenge remains to envision and implement a democratic education in America that can respond to the needs of the time. In line with past attempts to capture the true meaning of democratic education in the country, this research profiled three authors and their perspectives on the public purpose of schooling, school structures that support those goals, curriculum development and more. Mindful of the varying definitions of democracy and the changing nature of democracy and education in
America outlined here, they present a path forward in the ongoing quest for a ‘better tomorrow’. More specifically, they provide insight into the questions that guided this research.
CHAPTER 4
METHODOLOGY/METHODS

Introduction

In their analysis of the nature and purpose of inquiries in education, Carr and Kemmis (1986) establish three basic approaches for educational research studies – positivist, interpretive, and critical. The specific approach chosen in a study is crucial to determining the position the work takes on a number of important dimensions, including the perspective on the character of the situation being studied, the degree of impact the researcher has to the situation being examined, and the degree of emphasis on education as a social process (Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Creswell, 2014; Lincoln & Guba, 1994). In brief, a positivist approach establishes education as an object to be studied, a phenomenon to be explored and understood. Implicit in this approach is the belief that the reality to be studied is objective, fixed, and quantifiable (Creswell, 2014; McGrath & Johnson, 2003). Interpretive studies approach education as a social process, a lived experience that is distinctly human. As such, multiple realities are constructed by the actors engaged in the experience (Burns, 2000; Merriman, 1998). The critical approach to educational inquiry positions education as institutions designed to reproduce elements of social and cultural norms. In doing so, elements of power, privilege and oppression are key components of theories generated through this approach (Denzin, 2000; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000).
Qualitative Research

This research was grounded in the philosophical traditions of a critical approach to educational inquiry. At its core, this study sought to examine the practice of educating for democracy in America. Tracing a link between the designs of schooling in the newly formed country to the present day state of affairs, it sought to explore how democratic values are selected and perpetuated in our public schools, all with a critical eye towards improving the system in the future. To meet this end, this research employed a qualitative approach to uncover the realities of American schooling and to shed light on the changing relationship of education and democracy in the country. Patton (as cited in Merriam 1998) explains that qualitative research is an effort to understand situations in their uniqueness as part of a particular context and the interactions there. This understanding is an end in itself, so that it is not attempting to predict what may happen in the future necessarily, but to understand the nature of that setting – what it means for participants to be in that setting, what their lives are like, what’s going on for them, what their meanings are, what the world looks like in that particular setting – and in the analysis to be able to communicate that faithfully to others who are interested in that setting (p. 6)

To reach such an understanding, qualitative researchers take several distinctive positions on the nature of reality, knowledge, and the social world. Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2011) point towards eleven distinguishing beliefs of qualitative researchers, all of which helped guide the positioning of this study.

- People act intentionally and create meanings in and through their actions.
• People actively construct their social world, rather than passively exist within them.
• Situations are fluid and are influenced by context.
• Events, as well as individuals, are unique.
• The social world should be studied in its natural state, free from influence from the researcher.
• Fidelity to the situation being studied is crucial.
• People interpret events, and the context of those events, and act on their interpretations.
• There are multiple perspectives and interpretations of situations.
• Reality is complex.
• Events are not reducible to simplistic interpretations.
• Research should examine events through the eyes of participants rather than the researcher.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) discuss five key axioms representative of qualitative, or naturalist, approaches to research. First, on the nature of reality, naturalists reject the notion of a single tangible reality as it fails to take into account the influence of subjective factors on the creation of individual realities. Instead, naturalists believe in multiple constructed realities, each one valid and requiring a holistic approach to study. Sherman and Webb (1988) describe this approach as one that “implies a direct concern with experience as it is 'lived' or 'felt' or 'undergone’” (p. 7). Second, key to this work, naturalists hold an epistemological view that acknowledges the influence of the inquirer on the object of inquiry, and conversely, the impact of the known on the knower. Since
the two are inseparable, qualitative studies need to account for these influences. Third, as naturalistic studies recognize the influence of the researcher and that which is studied, the aim of the inquiry is to develop an understanding of the event bound by context and time. Other approaches, by contrast, aim to generalize findings that are free from context and applicable across all settings and time (Guba, 1990). The fourth axiom concerns the identification of causal linkages in naturalistic studies. With the understanding that multiple realities can be constructed in any given event, and with a holistic approach in mind, naturalists believe that all entities are in a constant state of simultaneous shaping. Accordingly, it is impossible to distinguish causes from effects. Finally, Lincoln and Guba point to the value laden nature of naturalistic inquiry, influenced by the values of the researcher and the values inherent in the context of the event studied.

### Issues of Subjectivity

The selection of a qualitative course of study, and the positioning of this research within its guidelines, played an important role in the development and execution of this study. First and foremost, my personal beliefs on the topics at hand, as well as my decisions as inquirer, helped to shape the realities uncovered in this work. Many have commented on the influence of subjectivity within the qualitative approach (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Merriam, 1998). Gregory (1990) asked, “How then can research be immunized from an infection by personal values?” (p. 169). Maxwell (2004) countered by asserting that separating the research from the other aspects of a researcher's life limits an important source of insight, hypotheses, and validity
checks. Instead, qualitative researchers use their personal experiences and beliefs as a component of the understanding process (Maxwell, 2011). Peshkin (as cited in Maxwell, 2004, p. 38), noted

the subjectivity that originally I had taken as an affliction, something to bear because it could not be forgone, could, to the contrary, be taken as “virtuous”. My subjectivity is the basis for the story that I am able to tell. It is a strength on which I build. It makes me who I am as a person and as a researcher, equipping me with the perspectives and insights that shape all that I do as a researcher, from the selection of topic clear through to the emphases I make in my writing. Seen as virtuous, subjectivity is something to capitalize on rather than to exorcise.

From this vantage point, this work embraced the tenets of a qualitative approach by recognizing the influence that I had on this project. As the instrument of research, the decisions on what to study, how to study it, and how to report on the findings were all affected by my identity and perspective.

It is important to note here that the influences I had on the project were not accepted without concern. As Reason (1988) points out, qualitative researchers must operate with a level of awareness that does not suppress their identity, nor does it allow them to be swept away by it. Instead, inquirers raise subjectivity to a conscious level, acknowledging its influence and using it as part of the research process. Agar (2008) explains, “The problem is not whether the ethnographer is biased; the problem is what kinds of biases exist – how do they enter into the ethnographic work, and how can their operation be documented” (p. 91). Lincoln and Guba (2000) describes the accounting for this partiality as a reflexive process, “a conscious experiencing of the self as both inquirer
and respondent, as teacher and learner, as the one coming to know the self within the processes of research itself” (p. 183). In line with this process, I begin this chapter with a discussion on my role as researcher, documenting my perspectives and establishing my place within the larger context of this study. From there I outline the selection of the research questions, the case study approach employed, the selection of the case subjects, and the data gathering and interpretation process. In doing so, the following serves both as a guide for the reader to frame the work completed here as well as a tool to increase the trustworthiness of this study.

**Role as Researcher**

My journey in education began in the unlikeliest of places – the front office of a small private school answering phone calls, stuffing envelopes, and passing out catered lunches to those unfortunate enough to have to eat them. I was 21, having recently returned to Hawai‘i with a college degree (philosophy and political science) in one hand and bills to pay in the other. I was educated but aimless, having no idea what I wanted to do with my life, nor any strong desire to figure it out as soon as possible. Before the story turned tragic, I signed up with a temporary employment agency and expressed my desire to work in a school setting. In the latter months of my college days, I grew to appreciate the impact that my teachers had on my growth and I was interested in seeing where a work placement in a school setting would lead. Not long after I arrived at the school, word of my admiration for my former teachers and my interest in teaching spread to the
principal and after a position as the second teacher in a classroom opened, I was offered the job.

I became a teacher on a blustery January day, filling a slot that was vacated right before the winter break. I entered the classroom not knowing a thing about pedagogy, curriculum, evaluation, and the like. I had never read the works of the heavyweights of the educational field, never attended a class in education, never observed a teacher and students in action, and never worked with children before. I came armed with a passion to help students improve their lives, but without the requisite knowledge and skills to do so. In every sense of the term, I was unprepared to teach. I made many mistakes those first few years, errors in lesson planning and implementation, errors in communication, errors in judgement. While I'm sure that most beginning teachers experience similar struggles, my ignorance of the basics of education added another dimension to my teaching experiment. For instance, not only did I lack the necessary classroom management skills, I had not even heard of the concept before, let alone been exposed to different strategies that may work in the classroom. Not surprisingly, in those early years my learning curve was steep, treacherous, and did not always trend upwards.

After a few years, I assumed the role of the lead teacher in the classroom. More than simply a change in title, this new role brought forth increased responsibilities, primarily in the selection and execution of the curriculum that guided the class. Free from the constraints of a mandated, standardized curriculum, I was able to create a course of study as I saw fit. Though individual subjects were generally driven by a cycle of broad ranging topics (industrial revolution, the world wars, earth science, marine science, etc.), the specifics of instruction within those themes were left to each classroom. While I
welcomed the flexibility this afforded me, I was intimidated by the task of developing a plan of study and creating instructional materials. These were times of incredible growth for me. Alongside decisions regarding classroom management and instructional methods, I was tasked with making determinations of what my students should learn, when they should learn it, at what pace, and to what depth. I experimented constantly here, challenging myself, my students, and their parents to take larger roles in formulating the plan of study. I pulled resources from the community and the school at large in a continual effort to add purpose, depth, and interest to our lessons. I explored different ways of teaching, and encouraged different ways of learning. This process, one that fully consumed me at times, was invaluable in opening my eyes to the issues surrounding curriculum design and the connection to student learning.

My Philosophy

In every way, my life as an educator is defined by my early teaching experiences. Though I have since gone on to take formal education courses that have broadened my educational horizons, my beliefs and practices as an educator remain grounded in the lessons that I learned in those formative years. Of note, my approach to research, and to education in general, stems from several key understandings.

- The Big Picture – Just as I entered the profession with an eye towards improving students’ lives, I remain committed to that goal today. My work is often focused on a 'big picture' approach to education, one in which overarching goals and objectives are first identified and solidified before then moving on to the finer details of
curriculum and instruction. Rather than starting with the standards to be taught in classes or assessment tools to be used, I conceptualize the issues surrounding education from the top down. Beginning with an examination of why public education exists and what its purpose should be helps to illuminate the appropriate steps for curriculum and instruction.

- Education should be personal – Stemming from the foundation that a 'big picture' approach provides, I believe that education's purpose should be realized in personal ways for students. In my own experience, capitalizing on students’ interests and prior experiences provides a powerful method to make the educative experience a meaningful part of their lives, not just a peripheral piece that comes and goes with the seasons. If we are to believe in Dewey's (1897) assertion that education “is a process of living and not a preparation for future living” (Article Two – What the School Is, para. 2), then we must pay attention to the ways in which we can make education come to life.

- Partnerships in education– Drawing from the belief that education should be a purposeful, personal experience, I believe that effective education must involve a partnership between school, teacher, parents, students, and the community at large. In many respects, education cannot achieve its goals without such partnerships. To be sure, some of the relationships involved here exist already in education on different levels. My hope for the partnerships between stakeholders in education stretches beyond the incidental connection. I believe that strong, deep relationships between the parties, ones that inform curriculum and instruction in real ways, are essential to advancing education in our communities.
Connections to Research

The lessons that I learned in my formative years of teaching permeated this research, informing the topic selection, the guiding questions that drive the study, and the research methodology. Though I did not conceptualize it as such at the time, my early efforts in education were aimed at making education more democratic. My attempts at making education more relevant to students’ lives were designed to refocus our studies on a higher purpose. My interest in giving students a voice in curriculum decisions pointed to a desire to equalize the power relations in the classroom. My efforts to explore different methods of teaching and learning were meant to broaden the skill sets of my students. No matter what you make of the debate surrounding definitions of democracy, these actions align to fundamentally democratic principles. Naturally, with these experiences, it comes as no surprise that my study pointed squarely at the relationship between democracy and education.

When I left the sheltered confines of the private school where my career began, I entered the teaching ranks in the public school system. It was, to say the least, an eye opening experience. I was the product of private schools, having attended and taught in those settings all my life. Content standards, statewide testing, adequate yearly progress, and restructuring were foreign concepts to me. Larger class sizes and varying levels of school and parental support were challenges that I never faced in my teaching experience. Lemann (as cited in Mondale & Patton, 2001) reminds us,

If it's a school day, during school hours, one-fifth of the total American population consists of public school students K through 12. One in five Americans. And if you count teachers and administrators, you are probably going
to get pretty close to one-quarter of the population of the country at any given
time on a weekday sitting in a public school building. (epigraph)

Given this reality, I was intrigued with the notion of applying the lessons I learned to the
public school setting. I never set out to do a study on democracy per se, only to explore
the issues of the purpose of public education and the appropriate methods of
strengthening and achieving those aims. Over time, after much reading and many
conversations with people both in and out of the education field, my thinking began to
crystallize around the notion of democracy. More specifically, I was interested in the
foundations of public education in our country, the current goals of education today, and
the gap between the two. In a sense, this research mirrored my approach to the classroom
in my early days of teaching. In looking for ways to make education more purposeful,
relevant, and participatory, I began with a 'big picture' approach.

**Research Questions**

In the early stages of the development of my research proposal, my research
questions focused on the practical concerns relating to the relationship between
democracy and education. Too often I had conversations with teachers who lamented the
present state of public education. The weight brought down on schools by the No Child
Left Behind Act, statewide testing, standardized curriculum, public labeling of 'failing'
schools, restructuring, and other actions, impacted the landscape of education in very real
ways. How teachers navigated the public education system was of particular interest to
me, especially when they may fundamentally disagree with the rules and regulations
under which they worked. Grounded in the real world struggles I observed in classrooms every day, these initial questions aimed to explore these issues.

- How should educators choose between competing visions of schooling for democracy?
- What are the necessary elements of a curriculum in America that supports democracy?
- How should such a curriculum be taught in the classroom?

While the answers to these questions are certainly important to any discussion of democracy and education, I began to understand that they did not strike at the heart of the issue. Indeed, no advocate for educational reform argues that their policies are undemocratic. The No Child Left Behind Act is supported by the belief that all students can learn. Statewide testing is designed to provide an objective measurement tool for school performance. A curriculum that is standardized for all students seeks to ensure that all receive access to the same information. Restructuring is based on the notion that schools should, and can, be better. None of these positions is inherently undemocratic. On the contrary, they seem to be grounded in notions that adhere to American democratic principles. While much emphasis is placed on the particulars of these policies, I realized that they are merely indicators of a larger concern. Could it be that the difficulties we face today are the result of a disconnect between the purpose of public education and the present day approach? Is it possible that we have lost sight of the principles of democracy in America that public education is charged with promoting? This train of thought led me to my final research questions.

- What are the essential components of democracy in America?
• What type of democracy are schools presently preparing our students for?
• What should schooling in American prepare our students for?
• What does the future hold for education and democracy in America?

**Qualitative Case Studies**

Given the intent of this study to explore key issues regarding the relationship between democracy and education, a qualitative approach to the research was a natural fit. As such an approach “implies a direct concern with experience as it is 'lived' or 'felt' or 'undergone’” (Sherman & Webb, 1988, p. 7), it positioned the study appropriately to address the research questions posed. More pointedly, an exploration of the essential components of American democracy, the type of democracy schools presently prepare our students for, and the aims our schools should be reaching for was best accomplished through an approach which values education as a lived experience. While quantitative methods may well have shed light on the issues in interesting ways, it likely would not have captured the essence of the relationship sought by this study.

From this starting point, I selected case studies as the most appropriate research method to be used here. Given the research questions that guided this work, a method that allowed for in depth study of the relationship between democracy and education was needed. Yin (1993, 2003) suggests that case studies are preferable in the following situations:
• When the research is explanatory in nature – This research's focus on exploring the essential components of democracy in America, as well as the democracy our schools are preparing our students for, fit the description here.

• When the researcher has limited control over events – The lack of control over the many aspects of democracy and education in schools required a research method that could account for what is happening in the field without the need to control the variables involved.

• When the research focus is on a contemporary phenomenon situated in a real life context – Clearly, democracy and education in America's public schools can be characterized as such.

With this in mind, and given the research questions presented earlier, I determined case studies to be the most appropriate method towards achieving the project's goals.

**Selection of Cases**

Having determined this research to use a qualitative case study approach, I turned to identifying educators who could address the questions I sought to answer in my study. The selection of participants, representative of their own 'cases' to be studied, was based on three key factors.

• Influence – While many have weighed in on the issue of democracy and education in America, I focused my efforts for this study on educators whose influence is widely felt in the field. Given my interest in uncovering key aspects of democracy and schooling, both present and future, I believed it necessary to
seek individuals who have had an impact on education in the country. Though clearly not an exact measurement, influence for this purpose can be seen through the publications generated, positions held, and the general impression of an educator's work by his colleagues and the public. Clearly, this is in many respects a subjective determination. Nevertheless, I deemed it important to the study to select, as carefully as possible, individuals of note within the field.

- Contemporary – The long history of American democracy and its public schools can generally be marked by several important periods of time. Unquestionably, the early efforts of public schooling after the nation's founding did much to establish the footing upon which present day public schools still stand. Later developments of the 'progressive era', the civil rights movement, and the more contemporaneous reform measures all served to shape the prevailing relationship between democracy and education. With this in mind, I initially considered selecting an author from each of these influential periods to present a balanced view of the essential components of democracy and the efforts of schools. In the end, I chose to focus on contemporaneous authors for their ability to speak to the present day issues in the field. As educators who have been active in the modern reform era, they are well positioned to comment on where the relationship between democracy and education currently stands, and in what direction we may wish to head in the future.

- Diversity – Understanding the complexities involved in presenting an accurate accounting of an educator's position on the issues at hand, I opted to limit the research's data collection to three authors. Given this position, I sought to include
authors with diverse opinions or perspectives on the relationship between democracy and education in America's public schools. This approach, maximum variation sampling, provides researchers with an avenue through which a phenomenon can be studied in detail to reveal its salient dimensions. Patton (1990) explains,

When selecting a small sample of great diversity, the data collection and analysis will yield two kinds of findings: (1) high-quality, detailed descriptions of each case, which are useful for documenting uniqueness, and (2) important shared patterns that cut across cases and derive their significance from having emerged out of heterogeneity. (p. 172)

**Description of Cases**

With these criteria in mind, Linda Darling-Hammond, John Goodlad, and E.D. Hirsch were selected to be incorporated into the study. In addition to fulfilling the requirements outlined above, I believed that the comparison of the similarities and differences in philosophies of these specific authors make for a comprehensive and compelling reading on the issues at hand. Though all of the chosen educators are grounded in the belief that American education should promote democratic values, their thoughts evolved from there. Each presents different ideas surrounding the purposes of public education in the country, and each offers different prescriptions for creating and maintaining democratic education in the future. Accordingly, all three are noted scholars
in the field who bring unique points of view into the conversation. The juxtaposition of these viewpoints revealed much about the issue of democracy and education today.

**John Goodlad**

John Goodlad, a prominent advocate for educational renewal, was well known for his efforts to raise the national dialogue on the public purpose of education in democratic societies. A veteran of the field, having worked on these issues for several decades, Goodlad has been described as the “reasonable and determined voice of renewal in the midst of shrill cries of reform from all corners” (Smith, 2008, para. 1). Goodlad often referred to concepts such as school renewal, function of schooling, and universal education in his writings.

**E. D. Hirsch**

In stark contrast, E.D. Hirsch, also a long time veteran of the modern reform movements era, is best known for his 'back to basics' approach. Grounded in his belief that students need to develop a standardized knowledge base upon which future learning can be built, Hirsch has promoted the use of standards that inform parents and teachers the essential learning that needs to take place in a given school year. Guides that outline what a second grader needs to know, for example, aim to standardize the fundamentals of

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20 John Goodlad died during the course of this study.
a second grade education to ensure that they are prepared for the next years of schooling.\textsuperscript{21}

\textit{Linda Darling-Hammond}

Linda Darling-Hammond, a former president of the American Educational Research Association, forges a different path through the muddled waters of educational reform. Rather than approach the issue of democratic education through a focus on the public purpose of schooling, as Goodlad did, or Hirsch's cultural literacy, Darling-Hammond's work is grounded in the stories gleaned from the actual happenings in education. Her research, built upon the careful analysis of the data that permeates education today, aims to uncover what works in the field, and the lessons that can be learned from those efforts. While firmly committed to the idea that America's public schools hold a commitment to advance democracy in the nation, she believes in an approach to reform that highlights “the professional knowledge needed as well as the practical and political requirements of building a system full of such schools” (Darling-Hammond, 1996, p. 9).

\textbf{Data Selection}

Merriam (1998) explains that the “single most defining characteristic of case study research lies in delimiting the object of study, the case” (p. 27). Though there are

\textsuperscript{21} See Core Knowledge Sequence: Content and Skills Guidelines for Grades K-8, (2010), Core Knowledge Foundation.
natural boundaries that define Goodlad, Hirsch, and Darling-Hammond's works, practical considerations led to important decisions regarding the scope of their work to be analyzed in my study. First, I decided that an analysis of every single publication that Goodlad, Hirsch, and Darling-Hammond have authored was not possible, nor necessary, for the purpose of my research. Each author has published a large body of work over the course of several decades. Goodlad alone has authored more than 30 books and 200 journal articles (Amrein-Beardsley, 2012). The entire body of work from each educator may not be accessible, given reasonable limitations of time and resources. Moreover, while the opinions of each author may have become more nuanced over time, I reasoned that the core values advocated by each remained steady. Therefore, instead of seeking to review all existing publications by each author, I concluded that an analysis that emphasized publications that discussed contemporary issues in education would be appropriate. Such an analysis occurred simultaneously with the data gathering, and determinations of the need for additional sources were made throughout the process. Understandably, some readers may feel more comfortable with a predetermined set of publications to be analyzed, or a complete accounting of all of the works of each author. Hill (1993) reminds us, however, that

In archival work, what you find determines what you can analyze, and what you analyze structures what you look for in archival collections. This is blatantly circular – and points to the necessarily provisional and iterative essence of ongoing archival work. Investigations in archives simply cannot be predicted or neatly packaged in methodological formulas that guarantee publishable results. (p. 6).
Accordingly, the process of focusing on select works relevant to the issues of the day and expanding as needed proved successful at capturing the essence of each author's positions on democracy and education in America.

Selection of the core works to be studied began with the use of the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa Library's OneSearch Mānoa tool. OneSearch Mānoa is a single search tool which accesses the University catalog of books, videos, archives, music, and government documents owned by the University system libraries. It also searches the Primo Central Index, ScholarSpace, and eVols, databases with access to scholarly journal articles, magazine and newspaper articles, ebooks, and legal documents. Typical searches using the OneSearch Mānoa tool consisted of the author's name paired with keywords such as democracy, democratic education, civics, and character education. Search results represented a starting point for study. The works identified in the initial search often pointed towards additional resources to investigate, and they in turn revealed still others for study. In line with Hill's (1993) explanation above, the process was often cyclical, until a broad range of works were covered in this research.

**Data Sources**

**E. D. Hirsch**


Core Knowledge Foundation. (2010). Core Knowledge Sequence: *Content and skill guidelines for grades k-8.* Charlottesville, VA.


Hirsch, E. D., Jr. (2010b). Beyond comprehension: We have yet to adopt a common core curriculum that builds knowledge grade by grade – but we need to. *American Educator*. 34(4). 30-36.


Hirsch, E. D., Jr. (2013b). Why I'm for the Common Core: Teacher bashing and Common Core bashing are both uncalled for. *Huffington Post*. 


*John Goodlad*


*Educational Leadership, 49*(3), 4-6, 8-10.


*Educational Leadership, 56*(8), 14-19.

*Linda Darling-Hammond*


Merriam (1998) writes, “Case studies that are undertaken to build theory use an inductive rather than deductive mode of thinking about the problem and analyzing the data” (p. 59). Accordingly, data analysis occurred throughout the data collection process. As each work was analyzed, key ideas and themes emerged and constant comparative analysis was employed. Glaser and Strauss (2009) explain that the constant comparative method consists of four distinct stages. First, I began by coding the data into as many categories as possible. For example, though they may not appear to directly link to the research questions here, categories such as “reading comprehension”, “research study”, “seasons”, and more were identified. Key in this stage of analysis is what Glaser and Strauss (2009) describe as the “basic, defining rule for the constant comparative method” (p. 106), the comparison of each incident with previous incidents to begin the process of theory generation grounded in the data. Data categorized as “research study”, for instance, was compared with each other constantly to ensure a measure of validity in the categorizations as well as the emerging theory. The second stage involved integrating the categories and their properties. As the categories themselves became solidified, links between them arose. For example, “reading comprehension” was linked to “opportunities” and “standards”, and theory generation developed to incorporate the
connections between them. Merriam (1998) describes this process as “highly intuitive; a researcher cannot always explain where an insight (that may later be a finding) came from or how relationships among data were detected” (p. 156). Next, as continued constant comparison of each data source to the ones before it occurred, the theory crystalized with fewer and fewer modifications required. Categories were collapsed and others streamlined, resulting in a core set of categories remaining. Goodlad's concept of “educational renewal” presents a prime example of such a delineation. Embedded within the concept are elements of leadership, school environment, relationships, and more. Finally, in the fourth stage I used the coded data to create a theory surrounding the respective author's perspectives on the research questions posed.

Organization of Chapters

**Chapter 5**

In line with the data analysis process, Chapter 5 was written with the emergent themes of each author in mind. Rather than structure the chapter with a comparison of each author’s perspectives on various themes, for example citizenship, school goals, and teacher education, I elected instead to tell the story of their approach to the issue of democracy and education in America. Each section began with a recounting of the philosophical basis for each author’s approach to the issue. From there, the chapter covered different ground in an attempt to best summarize the salient viewpoints of each case study. Accordingly, though there was often an overlap between the themes that were uncovered in the data analysis, at times there were points unique to each case. Such a
structure allowed the chapter to address the questions that guided this research as they were revealed through each author’s body of work. More importantly, it afforded the chapter the flexibility to flow freely in line with the different authors’ perspectives and to present their viewpoints in a manner that was most consistent with their works.

Chapter 6

As Chapter 6 aimed at looking towards the future for democracy and education in the country, it was structured differently from Chapter 5 in an attempt to best meet that goal. While a simple explanation of each author’s outlook on a democratic education for the future may have been clear and concise, I determined that this would not have been sufficient to address the issue in its entirety. After all, the variation in themes that emerged in Chapter 5 demonstrated that the differing approaches of each author resulted in some topics being universally covered while others were not. Hirsch for example, does not delve in depth on the issue of school structure and the changes that may be needed in that area. Darling-Hammond addresses teacher education more thoroughly than the other cases in this study. And Goodlad’s work on educational renewal versus reform is a theme unique to him. With the variability in themes at work here, I opted to select an overarching framework that would guide the discussion on the future of democracy and education in America. Such an approach offered two advantages. First, it ensured that key elements of democracy and education would be covered in the discussion on the future. Second, it allowed for a direct comparison between the authors, providing a more complete view of each covered theme.
Framework for Analysis

Davies’ (1999) work on comparing differing definitions of democracy in education was selected to be used here for its clarity and comprehensiveness. More specifically, she outlines an eight point framework for examining schools and systems in the process of transition to a democratic focus. This framework included the following areas:

- Basic values - What values are associated with democracy in education?
- Rights - How are individual rights viewed and incorporated into educational life?
- System structures - What structures govern the educational system?
- Structures within schools - How does democracy embody itself in the decision making process within schools?
- Balance - How do systems seek to achieve a balance between centralized control and local freedom?
- Learning content – What are the elements of the curriculum that link to democracy? How were they selected?
- Training – What training is necessary to democratize education?
- Outcomes – What kind of democracy is possible given the educational system?

As the framework was intended to evaluate actual school systems in practice, several modifications were needed to fit the intended purpose here. First, system structures, structures within schools, and balance were combined into the overarching category of school structures due to the fact that each author did not speak at length about those areas separately. Second, outcomes as a distinct category was removed from the discussion as
it was explored in detail in Chapter 5. The changes resulted in the five categories of basic values, rights, school structures, learning content and training that were covered. Woven within the conversation in those areas are my personal beliefs on the subjects, and my perspective on a direction for the future of democratic education.

Limitations of this Research

A primary limitation pertains to the selection of cases that were included in this study. To be sure, Goodlad, Hirsch, and Darling-Hammond are not lone advocates for their respective positions in the field. Indeed, their influence is felt in the number of teachers, parents, administrators, and schools across the country that share similar viewpoints. It is no stretch, therefore, to state that others before them promoted comparable beliefs, and others after them will do the same. Nevertheless, Goodlad, Hirsch, and Darling-Hammond's importance to the field of education reform is unquestioned. While this work may very well have included alternative educators that advance the cause of standardized curriculum, research based efforts to determine what's working in our schools, and an emphasis on the public purpose of schooling, I believe that the selection of the three authors profiled provided this research with a compelling view on democratic education in America.

It is also important to note here the obvious implications of limiting the educators involved in the study to three. While including additional voices would certainly have added a different dimension to the research, it would not necessarily have added to the study's ability to address the guiding questions. The point here is not an objective look at the essential components of democracy in America with the intent of generalizing a
curriculum that adheres to it, an approach Hirsch would likely support. Instead, this research delved into the relationship between democracy and education and the experiences students are currently receiving in schools related to the issue through the lenses of key figures in the field. Maykut and Morehouse (1994) explain that this method aligns with the goals of qualitative research.

It is not our goal to build a random sample, but rather to select persons or settings that we think represent the range of experience on the phenomenon in which we are interested. Thus, it is our working knowledge of the contexts of the individuals and settings that lead us to select them for initial inclusion in our study. (p. 57).

Accordingly, the targeted selection of the three cases to be studied here presented this study with the appropriate data to address the research questions.

A further limit to the cases that were studied involves the exclusion of personal communication between the authors and myself. Though two of three educators remains active in the field, I declined to seek out any correspondence with them on the issues at hand. On the face, this may seem a serious omission, especially given the fact that the authors may never have written to specially address the research questions asked here. However, as each author has an extensive body of work in publication, there may not be any additional insight gleaned from direct communication. Furthermore, each author's influence on the field is felt primarily through his or her published works and public commentary, not through private communications. As such, these works should, and do, stand on their own.
CHAPTER 5
CASE STUDIES

E.D. Hirsch (March 22, 1928 - )

Overview

Eric Donald Hirsch, Jr. was born and raised in Memphis, Tennessee. He graduated with a B.A. degree from Cornell in 1950, and received a Ph.D. in English from Yale in 1957. Prior to his work in education, he was a Professor of English, studying Romantic poets and questions of literary interpretation and hermeneutics (Edwards, n.d.). His shift to work in the field of literacy and curriculum development began with his 1977 work, The Philosophy of Composition (Edwards). As part of this work, Hirsch (2009a) conducted research on reading and writing with students at the University of Virginia and at J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College, a predominantly African American institution in Richmond, Virginia. Testing at these institutions revealed that while the community college participants could decode and comprehend texts equally as well as the university students when the subject was roommates or car traffic, they could not do so when the passages concerned Robert E. Lee's surrender to Ulysses S. Grant (Hirsch, 2009a). The sole reason for this weakness, Hirsch (1984, 2009a) concluded, was not social inequality or differences in upbringing, but gaps in the factual knowledge needed to make sense of the passage. In essence, he determined that while both groups were equally skilled in reading, they were dramatically different in their background knowledge. It was the increased background knowledge that the university students
shared that allowed them to outperform their peers in the study. The community college students failed to understand the text not because they could not understand the words, but because they had relatively little familiarity with America's civil war (Hirsch, 1984).

The results of his research, Hirsch (2009a) later explained, “shocked me into school reform” (p. 6). It spurred him to leave his “comfortable life as a conference-going literary theorist” in order to devote himself to helping right the wrong he perceived was being done to those like the community college students he encountered (Hirsch, 2009a). The recognition of the importance of background knowledge to learning led Hirsch to formulate his concept of “cultural literacy” – the idea that reading comprehension requires not just formal decoding skills but also wide-ranging background knowledge (Stern, 2009). He continued to work on that concept and founded the Core Knowledge Foundation in 1986. He has published a number of influential books, including:

- *The Schools We Need and Why We Don’t Have Them* (1996)

In 1997, Hirsch began publishing the Core Knowledge Series of books that focused on particular grade levels such as What Your Kindergartner Needs to Know. This series now runs from preschool to the eighth grade.

Now retired, Hirsch was a professor of Humanities and English and the Linden Kent Memorial Professor of English Emeritus at the University of Virginia. He was a distinguished visiting fellow at the Hoover Institution from 1999 to 2006. He served on the Research Advisory Board of the U.S. Department of Education, and in 1997, received the Biennial Quest Award for Outstanding Contribution to Education from the American
Federation of Teachers. He remains an active member of the Board of Trustees of his nonprofit Core Knowledge Foundation.

**Failures in Modern Education**

Hirsch opens the issue of education in America with a disheartening accounting of the uneasiness that has surrounded education in recent times. Despite much activity in the past several decades to improve the quality of education in the country, he points to the documented failures of these reforms. Reading scores across the country have continued to remain low (Hirsch, 2001, 2013a). American students have ranked poorly when compared to other developed nations on international assessments (Hirsch, 1996, 2006). And employers have turned to immigrants from other countries to do the work that American graduates cannot do (Hirsch, 2006). Hirsch (2010b) concludes that

Most current reading programs do not prepare students for high school, higher education, the workplace, or citizenship because they do not make a systematic effort to convey coherently, grade by grade, the knowledge that books (including high school textbooks), newspapers, magazines, and serious radio and TV programs assume American readers and listeners possess. (p. 31)

For Hirsch, all of these results have led to a general lack of confidence in America's public schools.

Even more troubling to Hirsch than the overall performance of American students is the specific achievement gaps that exist between socio-economic groups in our educational system. Hirsch notes the disparities between reading proficiency among
differing demographic groups, concluding that not only do Americans as a whole perform poorly when compared to those outside the country, but within the country there exists significant variation in academic success among distinct groups. This imbalance signifies to Hirsch the inability of our current system to level the educational playing field to allow students with diverse backgrounds to overcome whatever disadvantages they may face in order to ultimately find success in life. The capacity of schooling to meet this aim, Hirsch (2006) asserts, is central to democracy in America.

What gives the reading gap between demographic groups a special poignancy is the dramatic failure of our schools to live up to the basic ideal of a democratic education, which, as Thomas Jefferson conceived it, is the ideal of offering all children the opportunity to succeed, regardless of who their parents happen to be. Reading proficiency is at the very heart of the democratic educational enterprise, and is rightly called the “new civil rights frontier” (p. 3)

Gaps in academic achievement strike at the heart of the American ideal that all children, regardless of their backgrounds, deserve an equal opportunity for success. Without the requisite knowledge and skills provided through a quality education, Hirsch notes that students who lack academic competence are robbed of the American principle of opportunity and fairness. In this sense, educational reform takes on a larger role than simply improving the economic and political prospects of American students. For Hirsch, precise adjustments to the system of education will result in schooling that is more efficient, more effective, and most importantly, more democratic.
The Goals of Schooling

To Hirsch, the issue of poor student achievement points to the failure of the current educational system to fulfill its desired purpose. Relying on the thoughts of America's Founding Fathers, as well as an analysis of the changing realities of the world we live in, Hirsch identifies two primary goals of schooling. First, Hirsch establishes the function of education as the preparation of its citizens to find success in the modern world (Hirsch, 2006, 1996). Here Hirsch contends that education should seek to build students' "intellectual capital", a phrase which denotes the knowledge and skills a person possesses. Sometimes understood as a quality that contributes to an individual's economic success, Hirsch argues that the concept extends far beyond the financial realm. He points to the impact intellectual capital has "in almost every sphere of modern society to determine social class, success or failure in school, and even psychological and physical health" (Hirsch, 1996, p. 19). With the evident lack of academic competence generated by schools today, Hirsch questions the ability of modern day schooling to build the requisite intellectual capital to allow students to find success in the future.

Second, and more fundamental to the purpose of education in America, Hirsch argues that schooling in the country should be committed to providing citizens with the tools necessary to protect and advance the American way of life (Hirsch, 2006, 1996). On the surface, this preparation involves the teaching of the requisite knowledge and skills citizens need to fulfill their political function in American democracy. Naturally, in order

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22 Hirsch’s concept of intellectual capital is opposed to the belief that the learning of skills takes precedence over the acquisition of knowledge.
to self-govern, Americans need to possess a certain level of understanding of the many issues surrounding the social, political, and economic realms in the country in order to effectively guide the nation forward. Yet beyond the building of the technical means of governance, Hirsch argues that education in America is tasked with a deeper commitment. For him, an essential characteristic of the public’s preparation is education's capacity to instill within its students a sense of commonality and civic commitment to the country. After all, to be American encompasses much more than knowledge of the branches of government, a government identification card, and the payment of taxes. At its core, to be American is to adhere to its values and beliefs, to think like Americans think, to act like Americans act. In order for people to do so, they must be imbued with the knowledge and skills that make them uniquely American.

Not just Webster but all of our earliest educational thinkers argued that precisely because we were a big, diverse country of immigrants, our schools should offer many common topics to bring us together; if schools did so, they felt, we would be able to communicate with one another, act as a unified republic, and form bonds of loyalty and patriotism among our citizens. (Hirsch, 2009b, p. 21)

In essence, education is tasked with the making of Americans, in every sense of the term. The power of schooling to indoctrinate its students in the core values and beliefs of the country sets it apart as the singular institution that can ensure not only the continued existence of the nation state, but the American way of life.
Education’s Role in Preserving Diversity

To be clear, Hirsch does not envision schooling as an environment devoted entirely to the development of the public good at the expense of the individual. Instead, he recognizes the importance of personal development and the protection of the essential qualities of differing groups, as diverse as those may be. He establishes the balance required here as in line with the tradition of a separation between public and private space in American democracy.

Although the specifics of schooling in the twenty-first century must be new, the larger aim upon which American schooling needs to be founded is the same as in Webster's day – to develop the common public sphere in order to liberate and safeguard the heterogeneous private sphere. (Hirsch, 2009b, p. 20)

Hirsch argues that rather than threaten the country's history as a collection of diverse languages, cultures, and beliefs, the explicit teaching of the elements common to American life is the surest means to preserve this distinctiveness. In his eyes, given the American traditions of tolerance and the separation of church and state, among other beliefs, the perpetuation of American values amongst the public directly impacts the freedom of individuals to operate in their private lives. Indeed, it is this relationship which makes the quest for commonality all the more important for Hirsch.

Today, the idea of commonality is labeled un-American because it conflicts with our more capacious idea of American identity, which can no longer be described by the imperialistic metaphor of the melting pot but by the multicultural metaphor of the salad bowl. This is an oversimplification. Our early educational thinkers conceived of the United States as both a salad bowl and a melting pot – a
federated union. Salad bowl and melting pot are not mutually exclusive concepts – and they cannot be if we are to have a bowl to hold the salad. The recent debates over multiculturalism have obscured the founding political conception of the United States, one of commonality with diversity, the pluralis within the unum. (Hirsch, 2009b, p. 22).

Education, therefore, not only plays a vital role in the making of Americans, Hirsch also views it as crucial to the preservation of an America that values diversity, that protects the liberties of private individuals, and that allows all citizens to fully benefit in common public life.

**Barriers to Educational Achievement**

Given this clear course for education in America, Hirsch uncovers several barriers that have led to the current state of lagging academic achievement in our schools. At the heart of the problem is Hirsch's (2006) assertion that an “army of American educators and reading experts are fundamentally wrong in their ideas about education and especially about reading comprehension” (p. 3). Hirsch decries the unquestioned adherence to four erroneous ideologies at work over the past several decades in America. He denounces the philosophies of naturalism, determinism, individualism, and formalism as root causes of the misguided efforts in the country's schools (Hirsch, 1996, 2004). Though a complete accounting of these intellectual arenas is beyond the scope of this work, it is important to provide here an overview of the ideologies, as well as the links

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23 "E pluribus unum" is a Latin phrase often translated to mean “Out of many, one”. Hirsch’s reference to the pluralis within the unum likely refers to his view that there is diversity that exists within the one American culture.
Hirsch draws between these traditions and familiar claims about what American education should strive to accomplish.

*Naturalism*

In regards to the philosophical tradition of naturalism, the notion that learning can and should be aimed at the development of a natural life, Hirsch argues that this belief has precipitated the faulty claim that schools in America should aspire to develop a child's natural abilities, to allow them to become who they naturally are. This viewpoint, contrary to one that views children as a formless piece of clay to be molded, is sometimes represented as the belief that schools should avoid any approach to learning that wouldn’t occur outside of schools in favor of more organic methods. Hirsch contends this design contributes to an anti-intellectual sentiment plaguing the American educational system. “In education”, Hirsch (1996) writes, “this optimistic cast of mind induces trust in the child's natural development, and suspicion of harsh discipline, bookish hard work, and other forms of artificial stimulation and constraint” (p. 76). For Hirsch, naturalism, in theory and in practice, has encouraged parents and educators to sacrifice academic achievement for a watered down educational experience. Rather than emphasize content and instruction in schools, curriculum has evolved to be more student centered, motivated by individual wants and needs. Hirsch traces the current state of academic failures directly to this naturalistic approach. After all, if education aims to prepare students for future success in American democracy, it is difficult for Hirsch to imagine that the
necessary knowledge and skills needed to meet this end will be gained entirely through a student directed program of study.

**Developmentalism**

Hirsch also refutes the notion of an American education designed around 'developmentally appropriate' practices. Closely related to the European Romantic notions of children as natural beings, this determinist approach advances the faith that early childhood is a time for being a child. Accordingly, a child's natural course of development should determine when a particular method of instruction should be used or a specific subject should be taught. Often times proponents argue that formal instruction, and the pressure that accompanies it, should be reserved for a time that is more appropriate. Hirsch maintains that such a belief in a natural course of development for children has had wide ranging negative effects on education and society at large. In education, Hirsch argues that developmentalism has hampered the ability of schooling to accomplish one of its primary democratic goals, the preparation of citizens for future success. Seeking to avoid disrupting the natural course of development of children, American school programs have too often eschewed a rigorous, content specific approach to early childhood education in favor of one more exploratory in nature. Hirsch points to the continuing achievement gaps in education as evidence of the failure of this course of action. Internationally, by comparison, nations free from a strict adherence to approaches deemed developmentally appropriate have successfully implemented strong academic programs for the young. For Hirsch (1996), such programs have not only disproven the
myth of developmentalism in education, they have also demonstrated that a “good, academically focused preschool can overcome the egregious academic differences that currently develop between social classes in American schools” (p. 80). On a broader level, Hirsch (1996) alleges that the attachment to developmental beliefs has contributed to the inequities in American society at large.

By encouraging an early education that is free of “unnatural” bookish knowledge and of “inappropriate” pressure to exert hard effort, developmentalism virtually ensures that children from well-educated homes who happen to be primed with academically relevant background knowledge, which they bring with them to school, will learn faster than disadvantaged children who do not bring such knowledge with them and do not receive it at school. (p. 90)

Essentially, in withholding rigorous academic instruction in the early years of childhood, the gap between the privileged and the underprivileged are at best maintained, and at worst exacerbated. Unsurprisingly, Hirsch concludes that real change in American education can only occur with a shift away from a developmental approach to educational theory towards one that embraces the unconstrained growth of intellectual capital.

**Individualism**

Third, Hirsch rejects the theory of individual learning styles and multiple intelligences. Again linked to the underlying belief in a natural and unique child, Hirsch interprets these sentiments as nothing more than an attempt to invent a “compensatory intelligence, which makes everybody smart in something” (1996, p. 100). He dismisses
the familiar multiple intelligences model outlined by Howard Gardner as unproven scientifically, and downplays the impact that such perspectives should have even if they hold true. After all, Hirsch argues that the recognition of talents outside of academics does not absolve schools of the need to develop academic competence for all. Moreover, Hirsch regards an attachment to individualism as the basis for many of the dubious practices that have emerged in education in recent times. The acceptance of the equal worth of each child comes at the price of academic competition and honest evaluations of student progress. The emphasis on fostering a child's unique imagination and creativity minimizes the need for traditional academic success. And the understanding that each child carries inherent talents implies that each student deserves to pass, something Hirsch terms 'grade egalitarianism'. In the end, Hirsch (1996) couches the debate surrounding individualism in education in terms of the central theme of his work, the identification of practical methods to achieving student success.

Equity, however, clearly requires that schools give all children the knowledge and skills they need to become politically functional, economically successful, and autonomous citizens. If schools do not define with some particularity what those attainments are, and if they do not cause every student to reach them, no amount of overt concern for individuality can enable each student to develop his or her potential as a participant in the larger society. (p 106)

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Irrespective of one’s opinion on the unique gifts of each child, as problematic as those beliefs might be, Hirsch urges his readers to never lose sight of the need for schools in America to build academic competence.

*Formalism*

Lastly, Hirsch attacks the perception that education should concern itself not with the learning of content, essentially the accumulation of intellectual capital, but rather learning how to learn. Along with naturalism, this belief, what Hirsch terms 'formalism', shares an antipathy to gaining mere facts in favor of the acquisition of formal skills. Facts, formalists argue, are ever changing, particularly in today's fast paced society. Instead of emphasizing factual subject matters, each child needs to be given the all-purpose tools so that they can learn and adapt to a variety of content areas and situations. In reading, for instance, formalists promote the teaching of critical thinking skills that allow students to deal with any texts, regardless of subject matter.\(^{25}\) In math, students are encouraged to learn problem solving skills that extend their ability beyond the question in front of them. Across subjects, schools aim to teach metacognitive strategies for improving student competencies in a variety of areas.\(^{26}\) To these claims, Hirsch looks towards the empirical record and finds it severely lacking in support of such an approach. Formalism, he concludes “has proved to be a premature panacea – a continually repeated

\(^{25}\) Hirsch views critical thinking skills as akin to a form of discovery learning, where students are not merely taught facts but encouraged to actively explore and discover on their own.

\(^{26}\) Metacognitive strategies describe approaches which help students to be aware of their own thinking. See Zimmerman, B.J. (2002). Becoming a Self-Regulated Learner: An Overview. *Theory Into Practice, 41*(2), 64-72.
slogan without a consistent basis in reality” (Hirsch, 1996, p. 143). While on its face the singular teaching of higher order thinking that opens the doors to future learning seems attractive, Hirsch (2006) asserts that it mischaracterizes how real world skills are actually applied. He cites studies that have determined that the method of applying critical thinking techniques to new data reflects the lower order thinking of novices instead of experts in the field (Hirsch, 2000). He recounts research which indicates that intelligent decision making cannot occur without accurate factual knowledge. And he points out the cognitive research which has concluded the existence of an unavoidable interdependence between relational and factual knowledge, establishing the proper method of instruction as firmly between formalist and anti-formalist approaches. Indeed, Hirsch notes that anti-formalists, those who support an emphasis on factual knowledge, are correct in that the higher order thinking skills so sought after are founded upon a strong knowledge base. At the same time, formalists are correct in their assertion that the purpose of education is not to possess knowledge as an end in itself, but as a means to facilitate future learning. Put another way, “intellectual capital is itself the great all-purpose tool of adaptation in the modern world” (Hirsch, 1996, p. 22). In Hirsch’s eyes, if schools in the country are to prepare students with the tools necessary to thrive in and perpetuate...

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American democracy, they must not run from a clear focus on developing the intellectual capital that success is built upon.

Hirsch Proposes a New Direction

To correct the failures of present day schooling to ensure student success, Hirsch turns his attention towards the presentation of a clear, coherent direction for American education in the modern world. He begins first by dispelling the notion that schooling in America is unique in the field of education, driven by an exceptional history, location, diversity, or any number of other factors. Though he understands the purpose of education in the country to be uniquely American, Hirsch derides the position that the kind of education that the United States needs is necessarily different from other nations as America and its citizens are different from the rest of the world. In response to the often cited argument that America's ethnic and economic diversity presents educational challenges not faced elsewhere, Hirsch (1993) points to other nations with diverse school populations and higher levels of academic achievement.  

When presented with the argument that the promotion of American egalitarianism necessities a singular approach to education in the country, Hirsch (1996) highlights international research which uncovers “apparently universal characteristics of successful systems of elementary education” (p. 93).  

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28 Hirsch points to high-performing systems in countries such as France, Sweden, and Japan.

29 Hirsch highlights the research done in Harold Stevenson's (1992) book The Learning Gap as indication of the apparently universal qualities of successful elementary educational systems. The Learning Gap compared elementary schools in America (Chicago and Minneapolis) with those in Asia (Taiwan, China, and Japan).
related to independent and critical thinking, Hirsch counters that such principles flourished in the nation's history irrespective of differing modes of instruction or the often changing emphasis of education at the time. Moreover, the encouragement of children to think for themselves is not a uniquely American trait, nor does it imply a uniquely American educational system. Indeed, Hirsch cautions us to resist the lure of American exceptionalism. “So long as educationists and the general public believe that our culture and our children are incomparable, American exceptionalism will continue to be exploited as an effective means of resisting real change” (Hirsch, 1996, p. 99).

With this groundwork in place, Hirsch explores the empirical record related to reading instruction, vocabulary acquisition, successful efforts at closing gaps in achievement, higher order thinking, and more. He argues that

At any given time, it is our duty to work out the most probable theoretical analysis of a practical educational problem in the light of all the relevant research from all relevant areas, and to resist being distracted on the one side by the latest research bulletins and on the other side by people who say skeptically that educational data are too complex so we'll stick to our educational philosophy. (Hirsch, 2006, p. 130)

Hirsch's review of the literature on student achievement and the learning process leads him to conclude the need for a return to an academic focus in American education. Based on the examples set by successful developed nations around the world, Hirsch identifies two crucial truths of strong educational programs. First is the recognition that content must be directly taught to students (Hirsch, 1996, 2006). Contrary to the theory
underpinning a naturalistic approach to schooling, Hirsch asserts that the whole of education cannot be left to natural learning. While the young may possess an innate oral language ability, no such capacity exists for alphabetic learning. Similarly, the base ten number system is non-natural, and no evidence exists to support any claims that naturalistic methods will succeed there. Indeed, Hirsch notes that any information that is the artificial product of civilization needs to be directly taught, rather than left to the devices of natural learning. Second is the understanding that in order for students to comprehend material in school, they need to possess prior knowledge about its respective domains (Hirsch, 2003). Hirsch points out that the ability to learn something new depends on one's ability to accommodate the new knowledge to that which is already known. Relevant prior knowledge, in essence, enables the efficient comprehension of new learning by providing a platform upon which a child can readily build his understanding of new material. As Hirsch (1996) argues, “there is an unavoidable interdependence between relational and factual knowledge, and that teaching a broad range of factual knowledge is essential to effective thinking both within domains and among domains” (p. 157).

**Content Guidelines to Ensure Student Success**

Given these conditions, Hirsch proposes a grade by grade sequence of content guidelines in a variety of subjects for American education. If, as Hirsch argues, learning builds on learning, then in order for schools to fulfill their obligations to prepare citizens for their political and economic duties in the future they must ensure that every student
has an equal opportunity to learn. Indeed, Hirsch (1996) explains that is a “fundamental requirement of democratic education that every student who enters a class at the beginning of the year should be vouchsafed the academic preparation needed to gain the knowledge and skills to be taught in that year” (p. 24). In his eyes, the correct way to ensure such results is to identify a carefully chosen sequence of knowledge by grade levels and to implement them with fidelity in America's schools. He argues that such an approach provides students with an opportunity to develop a commonly shared knowledge and enables them to enter each new grade with a secure foundation for future learning. In doing so, schools will realize three critical benefits. As they adopt the principles and practices of a core knowledge approach, Hirsch contends that schooling will become more effective in achieving student success. He notes that in schools without curricular coherence, students often enter successive grades with varying levels of skill and knowledge as a direct result of a lack of consistency in the academic studies in previous grades. The problem is exacerbated, according to Hirsch, when students move from school to school, or state to state, without a common core of knowledge expectations to guide instruction across those various settings. Consequently, teachers spend precious time at the beginning of each year reviewing materials that should have been mastered previously, and dealing with the difficulties that arise when students possess differing levels of academic competence. Even the best teachers, Hirsch (2006) notes, “cannot achieve as much as an ordinary teacher can within a more coherent curricular system like those found in the nations that outperform us” (p. 84). When all students hold the same background knowledge, however, Hirsch concludes that classroom time can be spent moving forward in the curriculum, avoiding the boredom
that accompanies reviewing past knowledge and instead challenging all students at the appropriate levels.

**Content Guidelines for a More Democratic Education**

Hirsch also argues that having a structured core knowledge approach to education makes schooling more fair and democratic. When faced with the task of providing all students with the foundation for future success, care must be taken to account for the inequities in American society outside of school. A primary cause of the achievement gaps evident in schools, Hirsch notes, is the disparity between the out of school education happening in advantaged homes compared to disadvantaged homes. Differing language patterns, varying degrees of exposure to new knowledge and experiences, and a variety of other factors impact student readiness levels as they begin schooling. If schools do not successfully mitigate these out of school effects, narrowing the achievement gaps will prove increasingly difficult. Schools that are committed to a core knowledge approach, however, can guarantee equal access to essential knowledge and compensate for the academic disadvantages that some students face. Despite the fact that disadvantaged students may start schooling knowing less than their peers, each additional piece of learning that they accumulate is proportionally more enabling to them than to students who knew more. Over time, this decreases the distance between the two groups, and ensures that all children will enjoy the benefits under a more equitable, democratic educational system.
Content Guidelines for the Development of a Common American Culture

Finally, Hirsch asserts that schools that adopt a shared knowledge program help to create cooperation and solidarity both within the school and in the nation at large. Here Hirsch emphasizes the development of a school based culture that is common and welcoming to all students, regardless of their differences. While recognizing the importance of diversity to the country, Hirsch cautions against the use of our multicultural makeup as a tool to divide the country into separate factions, each protective of their own aspirations and hostile to others. To this end he argues that for schooling, “cultural identity is a contingency – an accident, not an essence” (Hirsch, 1996, p. 209).

Here he takes aim at the influences a multicultural approach has had on education in America. Rather than strengthen the country through an embrace of diverse viewpoints, knowledge, and instructional methods, Hirsch concludes that such alterations in schooling have done nothing more than preserve the inequities in the economic and academic status quo.

Hence, the practical result of an “anti-elite” multicultural and bilingual orientation in elementary schooling has been to deepen the disadvantage of the children of the unassimilated and to enhance the advantage of the already-assimilated English speaking elite (whatever their original ethnic identities), and thus to exacerbate class differences. (Hirsch, 1999, p. 137)

By eschewing instruction in a broad base of content specific to America, Hirsch claims that schools that have taken a multicultural approach to education have failed to provide its students with the knowledge necessary to succeed. To combat this, Hirsch (1996) argues that instruction in our schools should be firmly committed to developing the
American culture, irrespective of students' ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Multicultural education, he (1988a) explains, is indeed valuable in itself; it inculcates tolerance and provides a perspective on our own traditions and values. But however laudable it is, it should not be the primary focus of national education. It should not be allowed to supplant or interfere with our schools' responsibility to ensure our children's mastery of American literate culture. (p. 18)

Therefore, in order to fulfill its purpose of preparing students for a future political and economic life, “effective classroom schooling has to be monocultural for the same reason the marketplace has to be – so that all can participate” (Hirsch, 1996, p. 209).

Accordingly, for Hirsch, the adherence to a set of shared knowledge in schools is designed to create a common American culture, one committed to toleration and civility. Hirsch (1996) writes, “The common learnings taught in school should promote a cosmopolitan, ecumenical, hybrid public culture in which all meet on an equal footing – a culture that is as deliberately artificial and non-sectarian as our public invocations of the Divinity” (p. 235). At the school level, such an experience would give all students, regardless of their backgrounds, a common foundation for understanding our cultural diversity (Hirsch, 1997, 1999). At the national level, it allows citizens to participate effectively in modern society.
Core Knowledge Sequence

Given this framework, Hirsch sought to identify the knowledge necessary to become a successful participant in democratic life in America. He founded the Core Knowledge Foundation in 1986, a group dedicated to educational excellence and equity for all children in schools. Through a review of state departments of education reports, as well as those generated by professional academic organizations, and an examination of the educational systems of several successful countries internationally, a selection of commonly shared knowledge to be taught in schools was developed. This plan was further refined by workgroups consisting of teachers, college professors, administrators, and scientists and trialed in schools across the country, ultimately leading to the creation of the Core Knowledge Sequence (Hirsch, 1997). Grouped by grade level, the sequence is intended to present a coherent, cumulative, and content specific curriculum for students. Currently comprised of preschool through eighth grade objectives, the sequence offers a detailed outline of specific knowledge and skills to be taught in language arts, mathematics, history, geography, finance, and fine arts. Key to its design is the layout of specific knowledge and skills, rather than general concepts to be taught. As the authors explain,

The Core Knowledge Sequence is distinguished by its specificity. While other standards provide general guidelines concerning what students should be able to do, they typically offer little help to teachers in detailing specific content or skills. The Sequence provides a solid foundation on which to build instruction. Moreover, because the Sequence offers a coherent plan that builds year to year, it
helps prevent the many repetitions and gaps in instruction that often result from vague curricular guidelines. (Core Knowledge Foundation, 2010, p. vi).

The Kindergarten guidelines, for example, call for specific content to be taught throughout the year. In addition to encouraging Kindergarten teachers to expose their students to picture books and non-fiction books, the sequence specifies the stories to be used to complement children's emerging reading and writing skills. Taken directly from the Core Knowledge Sequence: Content and Skill Guidelines for Grades K-8 (Core Knowledge Foundation, 2010, pp. 10-11), the stories include:

- The Bremen Town Musicians (Brothers Grimm)
- Chicken Little (also known as “Henny-Penny”)
- Cinderella (Charles Perrault)
- Goldilocks and the Three Bears
- How Many Spots Does a Leopard Have? (African folktale)
- King Midas and the Golden Touch
- The Legend of Jumping Mouse (Native American: Northern Plains legend)
- The Little Red Hen
- Little Red Riding Hood
- Momotaro: Peach Boy (Japanese folktale)
- Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs
- The Three Billy Goats Gruff
- The Three Little Pigs
- A Tug of War (African folktale)
- The Ugly Duckling (Hans Christian Andersen)
The Velveteen Rabbit (Margery Williams)

selections from Winnie-the-Pooh (A. A. Milne)

The Wolf and the Kids (Brothers Grimm)

In American history and geography, the Core Knowledge Sequence: Content and Skill Guidelines for Grades K-8 (Core Knowledge Foundation, 2010, p. 13) dictates that Kindergartners should learn:

- The voyage of Columbus in 1492
  - Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand of Spain
  - The Niña, Pinta, and Santa Maria
  - Columbus’ mistaken identification of “Indies” and “ Indians”
  - The idea of what was, for Europeans, a “New World”

- The Pilgrims
  - The Mayflower
  - Plymouth Rock
  - Thanksgiving Day celebration

- July 4, “Independence Day”
  - The “birthday” of our nation
  - Democracy (rule of the people): Americans wanted to rule themselves instead of being ruled by a faraway king.
  - Some people were not free: slavery in early America

Hirsch (2001) explains that the teaching topics in the sequence “have the greatest potential for developing general competence and narrowing the test-score gap among
student populations” (p. 24), and that they “strike a reasonable balance between deep, large scale generalizations and specific factual knowledge” (p. 25).

Occasionally the content guidelines also dictate the specific teaching methodology to be used in the classroom. Explicit phonics instruction, for instance, is embedded within the 2010 edition of the Core Knowledge Sequence, outlining grade specific decoding skills to be mastered. Additionally, certain sections within the sequence include directives on how to teach the specific content areas. The second grade language arts guidelines, for example, encourage teachers to focus on a single topic for classroom read-alouds for a period of two weeks, with a rich, structured conversation to follow each read aloud session.

**Core Knowledge and the Room for Local Control**

To be fair, Hirsch does not envision schooling to be an endless exercise of fact based instruction and memorization. Nor does he assert that a core curricula alone is sufficient to guarantee positive results (Hirsch, 1988b). Rather, Hirsch defends the teaching of a common knowledge base as a necessary condition for schools that aim to be fair, democratic, and effective in America. From this starting point, schools and teachers must make a whole host of determinations that govern the experience of schooling. The core grade level knowledge standards that Hirsch proposes are anticipated to comprise approximately half of a school's curriculum, leaving ample room for local requirements as well as teacher and student directed learning to complete the coursework requirements (Hirsch, 2006, 1996). He makes it clear that the guidelines are designed to “not be an
albatross around the teacher's neck” (Hirsch, 1985, p. 47). Once this is established the real world issues surrounding the teaching of the curriculum come to the forefront. Hirsch argues that neither fact filled memorization nor a large scale emphasis on conceptual generalizations are effective modes of education. The issue of instructional method, in his mind, “is best described not as part of a fight-to-the-death, liberal-vs.-conservative ideology but simply as a sounder empirical theory” (Hirsch, 2006, p. 136). Teachers, guided by a framework for education rooted in the understanding of the importance of a common, school based culture, must make sound decisions about the most effective teaching methods for each respective lesson. They must make wise decisions regarding the remainder of the school curriculum and how it can effectively support the content and skills outlined by the Core Knowledge Sequence. And they must make sensible decisions about how to assess their own teaching and their students' progress. In the end, Hirsch (1998, 2006) calls for better scientific research to aid in the decision making process in schools. “Without greater theoretical sophistication, we are unlikely to achieve better practical results in education. With greater theoretical sophistication, educational research might begin to earn the prestige that it currently lacks but, given its potential importance, could some day justify” (p. 138).

**Common Core State Standards**

With modern reform efforts pushing American education towards a more coherent, cumulative, and content specific system, Hirsch is encouraged by the developments in education over the last decade. The adoption of the Common Core State
Standards (CCSS), a set of academic standards in language arts and math that outline what students should be able to do at the end of each grade, lends credence to the adoption of Hirsch's views on a national scale.\textsuperscript{30} The CCSS, currently adopted in forty-three states, including Hawai‘i, has drawn comparisons to the Core Knowledge Sequence in its intent to raise the expectations for student knowledge and skills at each grade level (Baker, 2013). In fact, David Coleman, one of the chief architects of the CCSS, acknowledges the value of Hirsch's arguments in paving the way for the new standards. Coleman (as cited in Shurtleff, 2014) notes that Hirsch “showed the fundamental importance that knowledge plays to develop the foundations of literacy” (para. 8). Not surprisingly, Hirsch has defended the standards as a welcome break from the status quo and a legitimate effort to improve our nation’s schools. He applauds the Common Core's recognition of the importance of an approach to language arts that conveys key background knowledge instead of merely emphasizing the technical components of reading (Hirsch, 2010a). And while he recognizes the criticism of the standards, and admits that they, like any system, are not perfect (Hirsch, 2013a), he defends the states that have adopted the CCSS and their efforts to place increased content knowledge at the forefront of educational reform. Hirsch (2013b) argues,

The Common Core State Standards offer a framework for any state or locality to create the curricular coherence that could lead to massive gains in student learning. It would improve teacher effectiveness on a large-scale if we created a more coherent school environment in which a teacher's work in one year reliably builds on what has been taught in prior years. A conscientious and intelligent

\textsuperscript{30} See Common Core State Standards Initiative, http://www.corestandards.org
realization of the new Common Core State Standards could achieve that essential
element that has been missing in our schools for too many tragic decades. (para.
10)

Ultimately, Hirsch notes, the alternative to the CCSS, a return to the failures of the status
quo, is not be a viable option for the future of American democracy.

Critiques of the Common Core

That said, Hirsch (2013c) cautions the public to pay close attention to the tests
that arise out of the Common Core and the balance they might draw between an emphasis
on knowledge versus skill. He is also troubled by the lack of specificity outlined in the
Common Core. He notes that ensuring more specificity in state standards “is the real
battle to overcome” (Baker, 2013), even in the age of near universal standards for
education. With the CCSS firmly entrenched as a set of shared goals and expectations for
student knowledge, as opposed to a defined curriculum, Hirsch worries that their
adoption might not be transformative due to their lack of specificity. Absent a
curriculum, Hirsch contends, the Common Core “leaves the door open for schools to do
what they've always done” (as cited in Shurtleff, 2014). Teachers may continue to
emphasize skill building over content knowledge, and schools may continue to emphasize
test taking success as the end all of student learning. To avoid these troubles, Hirsch
encourages states to adopt a curriculum that is specific about what students should learn
in school.
If the idea of all children sharing some core content is to come to fruition, somebody needs to come up with a model curriculum along with validated, curriculum-based tests. That curriculum need not say how to teach, but it does need to say what limited core to teach, grade by grade. (That core is all the more important, since teachers will still need time to address students’ weaknesses and encourage them to pursue their interests.) Without a specific curriculum, and without tests that are drawn exclusively from that curriculum, word and world knowledge will continue to be taught haphazardly and incoherently, and our achievement gaps will not be closed. (Hirsch, 2013a).

Lacking this essential component, the educational ills of the previous years will still linger. Like the failures associated with previous standards based reforms, academic achievement will continue to fall behind our international competitors. Gaps within demographic groups in America will continue to rob the futures of those less fortunate. And the Common Core's efforts will prove to be “monuments to the continuing triumph of the anti-curriculum movement” (Hirsch, 2009b, 30).

John Goodlad (August 19, 1920 – November 29, 2014)

Overview

John Goodad was born in a rural Canadian town during hard economic times with limited opportunities. On his eventual entry into the field of education, he described it as “something I wouldn't mind doing. It would be nice to say I was driven powerfully to
education, but the truth of the matter was you didn't have any choices” (as cited in Goldberg, 1995, p. 82). Given his limited options, he elected to complete a fifth year of high school and one year of traditional teacher education to enter the teaching profession. Upon earning his teaching certificate, Goodlad attained a position in a one room schoolhouse with 34 students across eight grades, planning and teaching an average of 56 lessons a day (Goldberg, 1995). Later, when he arrived at a graded elementary school and was forced to relocate his classroom to a church, Goodlad experimented with ways to integrate grades and subject matters in ways that were meaningful for the students. Eventually, he became the director of education at the Provincial Industrial School for boys, a school for incarcerated youth. There he learned the power of one's environment to shape people (Goldberg, 1995).

Goodlad's experiences with education in America began with the completion of his Ph.D. at the University of Chicago. Despite once believing that “the university was something remote, and those who went weren't fully trusted by the common man” (as cited in Goldberg, 1995, p. 82), he entered the field of academia. Over the course of the next four decades, Goodlad held positions at Emory University, the University of Chicago, University of California at Los Angeles, where he served as the Dean of Graduate School of Education, and the University of Washington, where he was the co-founder of the Center for Educational Renewal. Upon his death in November 2014, Goodlad was the President of the Institute for Educational Inquiry and Professor Emeritus in the College of Education at the University of Washington (Amrein-Beardsley, 2012).

Goodlad's most influential work, *A Place Called School* (1984), grew out of his eight year study of classes from Kindergarten through 12th grade, involving more than
27,000 students, teachers, and administrators. The book, recipient of the American Educational Research Association’s Outstanding Book Award and the Distinguished Book of the Year Award from Kappa Delta Pi, was an important work in the advancement of educational policy at the time (Amrein-Beardsley, 2012; Lewin, 2015).

Additionally, Goodlad was the author of over 30 books on education, including:

- *Teachers for Our Nation's Schools* (1990)

Goodlad received numerous national awards in recognition of his work, including:

- Harold T. McGraw Prize in Education in 1999
- James Bryant Conant Award for Outstanding Service to Education from the Education Commission of the States in 2000
- Brock International Prize in Education in 2002
- New York Academy of Public Education Medal in 2003
- American Education Award from the American Association of School Administrators in 2004

**Education as a Personal Journey of Self-Discovery**

What is education? What purpose does it serve? How does it benefit the individual? How does it benefit society? Much of Goodlad's writings center on uncovering the answers to these seemingly simple questions. Developed over decades of work in the field of public education, Goodlad's ideology is built upon the belief that
understanding the complexity of the issues involved, and responding appropriately, are essential components to American democratic life. Indeed, Goodlad, Mantle-Bromley, and Goodlad (2004) argue that safeguarding education's role in the development of responsible citizens was “the most patriotic service one can provide” (p. ix). Given this importance, Goodlad took great care in establishing a firm foundation upon which a reply to the questions surrounding education could be built. He argues that his philosophy of education, which he described as a spiraling “clutch of concepts”, are at once familiar to those in the field and yet often neglected in the quest to uncover the truths of education (Goodlad, 1997a). At the heart of his ideology is the belief that education is uniquely an individualistic experience. Interpreted here as the acquisition of knowledge that constitutes selfhood for each student, the educative process is defined as a journey of self discovery (Goodlad, 1974, 1996, 1997a, 1999). While the course of discovery may be directed and influenced by others, the learning is individual in nature. In this sense, education is a deeply personal endeavor of discovery, one Goodlad (1997a) describes as the “development of a self” (p. x). The adoption of such a stance has clear implications for the purpose of education. Naturally the belief in the private nature of education signifies the existence of a personal purpose to education, one that is dedicated to the cultivation and satisfaction of the individual self.

**Education and Culture**

Far from being the end of the story, Goodlad is quick to point out that individual development exists within a larger societal context. A second concept in Goodlad's
philosophy is the belief that there is no self free from culture. He points out that one's education does not occur in a vacuum, insulated from all outside influences that may push and pull the learning in one direction or another (Goodlad, 2003, Goodlad, Mantle-Bromley, & Goodlad, 2004). Instead, the cultural context in which one develops plays a vital role in shaping the creation of one's self. It is important to note here that Goodlad speaks of culture not as related to a specific social, ethnic, or age group, but rather as the collection of societal beliefs and values that permeate the environment in which a child lives and is educated. These beliefs and values provide a context for the development of an individual self, guiding the personal growth in ways that often align to societal needs. Goodlad (1997a) explains,

Education is, in part, everywhere the same in that it always involves interplay between individual and context. But there the sameness ends. In its conduct and consequences, it differs from person to person and place to place according to what is denied and offered access to and what is dominant in the belief systems of the context. The way in which this context shapes selfhood depends heavily on the past and present hierarchy of dominance among the voices of reason and hope, faith, and punishment. (p. 12).

Consequently, a description of education necessarily includes a discussion on its assimilative nature. The wisdom central to a child's development of self grows in a cultural context through an interplay between the societal values expressed through education and a child's choices as to living this sort of life over that.
Education Beyond Schools

Closely related is the third concept underpinning Goodlad's work, a belief that education is environmentally ubiquitous (1997a). If one's development is influenced by their cultural surroundings, it follows that every aspect of one's surroundings is educative in nature. The many settings and experiences a child has away from the school all serve to contribute to a child's learning. By advocating such a position, Goodlad clearly interprets education as different from merely schooling (Goodlad, 1997a, 1997b, 2001, 2008). Indeed, Goodlad contends that “there is nothing about school as a system or school as a place that automatically imbues it with education” (Goodlad, 1997a, p. 83). Dispelling the notion that education and schooling are one in the same, he focuses on the ability of all aspects of life to advance the development of the self. To this end, he asserts that the education children receive outside of the school walls far outweighs what they learn within them. “Schools, no matter how good and committed they are to doing what they do, no matter how well-trained and competent their teachers, cannot counteract the influence of parents, peers, media, and all that constitutes the social surround” (Goodlad, Mantle-Bromley, & Goodlad, 2004, p. 84). Though we may not always recognize the educative nature of our surroundings, it nonetheless represents an important factor in the development of America's youth.

The Importance of Context to Education

Goodlad's fourth concept pertains to the environment in which children are educated. As context invariably shapes the development of children within it, Goodlad
argues that the political and social framework of the surroundings are critical pieces to
the educative process. Politically, for instance, one can learn much from the structures of
power and the decision making process in a regime. The social context is equally as
important, providing insight into such areas as the treatment of others and the resolution
of conflicts. Naturally, differing systems bring forth differing political and social
contexts. The shaping one receives in an authoritarian regime differs significantly from
that experienced in a socialist system. After all, if a primary objective of a government is
to create citizens who adhere to the establishment, it is not difficult to imagine how
education in those settings might manifest itself differently. Goodlad (1997a) explains
that “schooling can be good in its achievement of official public purpose but not provide
good education in a context dominated by repression and punishment” (p. 23).

**The Connection Between Democracy and Education**

For Goodlad, the unique characteristics of democratic governance leads to an
unparalleled relationship between democracy and education (Bellamy and Goodlad,
share a mutual instrumentality: A flourishing democracy nurtures education; education
nourishes democratic character” (p. x). Here Goodlad speaks of democracy as more than
simply a collection of political institutions and laws. Instead, he emphasizes the social
aspects of a democratic society, one envisioned to be community based with caring
citizens who are committed to each other and to the nation as a whole (Goodlad, 1996,
1999). Goodlad, Mantle-Bromley, and Goodlad write (2004),
To think of democracy as merely a political system in which people get to vote once in a while is to miss entirely the very essence of what democracy is all about. Democracy, first and foremost, is a shared way of life. It beings with who we are as individuals and the relationships we have with those around us, and it radiates outward from that center to encompass all of humanity. (p. 82)

When thought of in these terms, Goodlad argues that it is easy to understand the uniqueness of the relationship between education and democracy. While all schools aim to develop literate, socially and vocationally competent individuals, schools in a democracy must also strive to develop within its students a character that is democratic (Goodlad, 1996, Melancon & Shaughnessy, 1999). These students therefore, must grasp not only how they are to be democratic citizens in the political realm, but also how to interact socially in a way that underscores the principles of democratic life. It is in this sense that Goodlad argues that education and democracy share a mutual instrumentality. Students are expected to gain the knowledge necessary to perpetuate democratic life through education, while a thriving democracy provides the ideal context under which this can occur.

**Enculturation of Youth Through Schooling**

Building off the symbiotic relationship between education and democracy, Goodlad addresses the issue of the purpose of schooling within America. Returning to his belief that education is ubiquitous in society, he asserts that not only do the myriad of environments, experiences, and exposures all contribute to one's learning, the learning in
turn affects the individual in a myriad of ways. Politically, education prepares our youth to be responsible citizens in the future. Economically, education prepares our youth to be productive contributors to society. Sociologically, education prepares our youth to adhere to societal roles and behaviors that are deemed desirable. Yet for Goodlad, these outcomes serve to illustrate a byproduct of education and schooling, not what schooling is intended to accomplish. He argues instead for the recognition of a broader purpose for schooling in American democracy, one that extends beyond developing a competent workforce that votes every few years and adheres to the laws of the land (Goodlad, 1987, 1996, 2004b). Without such an understanding, Goodlad, Mantle-Bromley, and Goodlad (2004) note that “schooling becomes an empty vessel. It exists, but without real meaning or purpose. It exists simply because it exists, not because society recognizes that it needs to exist” (p. 58). To counter this, Goodlad advances a four part mission that supports the need for schooling in America, an approach he terms the Agenda for Education in a Democracy (Goodlad, Mantle-Bromley, and Goodlad, 2004, Bellamy & Goodlad, 2008).

First, much like Hirsch, he affirms the school's responsibility to enculturate the youth into America's social and political culture. To do so, schools must adopt a common public purpose above all other ends for education. Though the nature of education remains the development of the self, a decidedly individual goal, Goodlad (1999, 2004b, 2008) asserts that the creation of a democratic character within students that aligns with the political and social culture is the only goal that schools should strive for. No other national ends should be forced on the educational journey to self-transcendence. When school goals deviate from this established purpose, when economic, political, individual or behavioral objectives reign supreme, Goodlad argues that schooling hinders the
personal development of students in a way that is detrimental to the future of democratic society. He (1997a) writes,

Such ends are fleeting, almost invariably the result of narrow partisan interests masquerading as the common good. They lay claim to knowledge of a future that justifies and authorizes the educational shaping of the citizenry toward this future. This is mischievous and immoral. The ends a society chooses to state for education must be true to what education is and, therefore, must be both stable and comprehensive, leaving open the possibilities for creating and choosing myriad paths. Only in this way can a society ensure the development of maximum selfhood and the diversity of “selves” an unknown future will require. (p. xi)

In order to ensure the proper development of our youth, and the perpetuation of American democracy in the process, schools need to hold to their mission of educating our youth into the political and social culture of the country.

**Education as an Inalienable Right**

Second, like Hirsch, Goodlad (1996) argues that schooling in America must strive to provide for universal access to the knowledge and experiences that position students be successful in school and life beyond. Characterizing this essential knowledge as the information that allows its possessors to access what he refers to as the “human conversation”, Goodlad, Mantle-Bromley, and Goodlad (2004) state the information is crucial in so far as it constitutes what “develops a person's intellectual and social skills and abilities and what best prepares that person to interpret the human experience” (p.
30). In this sense, Goodlad establishes education, and in turn schooling, as an inalienable right (1997a). Just as it would be immoral for American democratic society to exclude a citizen from the voting process, so too would it be shameful to deny the opportunity for a child to gain the necessary instruction in how to fully participate in democratic life. Here Goodlad laments the unequal distribution of knowledge that too often occurs in schools across the nation. He asserts that poor and minority students have traditionally received “little more than the leftovers or refuse” of the human conversation (Goodlad, Mantle-Bromley, & Goodlad, 2004, p. 30). Goodlad argues that this exclusion carries with it dire consequences not only for their individual lives, but for an American democracy which strives to achieve a balance between personal freedoms and the collective good. He (1997a) argues, “The prospects for balance are dim when development of the minds of the people is curtailed through the denial or corruption of education. Denial to even a few creates a blemish that can grow into cancer and rot” (p. 7).

**The Moral Dimension of Schooling**

Third, Goodlad believes that schooling in the country carries with it a moral obligation to practice nurturing pedagogy (1990a). In order to produce citizens who are well versed in the political and social culture of America and contribute to the perpetuation of its democratic ways, he argues that it is incumbent on schools to create an environment that supports and cultivates growth and development. Naturally, if education comprised a journey towards the development of the self, it follows that careful attention to individual needs is critical to successful learning. Moreover, schools that seek to instill
within their students a democratic sense of community while embracing an approach to education that honors their individual needs sets a positive example by practicing what they aim to teach. Such means are necessary as “education, despite our honoring the concept, is not in itself good. We must intentionally and even passionately inject morality into education” (Goodlad, 2003, p. 21). Goodlad recognizes that such pedagogy is complex and fraught with difficulties. He (1990b) writes, “We want our teachers to be sensitive and caring, but the more they are, the greater the decision-making dilemmas in which they find themselves” (p. 24). As schooling is compulsory in America, one example of these complications is that students do not freely choose to be in school. Issues that arise from this condition, such as how teachers are to address students' low motivation for schooling, are never fully developed in Goodlad's works. Furthermore, the wide variety of needs that teachers encounter in a classroom raise additional dilemmas. How much time do teachers spend with one student versus others? Does a nurturing pedagogy support the denial of a student's interest in drawing in favor of learning arithmetic? How should teachers balance the desires of the state, the administration, and the parents in the education of the child? In the end, while Goodlad acknowledges the difficulties inherent in a pedagogy committed to the intellectual, social, and emotional growth of all students, he argues that it is a crucial component of an education for democracy in America. He (1990b) explains that “the more limited vision of what teaching in schools is and what it requires of teachers, their preparation, and their support, the more we shortchange them and ourselves” (p. 24).
**Stewardship of the Schools**

Finally, the fourth part of Goodlad's Agenda for Education in a Democracy is centered around ensuring responsible stewardship of the schools (Goodlad, 1990a, 1997a, Bellamy & Goodlad, 2008). Here Goodlad outlines a vision for the management and operation of schools in a democracy. Given their prime role as a vehicle for the enculturation of the youth into the political and social culture of the country, a well functioning school is a critical piece of democracy in America. Such an outcome is dependent on a school system that works as a cohesive unit to effect positive change and to sustain those changes moving forward.

In such schools, the staff – teachers, administrators, custodians, secretaries, bus drivers, and so on – come to view their school as a web of interconnected elements. They learn to recognize what is working and what isn't. They don't just focus on their own contributions; they look at the whole of the schooling experience. Their observations are shared with colleagues on a regular basis. Questions are expected, even encouraged. Concern is embraced as a vehicle for improvement. Solutions are developed from an in-depth knowledge of circumstances and an awareness of alternatives. Such knowledge is regularly sought, alternatives are routinely examined, actions are collaboratively determined, and their impacts are carefully assessed. (Goodlad, Mantle-Bromley, & Goodlad, 2004, p. 103).

Just as schools are tasked with providing a nourishing pedagogy within the classroom, Goodlad challenges schools to become a setting where success is nourished to the benefit of all. This is a place where individuals work jointly to improve education, where
opinions are valued, where constant improvement is the goal and where education becomes a collective exercise of the democracy in society at large. After all, if the Agenda for Education in a Democracy is to succeed, schools must be safeguarded from unnecessary distractions. In the face of constant pressure from policy makers, interest groups, and others, schools require vigilant stewardship to ensure that they can fulfill their lauded mission.

**Critique on the Notion of Educational Reform**

At the heart of a democratic educational system for Goodlad is a schooling governed not by concerns about school reform, but by the concept of educational renewal. Rhetorically, both approaches may seem quite similar, with an expressed commitment to improving education for all in order to support the needs of our democracy. In practice however, Goodlad (1996, 1998, 1999) argues that reform and renewal differ greatly in the beliefs that underpin each approach and the actions taken in support of them. To set the context for a comparison between the two, Goodlad explores the history of educational improvement efforts in America, ones that primarily sought to reform education and schooling (Goodlad, Mantle-Bromley, and Goodlad, 2004). Of note to this study are key characteristics of these reform efforts, particularly those of the past four decades. To start, Goodlad highlights the implications surrounding the use of the word 'reform' to describe the popular efforts in America's educational system. He notes that the term itself suggests a failure in the schools that needs to be rectified (Goodlad, 1994b, 1999, 2004a). Goodlad, Mantle-Bromley, and Goodlad (2004) write, “To state
that reform is in order is, in effect, to condemn that which is to be reformed” (p. 62). This viewpoint carries with it severe ramifications for schools. First, Goodlad points out that the quest to reinvent schools in the wake of their failures has often been accompanied by attempts to shift the public perception of the purpose of schooling in a democracy. Alongside calls for reform have come claims that education in the country has been focused on the wrong goals. In an effort to cure this ill, reforms have centered on remaking public education to serve particular ends, often times political, economic, or both (Goodlad, 1999, 2004b). Given Goodlad's belief in American schooling serving a common public purpose, he understandably interprets this refocusing as a disturbing consequence of modern reform efforts. Not only does it detract from public education’s role in supporting democracy in the country, it provides schools with shifting targets to achieve (Goodlad, 1996, 1997a, 1998, 2004b). One reform may focus on developing students who are prepared to meet the scientific and technological challenges that lie ahead. Another may emphasize the need to bridge the achievement gaps between students. A third may aim to develop a competent workforce. More recent efforts have centered on higher standards and student scores on standardized tests. For Goodlad, the seemingly constant ebb and flow of directives for public schooling in the name of educational reform unquestionably impacts its ability to effectively educate our nation's children.

Additionally, Goodlad notes that in labeling schools as deficient, the call to reform signifies that the solutions will not and cannot arise from within the schools. After all, if the schools were capable of solving whatever ills they faced internally, the need for reform would be moot. Instead, Goodlad points out that the perceived failures of public
education and the resulting calls for reform are born out of a mentality that those outside of the school know best about what they should aim to achieve, and how they should go about achieving it (Goldberg, 2000). Reform, in essence, becomes “an intervention that automatically places the reformers, whoever they may be, in a relationship of authority over those targeted for reform” (Goodlad, Mantle-Bromley, & Goodlad, 2004, p. 62). The resulting devaluation of the professionals within schools is deeply troublesome to Goodlad (1999). Worse still, Goodlad points to the recent reforms that have been the result of nationally driven efforts to improve education across the country. These nationwide reforms, rather than locally spawned attempts at improvement, serve to further remove the influence of many community parents, teachers, and students from the public education system.

**Reasons for the Failure of School Reform Efforts**

Goodlad argues that it is easy to grasp why the general notion of reform that has gripped the nation over the past several decades has established a mindset towards public education that makes it difficult to fulfill its democratic mission. In addition to the broad concerns that reform efforts have taken the country in the wrong direction, Goodlad highlights several root causes for the failures behind specific reform initiatives in America. Given that typical reform efforts emphasize a one size fits all approach, Goodlad notes that school reforms generally assume a much greater degree of uniformity amongst schools, teachers, and students than actually exists in a nation as diverse as America (Goodlad, 1999, Goodlad, Mantle-Bromley, and Goodlad, 2004). In mandating
a remaking of schools to mirror the successes in one particular model, little attention is paid to the variation that exists in the many facets of American public education that may contribute to overall achievement. The inability of these types of reforms to account for differences in community environments, cultural backgrounds, and access to knowledge and educational opportunities serve to limit the effectiveness of these efforts (Goodlad, 1994b). Looking specifically at the present day emphasis on achievement scores, Goodlad notes that far too much time is spent focusing on the outcomes that are desired, adequate yearly progress for example, instead of exploring the conditions necessary for the results that we want (Tell, 1999). While much effort has been expended on developing identical textbooks, regulating the curricular pacing throughout the year, and standardizing instructional language, less thought has been given to the overarching conditions that may play a larger role in determining success. Moreover, in a comment that could be applied directly to Hirsch's Core Knowledge Sequence, Goodlad argues that the adherence to a one size fits all approach not only proves ineffective due to its failure to account for the natural diversity at play in America, it is detrimental to the mission of public schools. Returning to his underlying belief in the mission of schools to prepare students for participation in American democratic life, Goodlad asserts that the modern reform efforts and their emphasis on a standardized model for change fail to meet their responsibility of nurturing the greater good.

If schools are to be effectual and relevant, and if they are to meet their moral obligation to a democratic public, they must have the presence and flexibility to adapt independently to change in their surroundings and in the specific populations they serve. Inflexible, prepackaged, homogenized approaches can
serve only to stifle creativity and innovation and make it far more likely that
whatever teaching does take place will be out of step with the greater social
surround in which the school is embedded. (Goodlad, Mantle-Bromley, &
Goodlad, 2004, p. 73)

Therefore, for Goodlad, as the rigidity inherent in many modern reforms runs contrary to the principles of democratic life sought after in public education, it is easy to see how such efforts are doomed to fail.

Finally, Goodlad disapproves of what he deems to be the tyranny of omission implicit in modern reform movements. Related to the disempowerment of school professionals in the attempt to mend public education from the outside, he contends that the present day efforts to remake schools often work to deny a human element to education that students deserve (Goodlad, 1996, 1999). Goodlad argues that in the focus on compliance with the policies and procedures of reform, the unwelcome, the threatening, the non-traditional, and the inconvenient voices are too often left out. Curriculum standards, for example, are often established far away from the communities in which they are imposed and leave key stakeholders without ongoing, meaningful opportunities for input into their creation, evaluation, and revision. Moreover, Goodlad notes that the standards that are implemented tend to favor an established worldview at the expense of ones that differ from the dominant narrative. He explains that such omissions are repressive in that they deny students full access to the realities of the world in which we live. For one example he writes, “the Western canon, to which Hirsch and Bloom are so affectionately attached, is not sufficient for carrying on the human conversation” (Melancon & Shaughnessy, 1999).
The omission of these viewpoints serves not only to limit the breadth and depth of the educational experience, it also acts to mechanize learning and turn education into an arena of conformity. Gone are discussions of the development of the self, of democratic character, and of the complexities of the human conversation. In its place is an education that Goodlad (1999) describes as downright scary.

And the scariness is exacerbated by an emphasis on accountability rather than responsibility, conformity rather than creativity, punishment rather than reward. In this view, education is seen as an instrument rather than as a value in its own right, the needs of the work force outweigh human needs, and the sheer dourness and weight of the rhetoric of schooling hangs like a dark cloud over the lives of children. (p. 576)

**Renewal as an Alternative to Reform**

For Goodlad, the failures of the many reforms efforts of the past have long pointed to the need for a different approach. Indeed, Goodlad laments the fact that society has not moved quicker to leave behind the shortcomings associated with attempts to reform public education.

It is particularly discouraging to note that no magnitude of failure seems able to persuade us to get off the treadmill of reform and seek more promising alternatives. This situation is all the more irksome given that the leaders of these reform efforts would have us believe that public education in this country has been in a state of crisis, requiring measures of immediate and draconian
intervention, for something on the order of a hundred years, despite our nation's many social, economic, and political achievements during that time. (Goodlad, Mantle-Bromley, & Goodlad, 2004, p. 63)

For Goodlad, educational renewal offers a real alternative. Though the concept of renewal shares with reform a common goal of improving education, the understanding of how best to achieve this end in American democracy differs in very meaningful ways (1987, 1997b, 1999). At the heart of renewal is the understanding that what schools need is a shift in their “way of being rather than a received program or set of instructions to be implemented” (Goodlad, Mantle-Bromley, & Goodlad, 2004, p. 103). Building off the belief that education in a democracy needs to exist because it bears a responsibility above and beyond the fulfillment of any personal, political, or economic objective, renewal efforts are focused on developing a system of education that allows democracy to be more fully incorporated into schooling in order to develop citizens with a democratic character. To do so, Goodlad posits that educational renewal rests on several principles. First and foremost, in order to develop democratic character, society must have a form of education which gives individuals a personal interest in social relationships that foster the common good. In the context of the classroom, this outlook implies an environment where students actively participate in the decisions that govern their instruction, an environment that aligns with the nurturing pedagogy called for in Goodlad's Agenda for Education in a Democracy (1997b). Similarly, in the context of school improvement, renewal implies an approach in which the stakeholders are actively involved in the process of change, guiding analysis, experimentation, and decision making that allows for schools to best fulfill their established mission (Bellamy & Goodlad, 2008; Goodlad,
1987, 1999). With this comes the belief that such practitioners within the schools have the capacity to effect positive change. Unlike reform efforts, which look outside of a school's walls for solutions to problems within them, Goodlad notes that the concept of renewal empowers educational professionals to be change agents, much like schools hope to empower their students to serve the same function. Additionally, renewal accepts that context has meaning and must be understood in any attempt to seek change. For example, the problem of poor graduation rates in schools in Hawai‘i may seem similar on its face to those of schools in another state, yet be vastly different due to differing circumstances. Equally disparate may be the solutions necessary to address issues across diverse settings. Accordingly, champions of renewal in education like Goodlad accept that a one size fits all solution is not feasible for our schools. In this way, when compared to attempts at reform, Goodlad explains that educational renewal is “a much different game. The language is multidimensional, relatively free of good guys/bad guys and (to the frustration of many reformers) of the linearity of specified ends, means, and outcomes” (Goodlad, 1999, p. 575). Goodlad argues that renewal is, in short, an approach that emphasizes a way of thinking about schooling, its relation to democracy, its place within the community and in the larger society, and the means through which stakeholders can collectively work to bring it all together.

A Look at Educational Reform

In its very nature, the quest for educational renewal and the accompanying Agenda for Education in a Democracy are precarious. Goodlad explains that in practice,
both “connote limitless possibilities”, a challenge for anyone intending to implement a renewal of education and democracy (2000, p. 86). To begin that process, Goodlad (2000) notes that the Agenda “must be unpeeled like an onion to reveal its wide-ranging implications for schooling, teacher education, the educative environment, and the human conversation” (p. 88). From there, hard questions must be asked, answered, and acted upon. Proponents of educational renewal offer no illusions that this transformative process will be straightforward, painless, and immediately fruitful. Cognizant of the difficulties of adopting a school renewal process that is elusive in nature, however, Goodlad works to provide the reader with concrete insight into what renewal might entail. Though it is explained that renewal is “local, holistic, organic, and rooted in the communities it serves” (Goodlad, Mantle-Bromley, & Goodlad 2004, p. 78), Goodlad (1997a) is careful to note that a simple shift in the responsibility of schooling to the hands of local communities is not a panacea for all its ills. Rather than being a process that accepts all input uncritically, renewal's power comes from its ability to strengthen the relationship between public education and democracy. As such, community efforts to improve public education can only rightly be called renewal if they are designed to promote not only the development of the self, but also the development of citizens who can work towards the greater good in the country. Goodlad provides as an example issues of diversity in our schools. He notes that America as a society is made up of many races, religions, and belief systems. It follows that a public education geared towards preparing students to participate meaningfully in this setting should reflect a similar diversity. Efforts that call for limitations on diversity in public schools, however “local, holistic, and organic” these calls may be, are not renewing in nature. Sincere attempts at renewal
would instead encourage America's public schools to embrace social and intellectual diversity in the classroom. Only in this way can our youth learn to listen to, understand, and appreciate the viewpoints of others, even when we may disagree with them.

Along the same lines, Goodlad explains that schools faithful to the concept of educational renewal are committed to a critical exploration of the world in which we live. Here, Goodlad, Mantle-Bromley, and Goodlad (2004) advocate for a public education in which “teachers and students alike must learn to ask the difficult questions, the questions that make us uneasy, the questions that have no comfortable, pat answers” (p. 88). Goodlad argues that such a disposition is a critical component to the development of an effective democratic character. After all, if the youth are to be expected to lead the country in the future, they would be well served to gain the tools necessary to inquire, to object, and to think critically. Applied to the school curriculum, such an approach carries with it significant implications. At the outset, it dictates the need for schools to provide students with a candid and comprehensive picture of the issues at hand. Goodlad points out that models of educational improvement that serve to limit the viewpoints presented hamper the ability of students to think critically about important issues and to make effective decisions. To avoid, for example, conversations about American imperialism, or its checkered history with racism, is to avoid the truths of the nation in favor of a dominant point of view. Instead, educational renewal must enable us to see ourselves not only as we wish we were, but as we truly are. Otherwise, 'education' is little more than a charade promoting complacency, servility, and ultimately the very kind of neglect that perpetuates social, economic, and political decay. (Goodlad, Mantle-Bromley, & Goodlad, 2004, p. 95)
At the same time, an approach to educational renewal that asks students to think critically about knowledge and the world around us is one that turns that same lens towards curriculum and the mechanisms of public schooling. In addition to providing students an opportunity to explore the varying viewpoints on issues in the curriculum, schools must also open to them the space to question the curriculum itself, and the decisions made in its selection, formation, and execution. Why, in American democracy, do we have schools? What should they teach? How should these decisions be made? Who gets to decide? For Goodlad, these, and many more topics, must be subjects of discussion if America is to have the kinds of schools that will help to produce a viable, robust, and committed citizenry. After all, the principles that guide life in a democracy should not be blindly obeyed, but subjected to “the steps of critically examining them, their origins and implications, the soundness of their reasoning, and their moral correctness. A democracy curriculum ought to help us learn how to do this” (Goodlad, Mantle-Bromley, & Goodlad, 2004, p. 88). If students are not allowed to become partners in this process, Goodlad (2001) warns that public schools will continue to be mired in its present troubles, a place where “adult interests prevail, and it becomes increasingly difficult to differentiate schools from prisons” (p. 4).

**Effective Strategies for Change**

Since the mid-1980's, Goodlad has led the charge for educational renewal in America. Through various initiatives, he and his colleagues have explored the practices of schooling, the preparation of teachers and administrators, and efforts at translating
theories in the field into educational practice. This work has revealed several key aspects of effective change strategies focused on the renewal of public schools. First, Goodlad (1987, 1997a, 1999) reports that collegial efforts are critical if the principles of renewal are to take root in schools. The good work of individuals may lead to personal growth, but they are unlikely to effect school wide change on their own. Instead, a core group of teachers, along with administration, must work together towards education renewal. Second, Goodlad argues that careful planning and preparation is necessary to bring forth positive change. Busy school schedules dictate that time is set aside for participants to engage in purposeful discussion and reflection. Closely related is the third characteristic presented by Goodlad, the importance of a supportive infrastructure for renewal efforts. Alongside planning and preparation comes the provision of resources necessary to implement the renewal process. Goodlad notes the tendency for federal initiatives with the best of intentions to be thwarted by the failure to provide the necessary support they needed to succeed (Goodlad, Mantle-Bromley, and Goodlad, 2004). Only when a strong commitment of resources is made can a culture of renewal begin to take shape within a school. Fourth, communication between core groups within and beyond the school is vital to the success of any change initiative. Such interaction can bring forth new ideas and perspectives, and the process can work to strengthen and expand the network of change agents. Finally, Goodlad notes that renewal efforts are best supported when a culture of risk taking and experimentation is strong within schools. In contrast to settings that reward control and predictability, the ongoing reflection and change present in schools of renewal fit best where those practices are encouraged and supported. In this way, an
existing school culture becomes an ally in the change process, rather than a hindrance to be overcome or circumvented.

The Importance of Educational Goals

With effective change strategies in place, schools can focus on an educational renewal that is for Goodlad, long overdue. This is not to say that he advocates for a complete disregard of the elements of educational standards, achievement testing, and teacher evaluation in public education. Indeed, he recognizes that the goal now must not be to eradicate every vestige of this reform theme, not just because this is impossible, but, more important, because such is not wise. Standards are a part of almost the whole of human existence; tests of some sort are indigenous to all cultures. (Goodlad, 2001, p. 18)

In fact, Goodlad argues that real change can begin with an open and honest conversation about educational goals. He (1979) writes, “the beginning of such a renaissance might very well lie in a dialogue about the extant goals for schooling that have emerged in this country over a period of more than three hundred years” (p. 43). To this end, Goodlad himself proposes goals for education that encompass mastery of basic skills or fundamental processes, career education-vocational education, enculturation, autonomy, citizenship, moral and ethical character, and more. Through a conversation about these goals, and his Agenda for Education in a Democracy, he implores us to reconnect with the democratic foundations of our society, and the purpose of public schooling. He challenges us to reprioritize our educational goals, and to redefine the indicators of
success. He hopes by doing so, the era of school reform will soon end. Goodlad hopes that in its place will be schools fit for American democracy. Schools that embrace their mission to enculturate the youth into America's social and political culture. Schools that provide for universal access to the knowledge and experiences that position students for success in life. Schools that practice a nurturing pedagogy. And schools that serve as responsible stewards of their role in our democratic life. In the end, Goodlad explains that this process is not simply about improving our nation's schools.

It is about restoring a shared humanity to the educational process. It is about the need to make caring, compassion, freedom, dignity, and responsibility central to the mission of schooling. It is about placing power and responsibility – concepts more demanding of the individual than is accountability – in the hands of those who need and deserve it. It is about taking the idea of excellence seriously. It is about taking democracy seriously. It is about having real faith in real people to do what is right, just, and honorable. It seems unconscionable to think that we might dare propose to do otherwise. (Goodlad, Mantle-Bromley, & Goodlad, 2004, p. 80).

**Linda Darling-Hammond (December 21, 1951 - )**

**Overview**

Linda Darling-Hammond was born in Cleveland Ohio. She received her B.A. from Yale University in 1973 and her Ed.D. in Urban Education from Temple University
in 1978 (Bio, 2016). A product of public schools in Cleveland, Darling-Hammond credits the quality education she received there for stimulating her interest in the teaching profession (Amrein-Beardsley, 2011). After earning her degree in 1973, she began her career as a public school teacher in Pennsylvania, teaching there from 1973 to 1974 (Bio, 2016). Those early years of teaching, a period which she describes as being woefully under-prepared for, exposed her to many of the educational issues on which she would later work. She recounts the frustration she felt with the uneven distribution of resources, a lack of adequate teacher support, and the factory model schooling she experienced (Amrein-Beardsley, 2011).

After completing her doctorate degree program, Darling-Hammond began working as a social scientist for the RAND corporation, a nonpartisan research institute dedicated to influencing public policy (Bio, 2016). From 1989 to 1998, she was professor of education at Teachers College, Columbia University. Since 1998, she has been a professor at Stanford University, currently holding the position of Charles E. Ducommun professor of education. Darling-Hammond founded the Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education, which conducts research and policy analysis on issues affecting educational equity and opportunity, including curriculum, assessment, and teaching policy and practices. She also founded the School Redesign Network and the Stanford Educational Leadership Institute, and served as the faculty sponsor of the Stanford Teacher Education Program, which she helped to redesign (Bio, 2016).

Darling-Hammond is past president of the American Educational Research Association, a two-term member of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, and a member of the American Association of Arts and Sciences, as well as
the National Academy of Education. She has served on the boards of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, the Spencer Foundation, the Wallace Foundation, the National Foundation for the Improvement of Education, the Center for Teaching Quality, the Alliance for Excellent Education, and the National Council for Educating Black Children, among others. In 2006, Darling-Hammond was named one of the nation’s ten most influential people affecting educational policy over the past decade (Influential People, 2006). In 2008, she served as the leader of President Barack Obama’s education policy transition team.

Darling-Hammond has conducted research on a wide range of policy issues affecting teaching and schooling. Among her more than 400 publications are:

- *The Flat World and Education: How America's Commitment to Equity will Determine our Future* (winner of the Grawemeyer Award in Education)
- *Preparing Teachers for a Changing World: What Teachers Should Learn and Be Able to Do* (with John Bransford, winner of AACTE Pomeroy Award)
- *Powerful Teacher Education: Lessons from Exemplary Programs, Teaching as the Learning Profession* (with Gary Sykes, awarded the National Staff Development Council’s Outstanding Book Award)
- *Learning to Teach for Social Justice* (with Jennifer French and Silvia Paloma Garcia-Lopez)
- *The Right to Learn* (recipient of AERA’s Outstanding Book Award for 1998)
The Purpose of Education

At the heart of Darling-Hammond's position on education in America is her belief in its unique ability to serve a purpose higher than the mere transmittal of knowledge. Darling-Hammond reminds her readers that at the founding of the country, public education was envisioned as a vehicle through which common governance could be achieved, and the principles of the country could be safeguarded. The very existence of the nation, and the popular intelligence that would sustain it, depended on the institution of education. As the country grew, education proved its importance to the individual lives of citizens as well, representing an avenue through which personal success could be achieved. Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness were made easier with education, irrespective of wealth or circumstances of birth. For these reasons, education was, and continues to be, a vital component of the grand experiment of American democracy. Indeed, Darling-Hammond (1998) explains that “if equality, humanity, and freedom are the promise of democracy, then education is the promise-keeper” (p. 79). In this light, the quest that drives much of Darling-Hammond's work surrounds the conditions necessary for American education to fulfill its promise keeping role. What challenges do public schools in the country face today? How can education rise to meet these challenges? What policies/procedures need to be implemented to ensure a better course for the future?

Educational Failures of the Status Quo

Darling-Hammond identifies several critical challenges to the relationship between American education and democracy today. First, like Hirsch and Goodlad, she
notes that education in America has historically left behind large segments of the population, including minority students, those living in poverty, new English learners, and students with disabilities (1998, 2004, 2010, 2013b). For many of these groups, disparities in educational opportunity and quality are too often facts of life, and corresponding disparities in achievement leave them less prepared than their peers to tackle the modern world. Darling-Hammond traces the institutional barriers that prevent equal access to educational resources to before the founding of the country (1998). She (2013b) notes that an ideology of race inferiority has pervaded the country's thinking and guided the development of policies and practices that have routinely, and quite effectively, produced an inequitable educational system in America. Though Darling-Hammond recognizes that efforts over the past several decades have been made to attempt to equalize access to education, she argues that the struggle is far from complete. Low income and minority students continue to be educated in schools with less resources, less qualified and experienced teachers, and less access to high quality curriculum. The significant costs of this inequality are borne by both individuals and society at large. For the student trapped in an education inferior to his peers, Darling-Hammond speaks of a sacrifice of human potential, a failure to embrace and enhance the innate talents of all children that has strong implications for future success. For society, personal tragedies translate into social tragedies, with growing rates of crime, unemployment, social dysfunction, and other symptoms placing an increased burden on the public. To be clear, these conditions are not solely the effects of a poor education. Yet Darling-Hammond explains that if education is to fulfill the promise of American democracy, it should aim
to fill it equally for all. Short of this, she (1998) notes that “in many and growing ways, unequal access to education threatens the foundation of democracy” (p. 81).

A second impediment to a more complete realization of democracy in education today lies in the structure of America's schools. Darling-Hammond (1996) explains that most schools “are poor places in which to learn democracy: They often illustrate authoritarian and coercive forms of social control, as well as social stratification both across schools and among tracks within schools” (p. 6). For Darling-Hammond (1992, 1996, 1997b), at the heart of the problem lies the fact that the bureaucratic school system presently in place across the country was not designed to meet the challenges that present day education requires. She (1998) notes that the “characteristics of today's schools were forged when the goal of education was not to educate all students well but to process a great many efficiently, selecting and supporting only a few for further educational pursuits” (p. 86). Darling-Hammond points out the similarities between many present day schools and manufacturing industries, with grade levels, subject matters, and students divided into specialized organizations, each conforming to a carefully selected set of procedures designed to produce a standardized product. For many years the product of these schools, the students, were to be instilled only with a rudimentary set of skills and knowledge and set on their way to twentieth century jobs that required little more than following directives in an orderly manner. Though the world has changed, and the skill sets students need to function as productive citizens today have evolved, schooling remains largely the same (Scherer, 2012). Darling-Hammond (1998) explains that “the rote learning needed for these early assembly-line objectives still predominates in today's schools, reinforced by mandated curriculum packages and texts focused on lower level
cognitive skills, multiple-choice tests, and continuing underinvestment in teacher knowledge” (p. 86).

**Effects of Education’s Failures on Teachers and Students**

For teachers in America’s current educational system, the bureaucratic model of education has served to dehumanize teaching. At the heart of the problem is what Darling-Hammond (1992) terms the trickle-down theory of knowledge at work in education today.

This theory assumes that somehow most of the knowledge about what to do in schools and classrooms resides at the top of a very large hierarchical system. It is embodied in required textbooks, curriculum packages, memoranda and directives, and systems that have been established for the placement, grouping, labeling, promotion, and treatment of students. The theory further assumes that knowledge that has been embodied in those structures and rules trickles down to the classroom teacher by way of the materials and procedures that the teachers are expected to use. (p. 12)

For Darling-Hammond, this is not a view that places knowledge of what’s appropriate for the classroom in the hands of the teacher, to be applied skillfully to address the various needs of the students. Nor does it assume that the expertise of the teacher should trickle up and out of the classroom to improve colleagues, communities, or the system itself. Instead, ever tighter controls are placed on teachers, over what is taught, how it is taught, when it is taught, and how all of it is assessed. Darling-Hammond (1992, 1998) notes that
this wave of standardization has created a host of classroom implementers, at the price of classroom teachers. For Darling-Hammond, if America is to strengthen the connection between schooling and democracy, to create an environment where democracy can flourish, then it must move away from a model of education that discourages democratic interaction in favor of an education for democracy in our public schools.

For students, the current system leads to widespread disengagement and alienation (Darling-Hammond, 1997b). She argues that students treated like parts in a factory perceive that the system is not designed to care about their well being and development. Students tracked by performance into segregated paths perceive that the only thing important in schools is test scores and grades. “The factory-model school, with its enforcement of a single, official knowledge, its fragmentation, and its segregation of groups of students by track and social class encourages disengagement, silence, and separation where intense communication, inquiry, and connections are needed” (Darling-Hammond, 1998, p. 87). In essence, students in this bureaucratic system are treated as if they are standardized, that their learning follows a specific path and that the steps to increasing achievement are uniform and consistent (Darling-Hammond, 1992; Goldberg, 2001; Scherer, 2012). In the end, Darling-Hammond fears that as students learn at different rates and in different ways, this inflexible system of schooling robs them of the educational opportunity that they all deserve. She (1992) explains,

Prescriptive systems actually create cracks for kids to fall into, rather than closing the cracks that kids might fall into. The more highly detailed and uniform the set of treatments specified for students is, the less likely it is that any given student
will fit the set of assumptions upon which these prescriptions for teaching and learning are based. (p. 17)

Not mincing words, Darling-Hammond (1992) describes this outcome as no less than educational malpractice.

**Education as Democracy**

To move education in America into the modern era, Darling-Hammond proposes a new paradigm for public schooling in the country. Rather than an emphasis on economic preparation or individual success, she encourages schools to reinvest in a democratic purpose for education. Darling-Hammond (1997a) reminds us that “a democratic education should enable all people to find out and act on who they are, what their passions, gifts, and talents may be, what they care about, and how they want to make a contribution to each other and the world” (p. 45). This shift in purpose presents schools not only with a redefined goal to achieve, it necessitates a reimagined educational experience. Schools no longer tasked with merely delivering instructional services for individual or economic gains need instead to take steps to ensure that all students learn and develop their knowledge and talents in effective and powerful ways. In order to do so, Darling-Hammond envisions an educational system reinvented for the modern world in two important ways. First is the establishment of schools as a humane, open minded environment where democratic communities of learners can thrive. Darling-Hammond points to the reforms of recent years that have strangled public schools' ability to work towards education for democracy. She argues that politically driven changes, particularly
those that resulted from legislation like the No Child Left Behind Act, have undermined the ability of schools to improve and have generated a whole host of students who have ended their school careers “with less opportunity to play a productive role in society than when they began as eager kindergartners” (Darling-Hammond, 2004, p. 8). In its place, education for democracy requires schools that not only provide an education in empowering forms of knowledge that enables democratic participation, it necessitates an environment where students participate in a democratic community. Simply put, Darling-Hammond (1996) states that schools must not only practice “education for democracy, in the sense that we think of students needing to learn trades and good citizenship, but education as democracy” (p. 6). After all, a social understanding of multiple perspectives that lies at the heart of successful democratic life is best achieved through experience (Darling-Hammond, 2002). Alongside a commitment to critical thinking, Darling-Hammond advocates for schools of the future that are structured to provide this community experience, to share diverse perspectives from various groups, and to demonstrate the caring required to develop a healthy democratic society. This ideal of knowledge-building and truth-finding – of looking for powerful, shared ideas to arise from diverse understandings and experiences of the world – undergirds the concept of a democratic, multicultural education that encompasses the many views of its participants – that is, all of the views that must be accommodated in the common space that comprises social life. (Darling-Hammond, 1998, p. 88)
Learner-Centered and Learning-Centered Instruction

Second is the development of an education committed to what Darling-Hammond terms learner-centered and learning-centered instruction (1992, 1998; Darling-Hammond, Griffin, & Wise, 1992). She (1996) comments that “surprisingly, in the United States of America, children who are required by law to attend school are not guaranteed the right to a knowledgeable teacher” (p. 6). To combat this, she argues that education for democracy requires educators who can stand apart from those charged with simply implementing a predetermined curriculum. This new batch of teachers must possess skills that allow them to create, adjust, and improve instruction to respond to diverse needs and situations.

To foster meaningful learning, teachers must construct experiences that allow students to confront powerful ideas whole, creating bridges between learners’ very different experiences and common curriculum goals. They must use many different approaches to build upon the conceptions, cultures, interests, motivations, and learning modes of their students. They must understand how their students think as well as what they know. This more complex approach to teaching requires that teachers combine deep knowledge of subject matter and a wide repertoire of teaching strategies with intimate knowledge of students’ growth, experience, and development. (Darling-Hammond, 2005, p. 364)

Teachers that embrace this approach develop classrooms where learner-centered and learning-centered instruction take place. Darling-Hammond (1998) explains that teaching centered around the learner is one that “responds to individual student intelligence, talents, cultural and linguistic backgrounds, needs, and interests” (p. 79). Such instruction
depends on a deep understanding of the learners in the classroom and the learning process, and stands in direct opposition to many of the current efforts at standardizing instruction and curriculum, irrespective of the diversity within the classroom. In contrast to Hirsch's prescriptive methods, Darling-Hammond asserts that student success is built upon a balanced foundation of both content knowledge and a teacher's knowledge of children (Goldberg, 2001). In Darling-Hammond’s eyes, learner centered instruction returns education to the students involved, and serves as a platform for their development into individuals who can bring their unique talents to the greater good of society. Closely related is learning centered instruction, “teaching that is aimed at genuine understanding – that supports active, in-depth learning leading to powerful thinking and flexible, proficient performances” (Darling-Hammond, 1998, p. 79). For Darling-Hammond, teaching that embraces this approach empowers students to become responsible citizens and full members of democratic society.

**Developing Capacity In Schools**

Building on the understanding that the reform efforts of the past have failed to advance an education for democracy in our public schools, Darling-Hammond (2005) calls for a new framework for school reform in America. She argues that in order for schools to enact a democratic education that is learner centered and learning centered, a different approach is needed,

one in which policymakers shift their efforts from *designing controls* intended to direct the system to *developing capacity* that enables schools and teachers to be
This new approach aims to respond to the changing dynamic of educational experiences required in an education for democracy. Darling-Hammond explains that rather than the behavioristic view of learning as a stimulus-response process, where education could be controlled from outside the classroom by dictating what should be taught and when, the path that recognizes an integrated learning process calls for a new paradigm of educational reform. This new method forgoes much of the current reform efforts, the search for educational efficiency by standardizing practices, in favor of building capacity within schools to accomplish their goal of high quality learning for all (Darling-Hammond, 1997b, Darling-Hammond et al., 2008). As such learning needs to occur in diverse settings with diverse populations, Darling-Hammond (2005) argues that an approach to educational improvement built on increasing the capabilities of schools “far exceeds what teacher-proof curricula or administrator-proof management processes could ever accomplish” (p. 364).

**Government’s Role in Building School Capacity**

Developing responsive schools, Darling-Hammond asserts, is a delicate process, fraught with peril. Attempts to build capacity within schools to educate for democracy cannot be accomplished through top-down or bottom-up approaches alone. Neither centralization, with its directives for uniformity, nor decentralization, and its segmented reform efforts, works. Darling-Hammond notes the long history of failed reforms that
have been mandated upon schools, resulting in little change that is often times short lived (2005). Similarly, she reminds us that even the most passionate local reform efforts struggle to break out beyond the confines of the school level without the support of system wide policies and resources. Darling-Hammond (2005) explains that “neither a heavy-handed view of top down reform nor a romantic vision of bottom-up change is plausible” (p. 366). Instead, a new approach is needed, one that combines both methods along with horizontal efforts that support learning across schools. Such a policy of educational reform must be carefully constructed to maximize the strengths and minimize the weaknesses of the role groups involved. Beginning with the government's responsibility in the new model for improvement, Darling-Hammond envisions it in broad terms. Relying on research that recounts the poor track record of government agencies in determining how reform efforts should be conceived and how resources should be spent, she (2005) outlines four policy areas government should take charge of:31

- Create a political consensus around goals for education and adopt high quality standards and assessments that evaluate the extent to which they are being met.
- Ensure adequacy and equity in the allocation of resources.
- Develop and enforce meaningful standards of competence for professional staff.
- Build local school capacity through professional development and the support of organizational learning across schools.

31 Darling-Hammond points to several studies here: Cuban, L. (1990). Reforming again, again, and again. Educational Researcher, 19, 3-13
From there, governments should delegate the remaining decisions regarding teaching and learning to local schools and professional agencies. As schools are most familiar with the needs of the local communities and individual learners, they are best suited to make determinations about curricular strategies, teaching methodology, and the like. Their decisions can be evaluated through the lens provided by professional agencies, who have ready access to the latest research and knowledge in the field. Important to note here is that the influences between these groups are multidirectional, rather than hierarchical, with each group impacting the other and learning occurring throughout the system as needed. Darling Hammond (2005) explains,

> For each aspect of the system, accountability is achieved as shared goals, norms, and values are translated into policies, organizational structures created to make the policies work, processes used within these structures, feedback and assessment mechanisms established to identify needs and progress, safeguards created to ensure that harmful practices do not occur, and incentives to promote productive practices. For children to be well-served, these aspects of school, district, and state efforts must work together and focus on both the demands of learning and the needs of learners. (p. 373)

**Supporting the Training of Quality Teachers**

As straightforward as a new approach to educational improvement may seem to be, Darling-Hammond acknowledges that much hard work needs to be done before change can be realized. Just as previous reforms suffered from the inability of teachers to
implement the kind of challenging instruction that was expected of them, regardless of whether the expectations were placed on them from the top down or the bottom up, so too will a responsive approach to education falter if past practices are followed (Darling-Hammond, 1996). Indeed, “capacity building requires different policy tools and different approaches to producing, sharing, and using knowledge than those traditionally used throughout this century” (Darling-Hammond, 2005, p.363). Built upon the foundation of research into the dynamics of human learning and the change process, Darling-Hammond (1997b) explains that careful attention needs to be placed on teacher education and their preparation for education for democracy. In this light, the recognition that teachers' knowledge, beliefs, and contexts all represent critical variables that contribute to their teaching practice becomes vital (Darling-Hammond, 1996). Darling-Hammond asserts that if policymakers intend on developing guidelines that result in new kinds of teaching, they must understand that the process of change is time consuming and dependent on avenues that allow teachers to reconstruct their knowledge and beliefs. With this in mind, Darling-Hammond outlines three components of successful policies that support positive changes in teacher practice. First is a commitment to providing extensive learning opportunities for those involved in the change process to experiment and grow into better teachers, administrators, parents, and community members (Darling-Hammond & Baratz-Snowden, 2007). Darling-Hammond (2005) argues that sustained growth that improves practice cannot occur with training and study alone. Instead, role groups must be afforded

32 Darling-Hammond cites the following research into the change process:
the time and space to exercise what they have been taught, so that “the complex practices envisioned by ambitious learning goals have a chance to be studied, debated, tried out, analyzed, retried, and refined until they are well-understood and incorporated into the repertoire of those who teach and make decisions in schools” (Darling-Hammond, 2005, p. 374). This process, she points out, must be collaborative in nature. Returning to the belief that an integrated approach to reform is necessary to bring forth responsive schools, Darling-Hammond argues that these learning opportunities can serve as the springboard for creating groups of stakeholders who regularly interact regarding educational problems, problem solve jointly, and suggest improvements for the future. In the end, this interaction embodies the education as democracy that Darling-Hammond envisions.

Next, Darling-Hammond asserts that policies that support simultaneous change in all of the areas that influence successful teaching is vital to securing the transformation of teaching practice. After all, any efforts to revamp teaching can only be as successful as the corresponding efforts to remove the barriers that have dictated and maintained the practices of the past. Addressing these impediments simultaneously, wherever they may lie, is a necessary step towards achieving success. For Darling-Hammond (2005), “this means rethinking the array of policies – from school funding to teacher education to school accreditation to collective bargaining rules – that hold the current regularities of schooling so firmly in place” (p. 375).

Finally, Darling-Hammond maintains that policies should be constructed such that the balance between external influences that push for school improvements and internal school autonomy is protected. Though educational reform efforts aimed at building
capacity within schools rather than exacting control over schools imply the existence of such a balance, policies that aim to ensure the tension between the two remain productive are beneficial to any attempts to enact changes in practice. After all, though Darling-Hammond includes within the role of government the task of creating quality standards and assessments for learning, teaching, and schooling, the many concerns raised by national standards calls into question their effectiveness at building school capacity on their own. At the same time, Darling-Hammond points out that local work can prove to be no better at enacting change. There is no guarantee that schools operating autonomously will create high quality programs, and there are questions about the wisdom of expecting individual schools to reinvent the wheel on their own. Instead, a balance must exist between the two competing ideals. As Darling-Hammond (2005) explains, “the trick, then, is figuring out how to value quality throughout the system and to create better vehicles among educational agencies for sharing knowledge” (p. 377). She argues that the best method for achieving this end is to develop professional standards relating to learning, teaching, and schooling, and using those standards as guides for a process of school inquiry that stimulates renewal within schools.

**The Development of School Standards**

While educational change demands the development and implementation of standards that guides schools, Darling-Hammond points out that this is a task easier said than done. On the one hand, proponents of a centralized system of education, like Hirsch, argue for the creation of a single set of highly specified standards designed to eliminate
variety within school systems and ensure that high quality schooling can be accessed by all. Such standards, for instance, aim to limit the variation that exists between schools in the country by ensuring that all teachers share the same qualifications, that all students are provided with the same curriculum, and that all are evaluated in the same way. On the other hand, opponents of the standards driven model of educational reform seek to return some level of control to the hands of local schools, accepting that deviation in schooling is not only natural, but desirable. Firmly planted in the middle ground, Darling-Hammond advocates for a balanced approach to the development of educational standards. For standards that govern student learning, for example, she argues that a tightly specified curriculum ignores the role of the learner in the educational process, foregoing any thought of meeting students where they are in favor of an idealized curriculum guide that imagines where they should be. While recognizing that decentralization of control over school curriculum is no assurance that children will receive a quality education, Darling-Hammond asserts that flexibility in the educational program is a key component of successful learning. A curriculum that adapts to students affords teachers the opportunity to create the necessary bridges between students' prior knowledge, experiences, and learning goals. In this sense, Darling-Hammond (2005) explains,

Standards and frameworks are likely to be most useful when they focus on a relatively small set of truly important core ideas and on preparing students to inquire successfully into new areas of study, to find and use information so that they can analyze and generate ideas, and to produce ideas and products so that
they have the tools to continually educate themselves for the world they will live in. (p. 376)

Such standards cannot consist of a rigid pile of directives to be implemented regardless of student interests and talents, teacher expertise, and school context. Instead, like Goodlad, Darling-Hammond argues that this small core of standards establishes a general direction for learning, the specifics of which must be worked out at the school level. This ensures not only a broad sense of coherence amongst schools that adopt the core standards, it introduces a process of supportive change that stimulates engagement and ownership over school improvement. As administrators, teachers, and other stakeholders take stock of the educational environment around them and begin to forge a program that suits their students' needs, they become curriculum developers rather than simply curriculum implementers (2005). This presumably, will allow them to better meet their democratic goals.

**Common Core State Standards**

In line with Darling-Hammond's view that education for democracy in America is best served as the embodiment of education as democracy in schools, she carries a healthy dose of skepticism to the conversation surrounding the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and the related systems that have developed to support it (Darling-Hammond, 2014b, Guastaferro, 2011, Ravitch, 2013). Like Goodlad and Hirsch, she recognizes that such standards play an important role in education in America. They are, after all, key components of the drive to build capacity to improve education within
schools. And like Goodlad, she favors general standards that establish a shared direction for schooling, ones that point us in the right direction while providing teachers the flexibility to seek the appropriate avenues towards the goals based on a myriad of important factors. Darling-Hammond (2014b) reminds us that the CCSS “need to be used as guides and not straitjackets” (p. 24). To this end, she is encouraged by the focus of the Common Core State Standards on critical thinking skills and performance tasks, forgoing the explicitly defined canonical knowledge that Hirsch might endorse (Guastaferro, 2011, Ravitch, 2013). From there however, she questions the implementation of the CCSS and the impact that may have on education for democracy in the country. Just as she points out that capacity building efforts in education will fail without different approaches to school improvement, so too does she warn that students will suffer the same fate under the Common Core without the changes to curriculum development, teacher preparation, and student evaluation that she advocates for.

The end result is going to depend on many other factors. It's going to depend on what we do around building curriculum materials, it depends on whether we transform assessments in very important ways. It depends on what we do about professional development for teachers and for school leaders, because you can implement the common core curriculum in a way that is much more focused on higher order learning skills or you can implement the common core in a way that just replicates a lot of the more rote-oriented teaching that we currently have in place. (Guastaferro, 2011, para. 3)

Moreover, Darling-Hammond voices her concerns over the assessments associated with the Common Core. She (2013a) cautions that “using assessments as sledgehammers,
rather than as tools for improvement, could undermine implementation of the Common Core and impede the changes in instruction that are needed to reach the goals of improved learning” (p. 23). Instead, Darling-Hammond supports a model of accountability that forgoes yearly testing in favor of one that requires fewer tests of more depth (Darling-Hammond, 2010, Guastaferro, 2011). This cycle follows many of the highest achieving countries in producing open ended assessments which may include projects or performances completed over the course of several weeks, and which allows ample opportunity for teachers to take an active hand in developing and scoring the assessments (Darling-Hammond, 2014a). Such a model views testing as a means to guide instruction and inform future decision making, rather than as a punitive measure that impacts the ability of schools to perform their democratic function.
CHAPTER 6
LOOKING TOWARDS THE FUTURE

Introduction

Change is a constant for educational systems. At the frontline of every society's quest for social coherence, cultural continuity, and economic progress, schools must cope with the simultaneous calls to preserve tradition and to change to adapt to the times. Creating school systems that can balance these forces while responding to the needs of their students, and society at large, is the primary challenge in education. Darling-Hammond (2005) outlines a number of factors in today's world that makes this challenge particularly problematic for schools. First, she notes that the growing importance of a quality education to individual and societal success invokes a need to produce quality schools as quickly and as broadly as possible. Second, the rapid expansion of knowledge and the increasing rate of technological advancement suggests that what students need to know and be able to do is more complex than ever before. Managing this complexity through the curriculum calls for schools that are both efficient and effective. Third, she argues that much of the task of educating students well is contingent upon the school system's ability to deal with an increasingly diverse world, the realities of which affect everything from curricular decisions, to assessment, to teaching methodology. Given these conditions, how are schools in America to move forward to fulfill their democratic mission? Put another way, in light of the earlier search for the essential components of democracy in America, the identification of the type of democracy schools are presently preparing out students for, and the determination of what schooling should prepare
students for, what might the path forward look like for education and democracy in the country? Based on a framework modified from Davies’s (1999) study of international educational systems in times of transition, this chapter discusses what a future for democracy and education in America may look like. In specific, it explores Goodlad, Darling-Hammond, and Hirsch’s viewpoints in the areas of basic values, rights, school structures, learning content, and training. Through a direct comparison of the authors’ beliefs in these areas, a clearer picture of a path forward emerges. Moreover, the chapter includes a critical commentary on the five areas, further refining the topics as they relate to democracy and education in America.

Basic Values

Davies (1999) explains that this category seeks to identify the underlying ideals upon which schools are built. For the three authors included in this study, a surprising degree of commonality exists in the value systems upon which an improved American education can be built. All agree that a reimagined educational system in the country would be based on at least two core principles, both of which aim to prepare students to find success in the world and to perpetuate American life. The first encompasses an education committed to providing an equal opportunity for all students to succeed. This kind of education, one in which students receive a quality education taught by quality teachers, is the foundation of American education. Turning to Jefferson, Mann, and others, Hirsch (1996, 2006) points to the common schools and their belief that all children were deserving of an education. Goodlad (1979, 1997a) notes that equal
opportunities should extend to all students, regardless of their academic prowess. Darling-Hammond (1998) argues that unequal access to schooling sacrifices human potential. Indeed, all would likely agree with Darling-Hammond (1998) that American success in the future will hinge on its ability to embrace and enhance “the talents of all of its new and previously unincuded members” (p. 85). Second, the authors assert that American education must be committed to instilling within the citizenry a sense of commonality and civic commitment. Goodlad, Mantle-Bromley, and Goodlad (2004) note this enculturation into America's social and political culture as the first part of the Agenda for Education in a Democracy. This commonality extends beyond the sharing of a joint language to the adherence to the set of beliefs, values, and principles of American life. Only by doing so can schools create what Hirsch (1996) calls the “domain of public communicability” (p. 233), one in which all Americans can participate freely and effectively. Accordingly, what is clear from the three authors is that a reimagined education for the future would be built on a system that values an equitable education for all and the development of a citizenry who share a civic commitment.

While Hirsch ends his discussion of the basic values of American education here, Darling-Hammond and Goodlad extend the conversation beyond these two basic principles. For Goodlad, his Agenda for Education in a Democracy incorporates two other foundational values, practicing nurturing pedagogy and responsible stewardship of schools (Goodlad, Mantle-Bromley, and Goodlad, 2004). Similarly, for Darling-Hammond (1998, 2005), any discussion of the advancement of democratic education must make mention of diverse viewpoints, learner centered instruction, and of practicing education as a democracy. These values imply a schooling in which education is not
merely a means towards an end, namely student success and their assimilation into American culture. Instead, how schools arrive at the goals should matter as much as whether they reach their desired outcome.

A Commentary on the Basic Value of an Equitable Education

On the surface, the basic value of providing equal opportunity to all students seems unassailable. After all, no one would suggest that education should be purposefully withheld from some students to the advantage of others. Such schooling would recall difficult memories of the struggles with equal access to education that plagued the country prior to the Civil Rights era. Instead, providing equal opportunity to all students, what Hirsch (2006) might describe as leveling the playing field, seems to be a noble goal. Yet underneath this idyllic surface, important questions arise. Given the inequities at play that hold real impact on students in school, including inequities in differing socio-economic status, in exposure to early childhood education, in school resources, and more, what does leveling the playing field entail? Put another way, does equal opportunity mean the same thing for all groups at all times? My first job in the public education system in Hawai‘i was as a teacher of students whose first language was one other than English. Of the seven students I had in the class, each one had a different first language. Each student had differing levels of exposure to English, each one had differing levels of exposure to school, and each one's experiences outside of school was different. One was homeless, some lived with a large family, and others with a single parent. Some families enjoyed a middle class lifestyle, others did not. Some came from a culture that valued
school based education more than others. For these types of students, is it reasonable to state that establishing equal opportunities for them to go to school and to be taught a similar curriculum by teachers with similar qualifications is sufficient to level the playing field? With such variability in experiences, in skills, and in cultures, I think it fair to imagine a situation in which an equitable education for some students, one that provides them with the best opportunity to access all that society has to offer, is necessarily different from that of their peers. After all, there seems to be evidence that minority students may need different types of education from those born into the dominant culture (Gay, 2010), that boys may need different types of education from girls (Gurian & Stevens, 2005), and that poor students may need different types of education from wealthy students (Rothstein, 2004). To limit the concept of an equitable education to the belief that this can be accomplished simply by providing equal access to a similar curriculum, similar resources, and similar teaching seems to fly in the face of the realities of schooling today.

Indeed, a recognition of the individualized nature of student education is well established in American educational practice, albeit with a small segment of the population. In educating students with disabilities in America, federal law has mandated the creation of an Individualized Education Program (IEP) that accounts for a student's unique needs. The team charged with creating the IEP, along with determining the appropriate services and supports that the student needs to succeed, is tasked with crafting and implementing a program that is designed to allow the student to meet the curricular goals. Yearly revisions to the IEP help to ensure that progress is continually monitored and that the plan is adjusted to best meet the changing needs of the student. In
essence, equal opportunity for these students means an education that is unique, not common, an education that is fluid, not predetermined, and an education that is responsive to the changing needs of the students, not outside influences. While I am in no way suggesting that differences in socio-economic status, language, culture, and the like, are akin to having a learning disability, I believe it is useful here to apply the example of special education to public education at large. On the one hand, we recognize that the differences in students with disabilities necessitate a unique form of education distinct from the education of those without disabilities, while on the other we do not extend the same benefits to students who differ from their peers in other important ways. I believe it important to begin a shift towards recognizing the impact of these differences on an individual's education and begin to craft programs that account for these influences. If education is truly a personal journey, as Goodlad (1999) argues, then it is time to value these differences and to adjust accordingly student rights, system structures, learning content, and teacher training in America.

Rights

Davies argues that the determination of which key stakeholders hold rights in the educational process, as well as which rights are protected, reveals much about democratic schooling in a nation. Here clear differences exist between the authors. Aside from the broad right to an equitable education, Hirsch mentions precious little about the integration of student rights into the educational experience. Indeed, much of his works are dedicated to correcting what he deems to be a dangerous focus on the natural development of children. For Hirsch (1996), this approach, one he determines to be anti-
intellectual and a large barrier to academic success, should be avoided at all costs if America's educational system is to experience marked improvement moving forward. Furthermore, Hirsch (1996) denounces the now familiar sentiments regarding individual learning styles and multiple forms of intelligence as distracting from the school's focus on developing academic success. The clear implication here is the limitation of student input into the educational process. To be fair however, Hirsch does not call for an absolute removal of all outside input into schooling. Though he advocates for a common comprehensive curriculum for all of the nation's public schools, he explains that such guidelines should account for approximately half of a school's curriculum (Hirsch, 2006). The remaining portion of the curriculum can be used to fulfill state or local requirements, as well as student and teacher directed learning. How this should be done, however, and how in the process schools can avoid the anti-intellectual bent that Hirsch so fears, is never fully developed in his writings. Consequently, those who adhere to Hirsch’s view on the rights in the educational process will need to determine the answers to these questions on their own.

Darling-Hammond, in contrast, offers a different path forward for a democratic education in America. She views the rights of students as a central piece of the puzzle to improving education. After all, in her eyes, democratic education must refocus itself to “enable all people to find out and act on who they are, what their passions, gifts, and talents may be, what they care about, and how they want to make a contribution to each other and the world” (1997a, p. 45). To do so, the rights of the individuals involved must be at the forefront of the conversation regarding school goals, curriculum, instructional strategies, and more. Indeed, Darling-Hammond encourages schools of the future to be a
more humane, open-minded environment. Inherent in that is the protection of the rights of those involved.

Goodlad begins from the viewpoint that education is an intensely personal experience. Though guided by external factors, education is at the core an individual act which should be honored as such. Students should be allowed to take an active role in shaping their education, much like the need for them to take an active role in the democratic society at large. Along the same lines, Goodlad advocates for an increased role for teachers, parents, and the community in determining the course of instruction in their local public schools. He writes,

The purpose of the local school is to provide all the young with the education not provided elsewhere in the cultural context. The purpose of schooling is to support all the local schools in this endeavor. When the schooling machine takes over the purpose of the local school—as increasingly it has done in recent years—this democracy and its citizens are headed toward deep trouble. (Goodlad, 1994a, p. 272)

In the spirit of fostering an education in which the human element is at the forefront, he argues that efforts that honor the importance of those most immediately affected would go a long way to renewing democratic education in the country. Accordingly, future efforts aligned with Goodlad's thoughts on education would necessarily include a strong role for stakeholders.
A Commentary on the Rights of Students to an Appropriate Education

It is difficult to imagine an education in which student voice is limited can rightly be claimed to represent the most appropriate relationship between democracy and education in America. Yet for Hirsch, and those who support his positions on a common curriculum for all students and limitations on student input into the curricular development process, this is precisely the argument that is made. In an effort to avoid the supposed anti-intellectual sentiments prevalent in theories supporting the natural development of children, multiple intelligences, and the importance of skill building over content knowledge, these are eliminated from the form of democratic education that Hirsch and his supporters espouse. What results is an uncomfortable situation in which democratic education supports the limitation of student voices. Put another way, the less free students are to control aspects of their education, the more democratic their education supposedly becomes. This is a position which I find to be untenable. Hirsch's argument holds only in the event that one accepts that the purpose of education is the mandatory transmittal of an established knowledge set, one that is fixed by individuals other than the student and one in which the student holds little rights to alter. This narrow definition of the purpose of education runs contrary to the humane, open minded environment that Darling-Hammond supports and Goodlad's belief that education is a deeply personal endeavor. Moreover, it runs contrary to my earlier discussion of the values of a democratic education where differing forms of education may apply to different groups at different times.

Indeed, the acceptance that a democratic education in America aimed at ensuring an equal opportunity for all students may take multiple forms for differing groups best
positions public education to appropriately address the issue of rights in the educational system. In effect, by necessitating that education take into account the particulars of a student and what may make them different from their peers, this outlook establishes the protection of those individual characteristics as a right to be safeguarded. Not only do students have a right to an education in America, they have a right to an education that is uniquely suited to their needs. Not only do parents have a right to insist on an education for their children, they have a right to insist on an education that is respectful of their culture, of their language, and of their beliefs. Not only does the community have a right to demand that the government provide children with an education, they have a right to demand an education that is mindful of context. These are important distinctions. A student whose cultural background emphasizes learning by doing, rather than paper and pencil work, may learn best through an active approach to teaching such as project based instruction. To simply say that he has a right to learn the same content as his peers without extending that right to encompass the methods that are most appropriate for him seems to fall short of what an education in democracy should entail. To be clear, I do not intend here to stereotype students into firm categories, or to lock students into one form of schooling or another. This should not be mistaken for a tracking system like the one first seen in the Progressive Era. My point is not that students of a Native Hawaiian ancestry, for example, should only be taught in a predetermined 'Hawaiian' way. Nor is my point that the differences that distinguish students from each other should serve as limitations, either real or perceived, in their educational journey. To interpret my position in these ways loses the spirit of what I am proposing. Instead, my point here is that public education should aim to protect the rights of students to not only receive an education,
but to receive the right kind of education for them. I’m reminded here of Darling-Hammond’s (1996) comments that “surprisingly, in the United States of America, children who are required by law to attend school are not guaranteed the right to a knowledgeable teacher” (p. 6). Moving forward, I firmly believe that any discussion of rights in a democratic education must include a conversation which encompasses how individual students learn and how they should be taught. To borrow Gandin and Apple’s (2002) terminology, such a conversation is aimed at creating a ‘thick’ democratic education, one which actively seeks to empower individuals.

**School Structures**

Here Davies points to the power stakeholders hold to determine key aspects of education such as the school’s mission, codes of conduct, and other rules and regulations. Such power, be it through majority rule, representative influence, or other means, speaks to how substantive democracy is within a particular educational system. Naturally, the perspectives that each author brings in regards to the basic values and rights of an ideal education system in America drive their stance on the necessary structures that govern schooling in the future. Hirsch, with his adherence to half of a school’s course of study composed of a well defined common core, views strong centralized leadership as a critical component of academic success. Of note, Hirsch does not elaborate on what he sees as the most appropriate makeup of such a leadership group, or the structures that they should erect to govern education in the country. Like in the area of rights, those who adopt his view as a foundation for building the schools of the future need to work through issues surrounding school structures without clear guidance from Hirsch. What seems
most important to Hirsch is not the makeup of the leadership group or the organization of the educational system per se, but rather the decisions that are made regarding what should be included as part of the common curriculum and the mechanisms through which such a curriculum can be adopted by all. Additionally, the decision making process governing the remainder of the curriculum is never fully developed, raising questions surrounding how democracy might fit into that piece of a student's education. It seems likely that schools in line with Hirsch's philosophy here would emphasize the creation of strong educational standards and promote widespread adoption of school and system structures that would ensure that the standards are implemented.

Goodlad and Darling-Hammond, on the other hand, envision the structures that govern education as key components that allow it to fulfill its democratic mission. Extending from the belief that how schools achieve academic success is just as important as whether they reach that goal, both present clear outlines of structures that should be enacted if we hope to move education forward in the nation. Goodlad reminds us that the environment in which education takes place is a crucial factor in the personal journey of learning. He (1979) writes:

In any examination of goals articulated for schools, a central consideration is the comprehensiveness of the total list and the balance of interests inherent in it. In any examination of schools themselves, a central consideration is the comprehensiveness of the program and the balance inherent in it. (p. 44)

The fourth component of his Agenda for Education in a Democracy, responsible stewardship of the schools, is aimed at finding this balance and creating the optimal environment for learning to take place. In practice, this points towards an education
vastly different from that which we have today. Goodlad explains that the members of the National Network for Educational Renewal, a coalition of school and university partnerships, agreed to commit to the following five ideas that guide their efforts, each one important to protecting the basic values of schooling and the rights that students have in schools (Goodlad, Mantle-Bromley, & Goodlad, 2004, p. 118):

1. Partner schools need to ensure that all learners have equal access to knowledge; entrenched practices such as tracking are to be examined and, it is hoped, replaced by practices that benefit all students.

2. Partner schools need to commit to developing practices that recognize and honor the diversity within school populations, that prepare students for active engagement in democratic society, and that promote social justice.

3. Partner schools need to ensure that, in addition to realizing their own personal growth, students have to learn to contribute to the nation's democratic systems as well as to its economic health.

4. Partner schools need to design decision-making processes that actually involve students, parents, and other stakeholders.

5. Partner schools have to look beyond the schoolhouse gate and work to create larger educative communities with an eye toward helping to develop a more just and sustainable society.

Similarly, Darling-Hammond calls for clear revisions to the system of education in the country. She (Darling-Hammond et al., 2008) writes,
Ultimately, raising standards for students so that they learn in powerful and productive ways requires raising standards for the system, so that it generates the kind of teaching and school settings students need in order to learn, guided by rich information about learning and supported by strong teaching expertise. (p. 211)

She laments the trickle down theory of education in which those at the top of the educational hierarchy claim to have the answers to all of education's needs and their prescriptions seep downwards to those less able to make such determinations. Instead, she argues for the necessity of local involvement in the education process. This reality, Darling-Hammond (2005) explains, is based on three factors. First, context varies and thus the nuances involved in education, mainly what to teach and how to teach it, must also vary. Those best suited to account for the variations inherent in educating such a large and diverse population are those at the local level. Second, the change process necessitates ownership on the part of those at the front lines of education. Without such an investment in the process, it is doubtful that meaningful change can be achieved. Finally, teachers aiming to establish a meaningful connection between students and the curriculum must understand the intellectual foundations for why such connections are important, how they might benefit the students and society, and how best to achieve this goal. Darling-Hammond asserts that this can only be done through active involvement in the curriculum shaping process (Darling-Hammond et al., 2005). In short, Darling-Hammond (1998) explains that in order for education in America to be successful in the future, “schools must enact democracy” (p. 87).
A Commentary on School Structures

In crafting an educational system for the future that honors democracy and education in America, identifying the basic values and rights to be guarded sets the stage for determining the remaining aspects of schooling, including the structures that are needed. For instance, in a system in which conformity is the ultimate goal and students hold no power to shape their education, the path forward seems straightforward. A centralized structure designed to maintain control over the educational process, to efficiently relay directives to the field, and effectively train teachers to implement the established curriculum would likely arise. Conversely, a system in which individual students hold full power to determine all aspects of their education points to a much less rigid structure, one that can accommodate a variety of distinct goals, curriculums, and teaching methodologies. The challenge, therefore, is to create an educational structure that supports a school's democratic mission.

Applied to my viewpoints on an education supportive of individual needs and reflective of the differences inherent in areas such as culture, language, and religion, it may be tempting to argue that a completely decentralized governing structure with power in the hands of local school communities is best suited for this vision of democratic education. Or to take it a step further, it may seem logical that differing structures should be created to support differing communities around the country in an attempt to align with the variables at work amongst the student population. Could it be that minority students need not only different types of education than those born into the dominant culture, but also a different school structure? Or that boys may need a different school structure than girls? Or that poor students may need a different school structure than
wealthy students? While these may indeed be the case, I believe such variability can be built within a system organized in line with Goodlad and Darling-Hammond's view on the structures that govern schooling and the balance between federal and local control. That is, a structure that values diversity, encourages input from stakeholders, and places control over the particulars of education in the hands of those at the local level is the most appropriate to ensure that a democratic education supportive of all students can succeed.

Moving away from the broad themes that govern school systems, Hirsch, Darling-Hammond, and Goodlad say little about the practical governance of the many elements of schooling. Even within Darling-Hammond's assertion that schools must “enact democracy”, what form does this take? Are schools to be reflective of the wider democracy with elected representatives and a system of checks and balances? Or are there systems in place to ensure that all students, and presumably the other stakeholders involved, have a say in the decision making process? Does this system extend to all areas of schooling, including school rules, curriculum, homework policy and the like? Drilling deeper, does this structure apply to decisions within individual classrooms as well as the school as a whole? These questions are too important to be left unanswered. At the same time, I am wary to believe that there exists only one answer, or that one system can be applied across all settings for all groups. Instead, I suggest that these questions are among the first that stakeholders ask themselves as we move forward in our attempts to strengthen the connection between democracy and education in America. Not long ago I was part of a group that trained pairs of teachers who would soon begin co-teaching together in a classroom. Rather than a traditional model of one teacher per class, these individuals would share the responsibility for educating the students in their classroom.
Having taught under those conditions before, I offered that the most important decision they would make in their partnership was deciding how they would make decisions.

Applied here to the practical concerns that permeate education in America, the same advice holds true. Though a school may be committed to a general structure that values diversity, encourages input from stakeholders, and places control over the particulars of education in the hands of those at the local level, determining the particulars of the decision making process is an important first step towards the realization of a democratic education.

**Learning Content**

Davies explains that this area touches upon the formal aspects of the course of study which covers democratic principles as well as the instructional methods used. For Hirsch (2006), he begins with an acknowledgement that “the contents of education in a democracy are always proper subjects for debate” (p.44). He (1996) asserts that through such discussions four options for curriculum emerge. First, decision makers can elect to teach the entire factual domain, with an emphasis on providing students with the entirety of the knowledge that currently exists. This clearly is not feasible. Second, general principles can be emphasized at the expense of specific content knowledge. Hirsch speaks at length about the weaknesses of such an approach. Third, in depth teaching of a few sample areas could be implemented. While this may seem initially to be attractive, Hirsch argues that the less is more approach does not guarantee that the necessary knowledge that students need for future success will be taught. Hirsch settles on the
fourth and final option, that schools of the future can elect to teach a careful sampling of facts in a well prepared explanatory context. Building from the position that the main cause of the ineffectiveness of our schools is incoherence in the learning content, he advocates for a common curriculum shared amongst all public schools in the nation. Such a curriculum would include direct teaching of facts, eschewing a more general reliance on critical thinking skills, problem solving skills, and the like. Though this common curriculum is to comprise only about half of the learning content in schools, Hirsch explains that such a common core of content is the most democratic form of education possible as it ensures an equal footing for all students, regardless of factors such as race, gender, socio-economic status, and geography.

Of note, Hirsch does not explore in depth the decision making process that would result in a common curriculum. Though he asserts that the knowledge contained within the core should comprise the facts necessary to achieve academic success, it is unclear who decides what facts are included and excluded. Moreover, little is mentioned regarding how disputes as to the content of the curriculum should be resolved. Hirsch (1991) does note that in democracies such as Sweden, Japan, and France, a central ministry of education that is accountable to the national legislature is charged with the task of identifying the elements of the common curriculum. By offering no critique of this arrangement, one can only conclude that this seems to be an acceptable structure to Hirsch. At the same time, Hirsch (1991) is careful to note that whatever content sequence is chosen, in the end, simply, “the people decide” (p. 7). Naturally, this raises questions similar to the ones Held (1996) posed in Chapter 2. Questions surrounding who constitutes the people, what roles are permitted for those who wish not to participate, and
under what conditions can the country impose a curriculum upon the people against their will are all important, yet left unanswered. Here again, proponents of a system in line with Hirsch’s view on learning content will need to seek answers to these questions on their own.

For Goodlad, the search for the ideal curriculum in a democracy must steer clear of the type of prepackaged content directives that Hirsch supports. He reminds us that such homogenized approaches stifle creativity and innovation and often do not align with the realities of the environments surrounding schools (Goodlad, Mantle-Bromley, & Goodlad, 2004). Moreover, they ignore the core element of Goodlad's philosophy on learning, the belief that education is a personal journey in which the school is but one influence along the way. He (1978) writes, “One of my purposes is to get beyond the too-common practice of separating out and refining, *ad infinitum*, behavioral components of goal statements as though no other kinds of considerations were involved in educating” (p. 52). Instead, a curriculum grounded in the needs of the community, interpreted as both the local and national communities, is more appropriate given the democratic goals of public schooling. That said, Goodlad is careful to note that we need not start from scratch as we move forward in education. Indeed, he proposes twelve broad goals for education, covering topics such as basic skills, intellectual development, enculturation, citizenship, creativity, and moral and ethical character. These goals are presented as a starting point for discussion on what our goals for schooling are and how those goals manifest themselves in our educational practice.

Like Goodlad, Darling-Hammond advocates for an end to the hierarchical approach to education. Rather than simply return control of the curriculum to the hands
of local governments or individual schools, however, she emphasizes the need for every player in the educational chain to learn from each other in working towards a common goal of school success (Darling-Hammond, 2005). She notes that federal policy makers should investigate why schools succeed and create regulations that guide schools toward that end without stifling their ability to reach that goal. At the local level, decision makers should use the state and national norms as guides for local ones, learning from the experiences of other schools who may have been similarly situated as they are. In essence, Darling-Hammond (2005) envisions a system that is “both appropriately humble and effectively bilateral so that its work is informed by the wisdom of good practice and its efforts do not override those of good schools” (p. 378). Naturally in practice, this type of partnership can take many forms. Yet within that diversity Darling-Hammond identifies some key elements of an education for democracy. Similar to Hirsch, she believes in a common core that would comprise roughly half of a school's curriculum. Such content standards would include a small set of “core knowledge and skills which are at the heart of schools' central purposes: the ability to think, communicate effectively, use mathematical and scientific ideas well, understand social systems, and acquire resources to frame and solve problems” (Darling-Hammond, 2005, p. 378).

**A commentary on Learning Content**

The fact that each author included in this study supports a level of common curriculum points to the reality that the business of education relies on content to be successful. After all, absent content to teach, what are schools to do? The question
therefore, is not whether a core curriculum should exist at all, but which curriculum is appropriate to advance the goals of education in the country? One answer to the question is the establishment of common standards that attempt to outline all the knowledge that students need to acquire. The difficulty with this approach, one that Hirsch advocates for, is that the prepackaged lists of content limit the voice of stakeholders in determining the makeup of the curriculum. Moreover, the selection of content to be included and excluded from the curriculum is a political decision that can introduce bias into the standards (Apple, 1995). As many have pointed out, this is problematic.\textsuperscript{33} Indeed, it seems reminiscent of the assimilative efforts of the Progressive Era, one in which immigrants needed to conform to the “Anglo-Saxon conception of righteousness, law and order, and popular government” (Cubberly, as cited in Gutek, 1986, p. 180).

Instead of such an approach, the democratic education which I support, one that values a student's unique qualities and is responsive to their individual needs, necessitates a curriculum that is heterogeneous and dynamic. After all, if equal opportunity translates into different forms of education for different groups at different times, it naturally follows that the curriculum may be similarly diverse. Thinking back again to the case of those seven students in my class who each had a different first language, the different stories that I asked them to read, the different work that they were assigned to do, and the different teaching methods that I employed were all based on their unique needs. Learning content must be flexible enough to adapt to these situations.

It is important to note here that I do not advocate for an approach to curriculum development that treats the process as a completely subjective one. This extreme positioning might reject the identification of any common curricular elements with a claim that all content selection is relative to the student, the parent, and the community that is involved. Such a stance would make it very difficult to ensure that a common knowledge base exists between people in a group. Furthermore, it may call into question the ability of that group to work together to make the necessary decisions pertaining to public life, such as the election of government officials or the passage of laws. Instead, like Goodlad and Darling-Hammond, I firmly believe that a basic set of content standards can be identified, codified, and utilized as a frame upon which the more student specific elements of the curriculum can be built. The following twelve goals of schooling presented by Goodlad (1979) may serve as a useful starting point for curriculum development moving forward.

1. Mastery of basic skills or fundamental processes
2. Career education-vocational education
3. Intellectual development
4. Enculturation
5. Interpersonal relations
6. Autonomy
7. Citizenship
8. Creativity and aesthetic perception
9. Self-concept

10. Emotional and physical well-being

11. Moral and ethical character

12. Self-realization

Most importantly, democratic education in America should continually strive to teach the skills of analysis and debate. This will help to ensure that the learning content selected will be critically examined in order to best support the needs of the students. To this point, Davies (1999) reminds us, “democracy contains within it the seeds of challenge and constant questioning, and it would seem a contradiction in terms to have a national syllabus for democracy” (p. 128).

Training

Though each author presents their own unique views on the necessary rights, structures, and learning content in schools, each recognizes that the future of American education is largely dependent on the quality of teaching in our classrooms. Darling-Hammond (2005) explains

Real improvements will come about not because standards have been written by committees, but because they begin to come alive as teachers study student work; collaborate with other teachers to improve their understanding of subjects, students' thinking, and learning; and develop new approaches to teaching that are relevant and useful for them and their students. (p. 379)
Indeed, each author points out that as past history has shown, the quality of teaching that students receive goes a long way to determining future success. One need only look at the unequal access to good teaching and the corresponding disparity in achievement among differing groups in America's educational history as evidence of the importance of instruction to the realization of school goals. Naturally, Hirsch, Goodlad, and Darling-Hammond each advocate for teacher training programs that promote their brand of American democratic education. For Hirsch (2006), training that emphasizes the theoretical underpinnings of the teaching of a common curriculum, as well as the most appropriate means to teach the content, is key to future academic success. He (1996) notes that a primary reason for poor teaching in the country is the anti-fact ideas that have permeated training courses in the past.

Proposing to improve teacher quality without grasping the relationship between low teacher effectiveness and the romantic, formalistic ideas of the education world is to mistake an effect (teachers' inadequate subject-matter knowledge) for an underlying cause (the dominant ed-school ideas that withhold that knowledge from them). (p. 84)

To correct these errors of the past Hirsch proposes that teacher education programs abandon the anti-fact push in favor of research based teaching methods which he argues, unsurprisingly, emphasize the teaching of a core curriculum for all.

Goodlad speaks passionately about creating teacher preparation programs that will ready teachers to become moral stewards of the educational process. In line with his Agenda for Education in a Democracy, teachers of the future must be prepared to practice nurturing pedagogy within the classroom, as well as work to safeguard the practices that
will ensure that the educational institution as a whole is a nourishing environment where
a democratic education can take place. Indeed, Goodlad (1997b) notes that until teacher
training programs are designed to achieve such ends, they will fail to attract and prepare
the types of teachers who we need to fulfill the democratic goals of public schools. For
this reason, “teacher education, no less than the schools, requires reconstruction”
(Goodlad, 1991a, p. 11). Goodlad identifies four main areas in need for change. First, he
bemoans the debilitating lack of prestige in the teacher education enterprise, a fact that
“oozes like molasses through and around every component of the teacher education
enterprise” (Goodlad, 1991b, p. 6). He argues that a concerted effort to improve the
standing of teaching would do wonders for recruiting and maintaining quality individuals
to the profession. Second, Goodlad finds fault with the lack of program coherence in
teacher education courses, brought forth by the large degree of variability within these
programs. Some teachers, for example, are prepared through traditional undergraduate
degree programs while others enter the field through a post-baccalaureate or alternative
certification route. Understandably, such variation leads to the third problem identified
through Goodlad's research, the separation of educational theory and practice. Not only is
there a disparity between programs in the amount of emphasis given to one or the other,
Goodlad noted that within an individual program there is often a disconnect between
theory and practice. A student teacher, for instance, may have no opportunity to
implement a learned theory if their placement endorses an alternative theory or
methodology. Finally, Goodlad notes the difficulties in preparing teachers for future
success in the face of the regulated conformity established by state and local standards for
teachers. Just as in the classroom, the quest to establish a baseline of teacher knowledge
and qualifications has led to an emphasis on meeting the standards, while nearly all else drops to the wayside.

To combat these conditions, Goodlad (1991b) proposes several new ways of conceptualizing teacher education programs. First and foremost, he suggests an organizational change in which all groups involved in teacher preparation, from faculty charged with teaching theory and content to the mentor teachers, have an equal voice in the planning and implementation of a teacher training program. Closely related is his second proposal, the creation of a dedicated professional development center run jointly by the university and the school district (Tell, 1999). Such a center would enable close supervision of all aspects of the program, and ensure that the training taking place there would meet the needs of the particular community in which the prospective teachers would enter. Finally, Goodlad proposes a major restructuring in the relationship between theory and practice. Rather than lecture on theory and hope that the lessons will make their way into actual practice, he advocates for a reversal of that process, one in which practice is analyzed in depth and the theory is woven into the discussion. Instruction in this way would establish a concrete connection between what actually happens in schools with the theories that have guided education's development.

Along the same lines, Darling-Hammond speaks in depth on the importance of teacher training to the realization of the democratic goals of education. The creation of teachers that embrace a learner-centered and learning-centered approach to instruction has already been covered in this work. Additionally, Darling-Hammond envisions standards for teaching built upon the practice of democracy in American education. While she acknowledges the importance of curriculum standards, equitable resources,
and active involvement by stakeholders in public schooling, she argues that the key to student success lies in high quality instruction (Darling-Hammond, 2005, 2006, 2012; Goldberg, 2001). Darling-Hammond (1997b) explains, “When all is said and done, what matters most for students' learning are the commitments and capacities of their teachers” (p. 293). To that end, she outlines 10 areas that teachers need to know in order to perform their jobs well.

- **Subject matter** – The starting point for most educators, teachers need to possess disciplinary knowledge that allows them to structure learning that is accessible to students. Extending beyond mere formulaic or procedural understanding of subject matter, Darling-Hammond explains that teachers must grasp the material to such a depth that they can be flexible with its instruction and assessment, and able to link it across fields and to everyday life.

- **Development** – In order to support a child's growth in school, teachers must have knowledge in child and adolescent development that will help them to understand how students think and act, what they may find difficult at certain stages, what might interest them, and how social, physical, and emotional factors impact learning.

- **Differences** – Teaching in ways that allows teachers to effectively connect with students requires an understanding of the differences that arise from culture, language, family background, and the many other factors that influence children's perspectives. Teachers need to be able to appreciate these in order to develop curriculum that connects with prior interests and experiences and matches each child's unique learning style.
Motivation – Effective teachers are ones who can motivate students to exert extensive effort, even when the lessons are difficult, and avoid situations where students become discouraged by schooling. These teachers understand how to engage students and structure the classroom to provide students with enough success to encourage them to continue to work hard to learn.

Learning – As there are different levels of learning required in schools, learning for in depth understanding, for application, or for access to other knowledge, to name a few, educators must have a strong grasp on what kinds of learning are required for different contexts and what strategies are necessary to achieve the stated learning goals.

Assessment – A fundamental building block of teaching, educators must possess the ability to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of students, gauge their progress, and react accordingly.

Strategies – Putting it all together, teachers must be able to pull from a repertoire of strategies that allow them to teach to a variety of learning styles, and to reach a variety of learning goals.

Curriculum resources and technologies – Increasingly important in the modern technological age, teachers are called upon to extend learning beyond the textbook and into the real world of problem solving and application. As would be expected in a democracy where independent critical thinking is valued, such instruction focuses on connecting students with resources and technologies that allow them to frame and solve problems through means beyond what the classroom can provide.
• Collaboration – An integral part of the development of democratic citizens lies in the development of an environment where collaboration is not only spoken of, but actively practiced. Teachers need to provide students with experiences of shared learning, and with the tools necessary to carry such collaboration forward. Moreover, teachers need to understand how to collaborate with other teachers and parents to provide for and improve learning across the school environment. Falk and Darling-Hammond (2010) note that “this approach to teaching views schooling as a system of relations and communications embedded in the wider social system of a democracy” (p. 75).

• Analyze and Reflect – Finally, teachers must be able to evaluate their work in the previous nine areas, assessing the effects of their teaching and refining their practice. Darling-Hammond argues that the implementation of these standards and the overhaul of teacher preparation programs to align with them, along with a commitment to the reimagined standards for student learning, will go a long way towards establishing an environment where schools can enact democracy.

A commentary on teacher training

The 10 areas of teacher competence outlined by Darling-Hammond presents a broad view of what a successful teacher in a democratic educational system should be able to do in their practice. While I have no qualms about this list, and no doubt that a teacher strong in those skills could effectively teach in the educational system which I
have advocated for here, the challenge remains how to train teachers to become proficient in those areas. Can we continue to rely on the models of teacher education currently in place, or are new ideas needed to ensure that teachers are better prepared for the classroom? The answer may largely be dependent on what goals for schooling we expect education to meet. Teachers are deemed effective when they have helped their students to reach a target objective, be it academic success, assimilation, or some other goal. In the current educational climate, with academic achievement at the forefront of school efforts in the classroom, teachers should be prepared to assist their students to meet the mandated standards. Does this leave room in teacher training programs for developing the full range of skills that Darling-Hammond recommends? In their review of teacher training programs, the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ), a nonpartisan research and policy organization, issued a list of policy recommendations to improve the quality of teacher preparation (Greenberg, Walsh, & McKee, 2015). These recommendations covered everything from the selection of teacher candidates, content instruction, teacher evaluation, and the regulations governing teacher training programs. Of the 21 recommendations given, more than half related to content issues, such as ensuring that teachers are tested in specific subject areas. None referenced understanding the development of children, collaboration, motivation, or any other of the 10 skills outlined by Darling-Hammond. To be sure, this is not to say that those areas are wholly absent from current teacher training programs. Rather, my point here is that until a different kind of education is valued in the country, and those skills are emphasized as crucial components of fulfilling the kind of democratic education that we seek, it will be
hard pressed to expect that teacher training programs will emphasize them to the degree necessary.

**Conclusion**

In the early stages of this project I crafted a working title for the research that described democracy and education in America as a promise unfulfilled. The description was built upon my belief that there was clarity in what the relationship between democracy and education in the country should be, and that there existed an established target at which we should aim. The assumption, therefore, was that we have failed to reach that target, that the promise of public education first made those many years ago at the founding of the country has gone unkept. This promise unfulfilled would have led today's schools astray, resulting in an education far from where it once was and where it should be. Accordingly, this project would have represented one step in the quest to reconnect public education in America with the democratic principles upon which the country was built. Naturally, change would be in order, with a new curriculum, new school structures, new training methods, and a recommitment to the values that were lost over time.

While these changes may still be needed, what has become clear to me throughout this research is that the assumption of a promise unfulfilled has failed on several fronts. The second chapter questioned the solidity of the notion of democracy and the extent to which one definition can, and should, be reached. Indeed, the three authors tasked with illuminating the subject here offered similar but competing definitions of democracy, not
to mention related concepts such as school structures and curriculum content. To state that one is more correct than another is a position that seems untenable. I am reminded here of Davies' (1999) assertion that “this is perhaps the nature of the beast” (p. 128).

Moreover, not only can democracy mean different things to different people, opinions on the concept can change with the passage of time and the influence of key events. The third chapter highlighted the ebbs and flows of such changes and the impact they had on the relationship between public education and democracy in America. Given this reality, the assertion of a promise unfulfilled is plagued by questions of context. To whom was the promise made? To whom is it left unfulfilled? Is it those in the margins that Brettschneider (2002) and Okihiro (1994) spoke of, or the broader public that Goodlad, Hirsch, and Darling-Hammond seek to educate? Is there only one correct answer, or multiple? The fifth and sixth chapters of this research drive home the point that the current state of public education cannot be so succinctly summarized. After all, if the promise of education and democracy was a firm target to be reached, then why the uncertainty over the best way to keep the promise moving forward?

With this perspective, the search to fulfill the promise of democracy and public education takes on a whole new light. To be sure, this is not to say that education has not failed segments of the population throughout the country’s history. Nor is it meant to assert that public education today is a success for all people at all times. Hirsch, Darling-Hammond, and Goodlad all lament the ways in which public education in the past and present has failed the people. Instead, a new perspective highlights the fact that the unfulfilled promise need not be interpreted in a negative light. Contrary as this may seem, a public education that has yet to fulfill its promise may be “the nature of the beast”, to
borrow Davies' phrase. Such an outlook emphasizes the continuing need for critical self-evaluation, for ongoing debate, for constant improvement. It raises the question as to whether public education in America can, and should, ever be deemed to have met the promise laid forth those many years ago. As Greider (1992) reminds us, “The democratic ideal has always been most powerful in America as an unfulfilled vision of what the country might someday become – a society advancing imperfectly toward self-realization” (p. 14). Applied to public education, the power of the vision can be found in the steadfast pursuit of an educational system which meets the needs of all students and the country at large. Indeed, this thread can be found in the works of the authors included in this study. In their own way, each advocates for a voice in the next chapter of the perpetual pursuit to fulfill the promise of public education. Which one will carry the day is difficult to say. Yet if we accept that there is no one definition of democracy, that there is no one way in which democracy can be realized in public education, that there is no one way in which we can measure the success of the relationship between the two, then we must also accept that there is no need for one winner in this great debate. Success here can be redefined not as the adoption of the principles of one over another, but as the constant evaluation of what we are currently doing, how effective are these efforts, and how we can be doing better.
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