Abstract

Title of Dissertation: AN ARCHIPELAGO OF THINKERS: THE FREE SCHOOL
                                MOVEMENT AS A SOCIAL MOVEMENT

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Dissertation directed by: Dr. Ethan Hutt
                                College of Education, Department of Teaching and Learning,
                                Policy and Leadership

The Free School Movement of the 1960s was a short educational reform effort that grew

out of the anti-establishment and anti-authoritarian ideas of the counterculture. This

group of radical thinkers included individuals like Jonathan Kozol, George Dennison, and

John Holt and built upon the rich history of education reform in the United States. This

study investigates whether the framework created by sociologist Charles Tilly to study

social movements can be applied to education reform efforts like the Free School

Movement. The goal of the study is twofold. First, it is to determine whether the Free

School Movement can be termed a social movement using Tilly's framework and thus, if the

framework can be used to create a common language for the study of educational reform

efforts. Second, the study situates the Free School Movement within the larger stream of

American educational history. Ultimately, the study concludes that the Free School

Movement can be termed a social movement according to Tilly's definition. In determining

this, the study also shows that Tilly's framework can, with a few modifications, be used to

study education reform efforts and to provide a basis for comparison and analysis. In addition, the study is able to demonstrate that the Free School Movement wrestled with the same tensions common to many educational reform efforts in American history. While those who participated in the Free School Movement believed that they were attempting something new and different, this study shows that the Movement was part of a long struggle to determine if education should be viewed as a public or private good.

AN ARCHIPELAGO OF THINKERS:
THE FREE SCHOOL MOVEMENT AS A SOCIAL MOVEMENT

by

Dani Biancolli

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
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Advisory Committee:

Dr. Ethan Hutt, Chair
Dr. Helene Cohen
Dr. Thomas Davis
Dr. Olivia Saracho
Dr. Margaret McLaughlin

Dedication

To my family, who supported me throughout this arduous process.   Thank you for never doubting that I could do this.

To Mom, research assistant extraordinaire, for her expertise as a photographer, her patience as a sounding board and her firmness as a taskmaster. Thank you for always being on my side. I would have never finished this without you.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

In the United States, the 1960s was a decade of great upheaval and change. It was a decade when the traditions of the past were called into question and the youth of America began to experiment with new ideas. It was a decade that endured challenges to institutional structures such as the government and the military. And, it was also a decade that saw great changes in education. For example, public education began introducing curricular reforms such as "new math" and "new English" in an attempt to break from the traditions then under assault by those seeking change (Long, 1973, p. 3). Yet for some of the most ardent reformers, these changes were not enough. For these individuals, the belief that the American educational system was "based upon a paradigm that was largely consistent with behaviorist psychology and an assembly line view" made wholesale change a necessity (Wheatley, 2009, p. 32). In *American Alternative Education: Ideals in Action*, Claire Korn writes that "the upheavals in American society from the late 1960s to the mid-1970s, through the heated times of the Vietnam War and the Civil Rights movement, stirred antagonism towards authority and stimulated the growth of non-traditional schools" (Korn, 1991, p. 2).

If the 1960s was a decade that changed America, then 1968 was a year that changed the nation, a year when tensions reached their zenithwith the assassinations of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Robert Kennedy, the shock of the Tet Offensive and the collapse of Lyndon Johnson's dream of a second presidential term (Newmann, 2003, p. 90). It was also the year when sales of A.S. Neill's *Summerhill*, a small book about an experimental school in England, reached one

million copies sold, and the Free School Movement[1] was born (Newmann, 2003, p. 91). While Neill's *Summerhill* would form one plank of the Free School Movement platform, his writings were joined by the works of Jonathan Kozol, Herb Kohl, Nat Hentoff, George Dennison, and John Holt. For these reformers, education was understood as "an inherently political process, involving helping students demystify the everyday world that they inhabit to reveal both the power relations and interests that structure it and the commonsense beliefs that support such power relations and structures" (Carlson, 1997, p. 16). By the late 1960s, these reformers formed the foundation of a new grassroots effort, the Free School Movement, with a desire to reshape the education system into something more "open and participatory rather than managed and technocratic" (Miller, 2002, p. 109).

This study tells the story of this effort to reform the structure and philosophy of American public education. It also seeks to investigate the nature and purpose of this assemblage of thinkers who came together very briefly to work towards a new vision of public schooling in America. These educational philosophers, each influential theorists and authors, were drawn together for a short window of time to propose a radical reform to the status quo before eventually returning to their own individual pursuits.

Purpose of Study

Given the social and political chaos of the late 1960s, it is not surprising that intellectuals would begin to reimagine some of the most fundamental institutions of American life. As an institution, education was closely connected to the American family and the collective societal goals for the future of the nation. Yet, faced with the turmoil of the 1960s, this institution was

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[1] The Free School Movement is the name given to this particular reform effort. The use of the term "movement" in its title does not indicate that it has been shown to be a social movement. For the sake of clarity, I will use a capital "M" to refer to the Free School Movement in order to differentiate between its title and the idea of a social movement.

found lacking by some theorists, parents, teachers and students, who chose to forge a new path outside of the mainstream of public education (Miller, 2002, p.2).   In leaving the public education system to create a non-public alternative, these individuals formed the foundation of the Free School Movement.

This study has two main goals. The first goal is to determine whether the self-titled Free School Movement can actually be termed a movement at all. Using the criteria established by Charles Tilly (2013), a noted sociologist and authority on social movements, I analyze the history of the Free School Movement to assess the extent to which it can be accurately described as a "social movement."   In the course of this investigation, I also tend to the related issue of how best to apply Tilly's framework—developed primarily to study 18th century social politics-- to the study of education reform efforts. The study of school reform efforts is a messy and complex affair. The ability to apply Tilly's criteria to classify and categorize education reform efforts would give researchers a common vocabulary to use when comparing and analyzing various reform efforts. In this respect, the Free School Movement provides a test case for this question because it was a short-lived and discreet reform effort that can be easily studied. Apart from the question of whether the Free School Movement fits Tilly's definition of a social movement, the second goal of this study is to position the Free School Movement in the history of American school reform and to examine some of its broader influence. As reform effort, the Free School Movement lasted only four years. In spite of its short existence, it is possible to situate this reform effort in the broader history of American educational reform and to demonstrate how its ideas merged with those of other efforts to remain relevant to the discussion of education reform.

Methodology

This study uses a narrative historical approach to analyze the life of the Free School Movement. In addition, the criteria established by Tilly is used as the interpretive lens for determining if the Free School Movement can rightly be called a social movement. For this study, I utilize the narrative method established by historian Lawrence Stone in his article "The Revival of Narrative: Reflections on the Old New History"(1979) which requires "the organization of the material in a chronologically sequential order and the focusing of the content into a single coherent story" (p. 3). To create this narrative, I use documentary evidence to analyze the Free School Movement in light of Tilly's social movement criteria. The majority of this documentary evidence comes from an analysis of primary sources located in the New Schools Exchange Collection at Yale University. Additional details about sources and methodology are provided in Chapter 3.

Research Questions

In Tilly's book *Social Movement*, he writes that modern social movements "emerged from an innovative, consequential synthesis of three elements" (Tilly & Wood, 2013, p. 4). These elements include: (1) a campaign; (2) a repertoire; (3) and so-called WUNC (worthiness, unity, numbers and commitment) displays.

In order to determine whether the Free School Movement satisfies Tilly's criteria for a social movement, three major questions must be answered. The combination of the answers to these three questions forms the basis of Tilly's criteria for a social movement. These questions include:

1. Does the proposed movement have an established campaign? In this case, a "campaign" is defined as a sustained, organized public effort making collective claims on target authorities.

2. Does the proposed movement employ a combination from among the following forms of political actions: creation of special-purpose associations and coalitions; public meetings; solemn processions; vigils; rallies; demonstrations; petition drives; statements to and in public media; pamphleteering? In this case, this ensemble of performances is considered the social movement's repertoire.

3. Does the proposed movement have a clear public representation of WUNC: worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment on the part of themselves and/or their constituencies? In this case, these examples of each of these elements are termed "WUNC displays." (Tilly, 2005, p. 216)

Significance of the Study

Beginning in 1968, the educational critiques presented in the writings of Neill (e.g. 1960), Kozol (e.g. 1972, 1982), Dennison (e.g. 1969), Holt (e.g. 1964, 1970), and others, "coupled with the emergence of the youth counterculture, led to a rapid increase in the number of free schools being established across the United States (Miller, 2002, p. 4). According to educational historians Elizabeth Hansot and David Tyack, the 1960s ushered in an era where the idea of national public education was being questioned and reexamined. For Hansot and Tyack, the late 1960s marked "the end of an era when school leaders had hoped that education could remain above politics" (Tyack & Hansot, 1981, p. 20).

In the 1950s, the public education system enjoyed a great deal of deference from the American public and other governmental institutions, including the courts. While school boards

were typically elected through a democratic process in the majority of the country, their decisions tended to be made with little input from outside groups. This began to change in part because of the Civil Rights Movements and decisions such as 1954's *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*. The move by Civil Rights leaders to break open that closed system and to use public education as a way of addressing inequality in the United States helped set the stage for the reform efforts of the 1960s (Tyack & Hansot, 1981, p. 18). As the 1960s dawned, school leaders found themselves ill-prepared for conflicts over school goals, governance and programs. Increasingly, school leaders found themselves faced with an ever-expanding group of programs and initiatives designed to improve the lives and experiences of children. These attempts to address problems and gaps continued through the 1960s and 1970s and are still searching for answers in the 21st century. While the tone of the discussion has changed from the excitement and optimism of the early reform years to the pessimism of the 1980s to the cautious reality of today, these efforts have not stopped (p. 21). Therefore, it is important that researchers have a way to categorize and compare these various efforts in order to better understand their results and impacts. One of the goals of this study is to provide such a method of analysis. If a framework like Tilly's can be used to categorize and compare educational reform efforts, then researchers will have another tool to assist them in their analysis. From the long history of education reform efforts in the United States, it is easy to conclude that these efforts will continue and therefore it is important to have a way to compare and analyze the impact of such efforts. In addition, while schools did enjoy a position of great deference in the United States prior to the 1960s, there were still efforts at reform going back centuries. This study is significant in part because it seeks to situate the Free School Movement within this continuing

narrative to demonstrate that while the specifics might change, the core conflicts within public education remain remarkably constant.

Definition of Terms and Individuals

- Free School Movement – This term refers to a specific non-public alternative education reform effort that existed between 1968 and 1972.

- Narrative History – This term refers to a specific type of historical methodology that focuses on organizing events chronologically in order to tell a story.

- Primary Sources – For the purpose of this study, this term refers to documentary sources produced by individual associated with the Free School Movement between 1968 and 1972.

- Documentary Sources – For the purpose of this study, this term refers to any written communications produced by the Free School Movement including but not limited to books, articles, and newsletters.

- New Schools Exchange Collection – A collection of documents including newsletters, personal correspondence, memos, and essays written by key members of the Free School Movement. After the dissolution of the New Schools Exchange, the materials were given to Yale University Archives and Manuscripts collection for preservation.

- Charles Tilly – Tilly served as a professor of history, sociology, and social sciences for the University of Michigan from 1969-1984. He later served as the Joseph L. Buttenwieser Professor of Social Sciences at Columbia University until his death in 2008. Tilly wrote liberally about contentious politics and social movements, authoring more than 600 articles and 51 books during his career.

Chapter 2

As a relatively short chapter in the history of American educational reform, the Free

School Movement has not been given much attention by researchers. Two comprehensive

studies of the Movement were published during its height and can be taken as a primary source

account of the Movement itself. Allan Graubard's *Free the Children: Radical Reform and the*

Free School Movement emphasized the symbolic significance of the Movement and predicted a

broad impact on the educational system. For Graubard, the free schools represented the same

spirit of "radical critique that inspired the Civil Rights Movement" (Graubard, 1972, p. 8). He

saw these schools as part of a broader effort to reinvent schooling in the United States. Jonathan

Kozol's *Free Schools* set off a firestorm within the Movement with its hyperbolic

characterization of one particular element of the membership. In contrast to Graubard, Kozol

wrote critically of those in the Movement who sought to remove themselves from the struggle

for a just society. He wrote with derision about "rich white kids who speak three languages with

native fluency, at the price of sixteen years of high-cost, rigorous and sequential education

(Kozol, 1972a. p.33). For Kozol, it was inexcusable that these same individuals were unwilling

to provide this same level of education to those less fortunate. Instead, these fortunate

individuals "determined that poor kids should make clay vases, weave Indian headbands, play

with Polaroid cameras, [and] clime over geodesic domes" instead of learning the skills necessary

to succeed in the world (Kozol, 1972a, p. 33). For Kozol, free schools that created escapist

"intentional communities" instead of confronting the evil of society were comparable to living

blissfully in the mountains of Germany during the Nazi regime (Kozol, 1972a, p. 11).

Although written with great passion and details, both of these works provides a firsthand

account of the Free School Movement rather than a more objective study. In his 2002 book,

Free Schools, Free People, Ron Miller provides one of the few secondary analyses focusing solely on the Free School Movement. Drawing from primary accounts, Miller gives a simplistic account of the Movement as a short-lived effort that faded almost before it began. Other secondary accounts of the Free School Movement can be found in anthologies on alternative education movements or in biographies of many of the key figures in the Movement. Each of these secondary accounts provides a basic biography of the Movement without any real attempt look beyond the surface. However, these accounts do serve a purpose. In order to better understand the internal dynamics of the Free School Movement, it is first necessary to have a general understanding of what a Free School was, and to situate the movement and its ideas historically. This background information provides a foundation for the primary source research used to analyze the Movement in accordance with Tilly's criteria for a social movement.

What was a Free School?

The 1960s was undeniably a decade of great turmoil in the United States. It was a decade that saw everything from a presidential assassination to civil rights protests to the first moon landing. It was a decade where the youth of America rebelled against the established order and rejected the values of their parents. It was a decade that saw the rise of a counterculture and a rejection of the establishment. Most of all, it was a decade of change. As Peter Collier and David Horowitz write in their 1960's retrospective, *Destructive Generation* (1989), the Sixties was "a time of monumental idealism populated by individuals who wanted nothing more than to give peace a chance; a time of commitment and action when dewy-eyed young people in the throes of a moral passion…sought only to remake the world" (p. 14). In order to "remake the world," these "dewy-eyed" dreamers mounted a full-scale assault on what Collier and Horowitz (1989), term "the system – that collection of values that provide guidelines for societies as well

as individuals" (p. 15). In a very real way, the basic institutions of the United States lost their sense of legitimacy and authority in the face of a vocal and growing counterculture movement.

With protest movements challenging everything from institutionalized racism to the Vietnam War, it is not a surprise that some of this "monumental idealism" came to include calls for educational reform. Liberal education reformers sought to use the public education system as a way to combat poverty and to increase equity and equality for minority groups (Tyack & Hansot, 1981, p. 19). Other groups sought to capitalize on the energy, anger and idealism of the decade to force social change through education. At the same time that some students were dropping out of the public school system because it was not meeting their needs, others were struggling for the opportunity to learn. Partly in response to these calls for change, public education institutions introduced curricular reforms in the form of "new English" and "new social studies" to join the "new math" born of Cold War fears (Phillips, 2014). Indeed, as Jerry Long writes in *The Free School Movement* (1973), the "educational vocabulary of the Sixties was spiced with the word 'new'" (p. 3). New technologies such as multi-media education, multipurpose classrooms and individualized instruction followed innovations like team-teaching and differentiated staffing (Long, 1973, p. 3.). And yet, for some of those "dewy-eyed" idealists, these changes were still not enough (Collier & Horowitz, 1989, p. 15). As Claire Korn notes in *Alternative American Schools: Ideals in Action* (1991), the "upheavals in American society from the late 1960s to the mid-1970s, through the heated times of the Vietnam War and the Civil Rights movement, stirred antagonism towards authority and stimulated the growth of non-traditional schools" (p. 2).

As a social institution, education provides the vehicle for a culture to perpetuate its core values and to mold its vision for the future. It is not surprising then that when there is great

cultural turmoil regarding those values and ideas that the basics of the educational institution itself are challenged (Miller, 2002, p. 2). This is the case in the 1960s, as the divisive political forces tearing apart other American institutions also attacked the educational system. From the radical changes forced by the Civil Rights Movements to the anxiety over the drop-out crisis, the American education system was under siege and would remain so for the next several decades. In "Conflict and Consensus in American Public Education," David Tyack and Elizabeth Hansot (1981) conclude that as groups marginalized by race, sex and class gained a political voice, they were no longer willing to allow others to control the vision for the future or the vehicle for creating it. The result of this upheaval made public education a primary target for cultural dissent in the 1960s, and brought forth the idea of "free schools," small educational facilities that were operated outside of the government-controlled institution of public education and created a personalized and authentic experience for every student, parent and teacher (Miller, 2002, p. 3).

The history of public education is filled with both politically and pedagogically motivated movements and reform efforts. Just as the 1960s was a unique decade in history, so too was the Free School Movement with its intensive cultural and political criticisms and its belief that public schools could not be saved (Miller, 2002, p. 7). In a very real way, the Free School movement was not an academic discourse but rather a call to arms to produce serious educational reform. While some teachers, parents, and students chose to remain inside the public education system to work for change, others decided to abandon public education in favor of something new and different.

These parents, teachers and students who chose to leave the mainstream education and create something more reflective of their personal beliefs about education formed the core of the Free School Movement. These individuals shared the belief that the changes made to education

in the early 1960s had done little to alter the core of public schools. The introduction of the "new" curricula in math, science and social studies, the adoption of self-directed, discovery learning and the incorporation of advanced technologies were simply superficial alternations to a fundamentally broken system (Long, 1973, p. 3). For these teachers, parents and students, schools were still fulfilling their "historic role of screening individuals, selecting the fit and rejecting the unfit" (Long, 1973, p. 3). Increasing feelings of alienation led many to seek answers outside of the public education system by the end of the decade.

In general, a common core ideology existed among the various free schools that developed between 1968 and 1972. Many of these schools emphasized a student's "natural or organic desire to learn and argued that school structures and routines (such as tests and grades, timed lessons contained by classroom walls, segregation by age) inhibited genuine learning" (Provenzo, 2009, p. 355). To advocates of free schools, personal relationships, emotional expression and active participation were as important, if not more important, than academic work. For these "free schoolers," education did not exist to serve the political and economic interests of the state, but rather to support the happiness and well-being of those who "lived, loved, and played" within each school (Miller, 2002, p. 3). Instead of subjecting themselves to institutions and ideas they found confining and alienating, these individuals chose to create something new by drawing upon the ideas of the developing counterculture.

Setting the parameters for what exactly was and was not a "Free School" is not an easy task. While most free schools shared common factors, there was not one simple, concise definition. While this lack of uniformity may not have been a problem at the start of the Movement in 1968, it would become a much larger and more contentious issue by 1972. In general, the biggest commonality between free schools was general attitude of anti-

authoritarianism and a desire to promote self-directed learning (Rossman, 1972, p. 324). Beyond those broad commonalities, free schools tended to be very unique. Generally, free schools were the product of small groups of families and idealist teachers who embraced the ideas of counterculture. For these educators, learning should be intensely personal and spontaneous rather than rigidly planned. The curriculum should be dictated by the needs and desires of the students rather than by textbooks or instructional methods (Miller, 2002, p. 3). In general, children were rarely grouped according to age or ability, but instead allowed to mix freely in large and small group activities. Others were allowed to spend quiet time as they desired. Most importantly, there was no real curriculum, only open-ended learning based on student interest (Miller, 2002, p. 118). This idea of student choice was the core of free school ideology. Students were given the power to decide what to learn, when to learn, where to learn and how to learn. Richard Newmann (2003), in his analysis of radical education in the 1960s, explained that because free schools operated outside of the mainstream of public education, they had the latitude to experiment with new and different ideas. Although free schools valued experimentation and individuality, there were several books published to help individuals to found new schools. For example, *The Rasberry Exercises: How to Start Your Own School…And Make It Work* provides some general ideas about curriculum and instruction in a free school. With five printings between 1970 and 1972, this "how to" manual had a great deal of influence over the course of the movement (Newmann, 2003, p. 81).

Another commonality between many of the free schools of this period was size. While many Americans saw schools as large institutions housed in expensive buildings with hundreds of students, free schools embraced a different philosophy. The average size of each individual school was approximately thirty-three students with two-thirds of all free schools having less

than forty students enrolled (Graubard, 1972, p. 359). The philosophy behind such small enrollments was that the essential elements of free schools, spontaneity and individuality, would be lost in a larger setting. The major exception to this small school rule was the community school established in inner-cities (Graubard, 1972, p. 361).

Along with the general rejection of American institutions and ideas came a desire for both personal and collective liberation. Free schoolers wanted to first transform schools to liberate and empower individuals, which in turn would bring about a transformation of society, a philosophy that draws heavily upon the various thread of the progressive movement. In the 1890s, faced with a rapidly changing world, education reformers sought use schools as a way to address the evolving societal needs (Kliebard, 2004). Much like those in the 1890s who struggled to adjust to a modernizing world and worried about how all of the changes would impact society, free school supporters looked to educational changes as a way create a new vision of the future. By individually resisting the calls for hegemony, free school supporters, like those came before them, hoped to bring a new consciousness into being. For many who felt both oppressed and alienated by the existing social structures in the United States, free schools offered an opportunity to concretely and immediately change that social order.

The general anti-authoritarian, anti-establishment inclination common to free schools is not surprising given the fact that the schools drew on the emerging counterculture of the 1960s. As "counterinstitutions," the free schools embodied "the desire of disillusioned young people to build a new society that would be open and participatory rather than managed and technocratic" (Miller, 2002, p. 109). By embracing the counterculture distain for anything compulsory or authoritarian, free schools rejected the traditional trappings of public education. The free school literature is filled with diatribes against the emotional and intellectual impacts of conventional

teaching methods on the fragile minds of children (Graubard, 1972, p. 352). Instead, free

schools advocated a radical sense of freedom, freedom from compulsion, freedom from

authority, and freedom from convention. This intense focus on freedom, both personal and

collective, helps to mark free schools as both radically different and distinctly countercultural

(Graubard, 1972, p. 352). Ironically, the lack of common ground that resulted from this

emphasis on freedom and individuality eventually led to the collapse of the Movement in the

early 1970s. Once the initial euphoria of breaking from the establishment had faded, those

leading the Movement were faced with the difficult task of marshaling a reform effort predicated

on a belief in freedom, individualism and non-conformity. For those attempting to lead the

Movement, this combination would prove too difficult to overcome.

What were the roots of Free School ideas?

The Free School Movement did not develop in a vacuum but rather grew out of the rich

tradition of education in the United States. The first public schools in the United States began in

the northern colonies in the 17th century with Massachusetts passing the first compulsory

education laws in 1647. Not only did these laws require towns to create grammar schools, but

they imposed fines on parents who did not send children to school, and even allowed for the

removal of children from parents deemed unfit to educate children properly (Davis, 2011, p. 29).

In the early years of the new American nation, the creation of a system of education was seen as

vital to the preservation of the ideas of the new republic and as weapons against the forces of

corruption (Gaither, 2003, p. 21). Instead of educating student at home or in small groups, this

Republican[2] ideal called for the creation of a system of common schools to educate future

citizens and leaders. In the period after the War of 1812, education, coupled with widespread

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[2] In this instanced, the term "Republican" applies to the post-Revolutionary War period in the United States, not the current political party.

property ownership, was seen by Whig and Democrat alike as a way of providing opportunity. The goal of education was less about morals and character building and more about commerce and industry (Gaither, 2008, p. 39). Beliefs about the importance of education to the nation continued into the 19th century when Horace Mann and Henry Barnard published the *Common School Journal*, dedicated to their beliefs that education was a vital step in developing citizenship, uniting society, and reducing crime (Davis, 2011, p. 29).

At the same time that infrastructure of the public education system continued to grow in the United States, new ideas about how best to educate children began to develop. By the early 19th century, a growing interest in European romanticism and American transcendentalism had led to the establishment of several schools which rejected common educational practices like rote memorization and corporal punishment. Joseph Neef, a follower of the Swiss Romantic educator J.H. Pestalozzi, who believed that every aspect of a child's life was a component in education, founded several of these schools between 1809 and 1826 in Pennsylvania, Kentucky and Indiana. At the same time, Transcendentalist A. Bronson Alcott founded several of this type of school in Connecticut and Massachusetts in the 1820s and 1830s (Miller, 2002, p. 111). These schools rejected the materialism and capitalism that formed the core of society, and thus of education, at the time. Although these early experiments failed to gain widespread followings, they provided the basis for the progressive education movement of the early 20th century.

By the early 20th century, progressive education began to assert itself as the vanguard of a broader project of social reconstruction designed to address the faults in American society. According to Kliebard (2004), the idea of a progressive education movement is something of a misnomer. There was not one unifying progressive theory but rather four different strands, each attempting to find a solution to the problems plaguing the system. As Kliebard notes in *The*

Struggle for the American Curriculum, 1893-1958 (2004), these four groups saw the need for reform but could not agree on the best way to address that need. The humanists, or the status quo group, wanted to keep alive the old traditions of Western education that had ruled the educational establishment for centuries. The three remaining groups sought to remake the system in various ways. The social efficiency educators saw a way of applying scientific principles to education to create a smooth and efficient system akin to many of the factory reforms of the era. Embracing many of the romantic ideals of the time, the developmentalists focused on designing an educational experience that was in harmony with an individual child's wants and needs. While still interested in applying scientific principles to education, the developmentalists advocated a marriage of child psychology and curriculum to produce meaningful learning. Finally, the social meliorists saw education as a driving force for social change. For them, education was the key correcting corruption, inequality and abuse (Kliebard, 2004). Throughout the early 20th century, each of these strands would take a turn guiding the progressive education movement as the nation adjusted and reacted to the demands of a changing world. In addition, the Free School Movement would draw some of its ideas from both the developmentalist and social meliorists threads a half century later.

As the 1930's dawned, the struggles of the Great Depression brought the inequalities of wealth and power that had been growing in the nation out of the shadows and into the light. At the same time, the social meliorists began to dominate the progressive education movement. In a time where a jailed Eugene V. Debbs could receive almost 1 million votes for President, the social meliorists found fertile ground for their social change agenda (Kliebard, 2004, p. 154). Led in part by George S. Count, the social meliorists called attention to an education system devoted to preserving the existing stratified social system rather than working for real and

permanent change. Unfortunately, the gains of these progressive educators were overshadowed by the events of World War II and the emergence of the United States as a global superpower. As a result, while progressive ideas shaped various reform efforts like multiage classrooms, integrated curricula and cooperative learning, new voices demanding a "back to basics" approach drowned out the calls of progressive reformers (Miller, 2002, p. 113). In addition, the close ties between social meliorists and Marxist, social reconstructionist theory led to the branding of both ideas as "socialist and un-American" during the "Red Scare" of the 1950s (Carlson, 1997, p. 15). However, both of these ideas would later remerge under new names and with renewed vigor during the social upheaval of the 1960s.

In addition to living in the long shadow of progressive education, the Free School Movement can trace its roots to the ideas of A.S. Neill, a British educator and founder of Summerhill, a pioneering school in holistic education. Far from a political activist, Neill established Summerhill not to help change society but to provide children with the tools to survive in the world. For Neill, this meant allowing children the freedom to enjoy life, as happiness is "the aim of life" (as quoted in Barrow, 1978, p. 67). The idea of educating children with the tools needed for survival was not a new idea. In fact, the importance of education to personal success and survival was one of the prime motivations for early education laws in the American colonies. Laws passed in Massachusetts in 1642, in Connecticut in 1650 and New York in 1665 all emphasized the importance of education for survival (Gaither, 2008, p. 12). It should be noted that in many cases, this mandated education took place within the home and was directed by parents. In fact, during the post-Revolutionary period in the United States, women were encouraged to begin the moral and character education of their children at home from an early age. This idea of "Republican motherhood" emphasized the importance of morals and

values over skills and content in early education (Gaither, 2003 p. 39). Gradually as the nation and the institution of public education grew, the central role of the parent was ceded to the schoolteacher. This shift can be seen in the rapid adoption of compulsory attendance laws in the late 19th century. In the twenty-five years after the Civil War, twenty-five state adopted compulsory attendance laws and by 1918, all states required students to attend school on a regular basis (Hutt, 2012, p. 9). This shift became even more obvious as the 20th century dawned. Between 1900 and 1920, states, aided by interest groups and reformers, passed hundreds of laws dictating the courses and content to be taught (p. 16). For many, compulsory school attendance provided the type of direct access to the future generation that was needed to help guide societal development (p. 16). However, as the 1950s gave way to the culture clash of the 1960s, more and more families began to return to a parent and family centered idea of education, eventually leading to the modern homeschooling movement (Gaither, 2008, p. 85). While much of the modern homeschooling movement can be seen as a reaction to the "mass culture of the modern liberal state," there are pockets within the movement interested in an even more liberal view of education (p. 85). It is in these pockets that the Free School Movement found a foothold.

For this subset of the population, the publication of Neill's *Summerhill* in 1960 served as a "catalyst" for the movement in the United States even though the book did not initially sell well (Long, 1973, p. 10). By 1963, popular American magazines such as *Look Magazine*, which reached a large cross-section of the population, began featuring articles about the school in England "run by students" (Long, 1973, p. 10). Gradually, these same magazines developed features about private American Summerhillian schools like Lewis-Wadhams School in upstate New York. The news about noncoercive, holistic education was out. In addition to coverage in

the popular press, individuals interested in Neill's Summerhill experiment formed the

Summerhill Society in New York City in 1961. Over the next few years, educators,

psychologists, parents, and other interested parties spent countless hours discussing issues,

making contributions, establishing networks and even opening schools. For these devotees of

Neill's Summerhill, the goal was to support and encourage the growth of Summerhillian schools

and those similar to them (Long, 1973, p. 10). It is important to note however, that the vast

majority of these schools were privately, not publically, funded.

While educators like Neill helped establish the idea of nontraditional, alternative

education, it was not until the mid-1960s that the Free School Movement truly coalesced. At this

point, a new generation of educational reformers, "brought up politically on the cultural struggles

of the decade, was developing a new social reconstructionist discourse in education" (Carlson,

1997, p. 15). These new reformers did not initially look to progressive educational literature but

instead looked to the emerging voices of the decade, voices that were critical of public

institutions and focused on addressing issues such as marginalization and racism (Miller, 2002,

p. 114). Authors such as Paul Goodman, John Holt, Edgar Z. Friedenberg, George Dennison,

Herbert Kohl, and Jonathan Kozol began to combine old progressive ideas with new social

militancy to create the core of what would become the Free School Movement (Graubard, 1972,

p. 352).

This new wave of reform began with the 1964 publication of *How Children Fail* by John

Holt. Fundamentally, Holt believed that traditional compulsory education was at odds with the

natural learning process of children. Holt proposed that the "un-asked-for-teaching" of tradition

schools sent a message that learning was something too difficult to be accomplished alone and

required the help of an authority figure (Wheatley, 2009, p. 28). Throughout the 1960s and

1970s, Holt continued to publish works such as *How Children Learn* (1967), *The Underachieving School* (1969), *Freedom and Beyond* (1972) and *Instead of Education* (1976). After the decline of the Free School Movement in the mid-1970s, Holt's ideas continued to be used by advocates of charter schools and homeschooling and even by some public schools at least until the start of the standards movements in the late 1970s (Miller, 2002, p. 4).

In addition to Holt, other reformers began addressing the perceived flaws in the public education system. For example, Paul Goodman, author of *Growing Up Absurd* (1960) and *Compulsory Miseducation* (1964) argued that institutionalized public education was sterile and stifling and needed to be radically altered to provide children with the rich, authentic education they deserved (Miller, 2002, p. 4). Goodman and Edgar Z. Friedenberg also proposed that public education had become an authoritarian institution designed to repress individuality and freedom by providing an education that was "irrelevant both to students' lives and the serious issues affecting society" (Provenzo, ed., 2009, p. 355).

By 1967, a new round of criticisms emerged, portraying public schools not just as authoritarian institutions bent on repressing individuality, but as racist institutions bent on alienating minorities and perpetuating poverty (Newmann, 2003, p. 88). Led by firebrands like Jonathan Kozol, Herbert Kohl, Nat Hentoff and George Dennison, these social revolutionaries "centered their attacks on the ghetto child's 'death at an early age' at the hands of a public education system obsessed with control" (Newmann, 2003, p. 88). Dennison, whose *The Lives of Children* (1969) detailed his time as a teacher at the First Street School in New York's Lower East side, helped to weave many of the varying threads of the Free School ideology into something more cohesive by combining the humanistic, holistic ideas of Dewey and Holt with the more political ideas of Kozol, Kohl and Hentoff (Newmann, 2003, p. 76). While many of

these authors were publishing too late to be considered an influence on the start of the movement, their poignant accounts helped shape the Movement at its height.

How did the Free School Movement rise and fall?

For four years, beginning in 1968, the Free School Movement combined many of the ideas of reformers like Holt, Dennison and Kozol with the anti-establishment feelings of the counterculture. Partially inspired by the "freedom movements" of the decade, those for civil rights and women's rights as well as other national and international student movements, these new schools embraced ideas of personal and collective liberation from oppressive institutions (Newmann, 2003, p. 91). Although some educators chose to work for the incorporation of progressive educational ideas into existing public schools, many others launched alternative education programs that collectively became known as "free schools". Drawing from the energy and commitment of the antiwar movement, the Civil Rights movement and the developing counterculture, the Free School Movement first expanded rapidly in places like Boston, New York and San Francisco (Newmann, 2003, p. 83). Like these other more high profile movements, the growth of the Free School Movement coincided with the coming of age of the Baby Boomers and the rejection of the status quo. As part of the counterculture that produced Free Universities on campus across the nation, the free schools served as both reaction and resistance to the "unresponsive educational bureaucracy intent on processing young people for a mechanical system" (Newmann, 2003, p. 73).

Although the Movement began in earnest in the late 1960s, there was a small number of what would later be termed "free schools" in existence at the start of the decade. The majority of these early schools were inspired either by A.S. Neill's *Summerhill* or by local demands for change (Miller, 2002, p. 114). While researching an undergraduate thesis at Brown University,

Tate Hausman compiled data on these early free schools. According to Hausman, while fewer than thirty-five free schools were founded between 1964 and 1967, thirty were founded in 1968 alone with over 270 new free schools developing between 1969 and 1971 (p. 26). A study by the New Schools Directory Project (NSDP) supports these findings. The NSDP found that thirty-nine states had at least one free school with the largest concentration of the 346 existing school appearing in California, New York, Massachusetts, and Illinois. In addition, there appears to be several key areas of free school concentration during this period. The largest numbers of free schools were found in the San Francisco Bay area, the Chicago area, and the Boston area, all regions with a heavy counterculture influence (Graubard, 1972, p. 357). These cosmopolitan urban areas also boasted a high concentration of university-associated people, thus providing the "critical mass" necessary for the founding of free schools (Graubard, 1972, p. 357). To place this data in context, the *New York Time* reported in December of 1970 that there were nearly 2000 communes across the United States, over 150 free university programs by 1971 and approximately 600 underground newspapers with a combined circulation of five million during this same period (Miller, 2002, p. 122). In 1978, Stuart Rosenfeld estimated that in 1972, free schools served an average 10,000 students, or 0.25% the total school population in the United States and less than 5% of the private school population (p. 487).

As the Free School Movement grew, school leaders began to see themselves as a coherent countercultural movement. They created journals such as *This Magazine is About Schools* and *The New Schools Exchange Newsletter* to share information and to create a network of resources. Drawing from the far left of the political spectrum, these periodicals rapidly gained like-minded readers as the 1960s moved to a close. For example, the Toronto-based, *This Magazine is About Schools,* claimed 7,000 readers by 1968, while *The New Schools Exchange*

Newsletter had a circulation of 6,000 by 1971 (Miller, 2002, p. 123). At the peak of the

Movement in the early 1970s, there were over eighteen different publications serving the

movement. The Teacher Drop-Out Center (TDOC), founded at the University of Massachusetts,

Amherst in 1969, helped hundreds of teachers and volunteers to find positions in free schools

around the nation (Miller, 2002, p. 4). Organizations like the TDOC combined with these

newsletters to serve as the hub of news, ideas and information dealing with the Free School

Movement.

During this period, Movement leaders also began calling for regional and national

conferences to give radical educators and motivated students a venue for exercising ideas about

participatory democracy and political activism as well as a general opposition to hierarchy and

commercial capitalism (Provenzo, 2009, p. 355). The first formal meeting of free school leaders

occurred in March 1969 in Menlo Park, California. Held on the campus of the Peninsula School,

a democratic, progressive private school founded in the 1920s, this conference produced a call

for greater communication and collaboration among free school advocates and leaders

(Newmann, 2003, p. 92). Another result of this conference was the creation of *The New Schools*

Exchange (NSE), a clearinghouse of free school resources, contacts, and information that would

become the most widely read publication in the Movement (Newmann, 2003, p. 92).

Contributors to this exchange would eventually include the pantheon of free school leaders such

as George Dennison, Allan Graubard, John Holt, Herb Kohl, Jonathan Kozol, and Michael

Rossman (Newmann, 2003, p. 92).

A second meeting of free school leaders took place at Zaca Lake in California in April of

1970. While registration was initially limited to 500 participants, the conference would

ultimately attract over 1000 free school advocates although some estimates set the actual

attendance at closer to 3000 (Miller, 2002, p. 123). Termed the "Woodstock of Free Schools" by Allan Graubard, this conference, more than anything else, signaled to free school advocates and educational reformers that they were involved in a bonafide reform effort complete with common goals and beliefs (Miller, 2002, p. 123).

In the late 1960s, it seemed to many that the Free School Movement would grow to become a true force of reform. Michael Rossman, a free school leader, projected 1,600 free schools by 1971, 7,000 by 1973 and 25,000 to 30,000 by 1975 (see Figure 1) (Rossman, ca. 1970a). In making these predictions, Rossman cites three factors that might limit the expected growth of the Movement: "the radical reform of public schools; political repression of the Movement; and economic depression in the nation" (ca. 1970a). In hindsight, Rossman's projections seem extremely optimistic, especially given the fact that by the late 1960s, less radical reformers were beginning to invest heavily in public alternative schools.
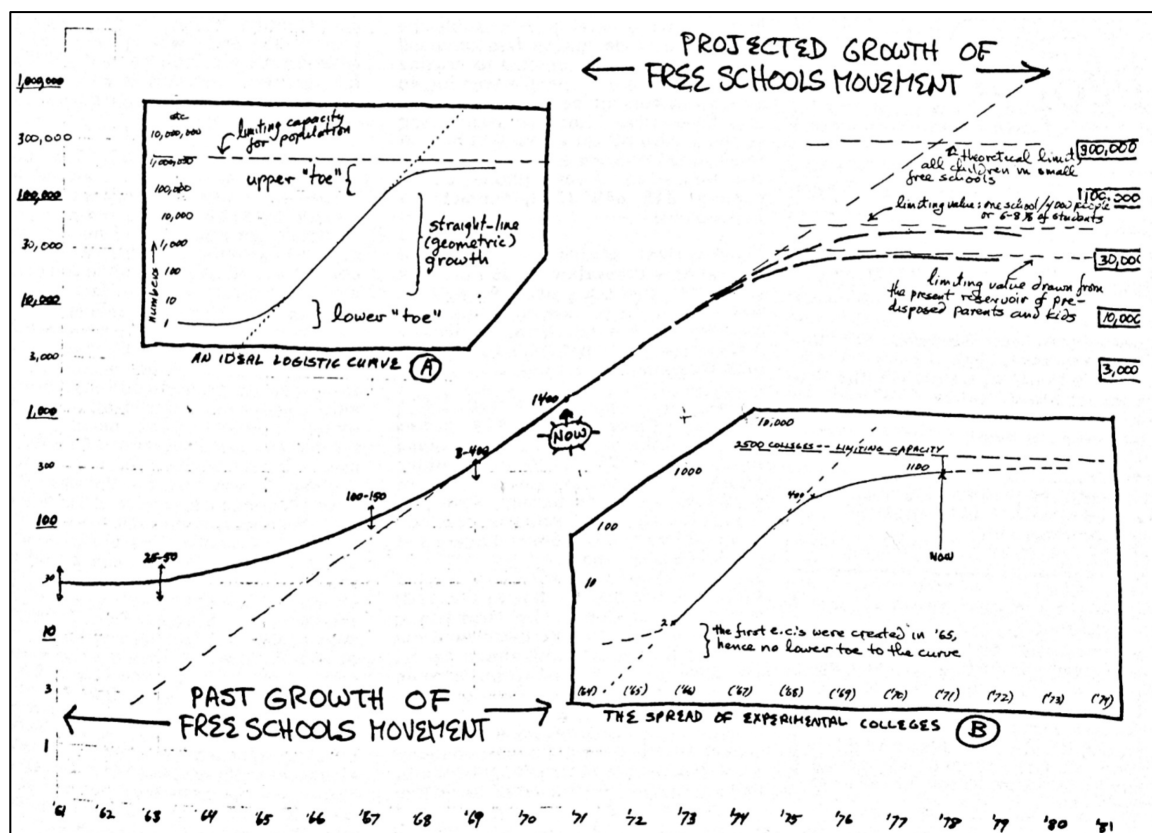
Figure 1: Rossman's Projections for the Free School Movement (Rossman, ca. 1970a). According to Rossman's calculations, the Free School Movement would include between 100,000 and 300,000 schools by 1980.

In addition to competition from public alternative schools, free schools fell victim to a number of disagreements. One of the main sources of disagreement concerned funding. Because many of these schools charged little or no tuition, they depended on either public funding or wealthy backers. For example, the New Nation Seed Fund was established in Philadelphia to help raise money to support free schools but never had much success (Miller, 2002, p. 125). As a result, financial problems generally drove most free schools out of business within two or three years (Graubard, 1972, p. 355). Another problem for many free schools was a general lack of organization. Researcher Terrence Deal commented that, "the counterculture ideology abhors organization, routinization, and bureaucracy, and as a result decision making in the alternative schools was participatory, consensual, cumbersome, burdensome, and ineffective" (quoted in Miller, 2002, p. 126).

After the initial euphoria of rebellion had passed, many free schoolteachers, parents, and students suffered from the lack of feedback and structure. Teachers were burdened with overwhelming workloads in the attempt to provide the spontaneity and individuality demanded by students and parents. Consensual and democratic decision making often led to conflict and chaos instead of peace and cooperation (Miller, 2002, p. 126). Deal, a supporter of alternative public education, concluded "nonauthoriatrian schools could survive the governance crisis only by finding some compromise between their countercultural ideology and some formal structure in which roles, goals, and authority were clarified" (quoted in Miller, 2002, p. 126).

More problematic than issues with structure and governance was the ideological split that emerged within the Movement. As contact between various free school advocates grew stronger through conferences and newsletters, the differences in ideology became increasingly obvious.

Some supporters favored a Summerhillian model that promoted personal freedom and happiness, while others argued that in a society seen as inherently racist, violent and corrupt, free schools needed to directly address social suffering instead of withdrawing from society completely (Provenzo, 2009, p. 355). Those favoring a Summerhillian model wanted to focus on creating a therapeutic community where young people could be taught to resolve personal issues and explore personal interests. The more militant reformers, led by Jonathan Kozol, wanted to "focus on development of a critical consciousness…a community of struggle" to liberate the oppressed minorities in the inner-cities (Graubard, 1972, p. 82). By 1972, the racial and socio-economic tensions within the Movement had grown too large to ignore. Writing for *Ramparts*, a free school journal, Jonathan Kozol attempted to provide a context for these tensions.

> There is a deep, unsettling and increasing problem of race-segregation in the "counterculture." It is one of the open, and unhappy secrets in the New Left; one which, for several years now, a number of us have tried to hide, transcend or bypass…The matter achieves its most specific and most vivid manifestation in the rapidly spreading cancer of the segregated two-thousand-dollar "Free Schools" for white children…(Kozol, 1972, December).

For Kozol, these high-priced free schools were antithetical to the entire idea of the Free School Movement. Instead of focusing on creating a new system dedicated to freedom and individual focus, these elite schools simply provided a convenient means of segregating the wealthy from the poor, the white from the black. Instead of helping to provide an education that would close the race and income gaps, these most often rural free schools provided an escape for those who could afford the tuition (Kozol, 1972, December).

These ideological differences came to a head at a Free School Conference in New Orleans in April of 1972. During the conference, the cracks in the Movement widened as the 300 to 400 supporters present were forced to confront the growing divide in the Free School Movement. Bill Harwood, a conference participant, recalled that "the romantic folks, characterized by the California contingent, were at odds with the folks who were working in urban areas with poor kids and concentrating on survival skills…and detested by both were the folks who were working within the established system" (quoted in Miller, 2002, p. 123). Ironically, it was the group working inside the current system that would eventually prevail, although this result might not have seemed likely at the time. During the four days of the conference, any semblance of unity that had previously existed within the Movement shattered bringing about the demise of the entire Movement.

By the summer of 1972, months after the New Orleans conference, it was undeniable that the Free School Movement was in decline. In addition to financial problems and ideological differences, the Movement suffered from a general fatigue. Those radical reformers who had founded the first wave of free schools in a frenzy of anti-establishment rebellion seemed to have little patience for the daily struggle necessary for true societal renewal. With the rise of the Silent Majority, those who still struggled for change found it more and more difficult to gain support. Those on the far left needed to find a new way to work for social, political and economic change. As a result, many within the Free School Movement were drawn in different directions. The mass media, which once drew some attention to the Free School Movement, had moved on to new topics by the early 1970s. As the Movement collapsed, those still interested in education reform moved on to become part of efforts for deschooling, homeschooling, vouchers and magnet schools.

The Free School Movement existed for a brief moment in the history of public education in the United States. Because of the short-lived and reclusive nature of many of these schools, it is almost impossible to determine exactly how many of these schools existed between 1968 and 1972. Estimates range from 400 to well over 800 schools experimenting with free school ideology during this period (Miller, 2002, p. 3). In spite of its short life, the Free School Movement provided the opportunity for reformers to experiment with new ideas to address the needs of the education system. Since the demise of free schools in the early 1970s, other educational dissidents have continued the tradition of challenging the institutions of public education, eventually supporting the creation of magnet and charter schools and growth of homeschooling. Others continued to call attention to the equality gaps based on race and economics. These repeated calls for change helped lead urban school districts around the nation to work for both racial equity and academic improvement (Kozol, 1982, p. 1).
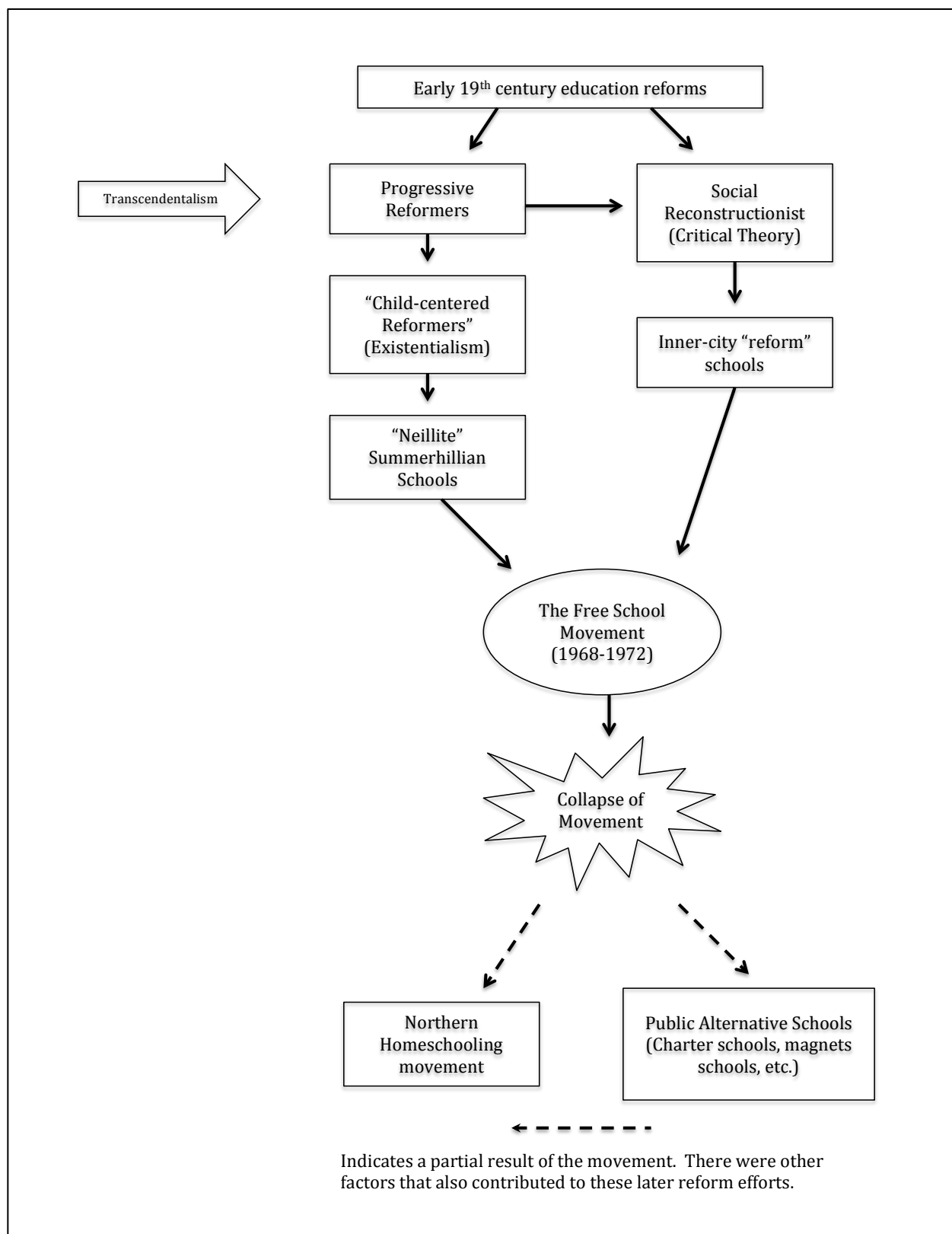
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                        │   The Free School   │
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Early 19th century education reforms

Transcendentalism

Progressive Reformers

Social Reconstructionist (Critical Theory)

"Child-centered Reformers" (Existentialism)

Inner-city "reform" schools

"Neillite" Summerhillian Schools

The Free School Movement (1968-1972)

Collapse of Movement

Northern Homeschooling movement

Public Alternative Schools (Charter schools, magnets schools, etc.)

Indicates a partial result of the movement. There were other factors that also contributed to these later reform efforts.

Figure 2 – Visual History of the Free School Movement

Chapter 3

Purpose of Study

"The protest movements of the 1960s included a vibrant, idealistic, and for a short time quite widely spread movement advocating a radical democratic vision of education" (Miller, 2002, p. 2). The primary purpose of this study is to conduct a documentary analysis of this movement, more widely known as the Free School Movement, an education reform movement which grew out of the 1960s counterculture and existed from approximately 1968 to 1972. The goal of the researcher is to apply the ideas of Charles Tilly's framework, a noted expert on social movements, on social movements to examine whether the Free School Movement can accurately be termed a movement at all. If Tilly's criteria can be applied to a reform effort like the Free School Movement, then perhaps it is possible to use those criteria as a method for categorizing and analyzing similar educational reform efforts.

Importance of the Study

For many, education is the "social institution in which a culture makes its core values and vision of the future most explicit" (Miller, 2002, p. 2). Essentially, education is a major vehicle for cultural continuity. However, when there are major cultural and social tensions, there are inevitably struggles over the nature of education, an institution seen by many as the vehicle for social change (Kliebard, 2004, p. 23). The 1960s represent one of the greatest periods of cultural and social tensions in American history, and by extension includes a period of struggle over education. Collier and Horowitz (1989), recall that the decade was "a time when the 'system' – that collection of values that provides guidelines for societies as well as individuals – was assaulted and mauled" (p. 15). As public education is a vital component of that system, it is

natural that educational institutions themselves faced criticism and attack by those seeking to establish a new cultural order.

In a very real way, the Free School Movement was part of the decline of a national consensus supporting the public education system. David Tyack and Elisabeth Hansot (1981) believe that until the middle of the twentieth century, the public school system was viewed as the mechanism for defining and promoting future citizens and thus revered as an institution of civic virtue and authority. Yet, even those within the Movement had difficulty agreeing on just what changes were necessary to the American education system.

This ideological struggle for control of the heart of the Free School Movement helped to lead to the destruction of the Movement itself. In reflecting on the Free School Movement, Peter Marin, a key figure in the Movement, recalls that almost from the beginning, there was a general lack of unanimity among contributors. To Marin, "the increasing inability of all sides in the great debate to find a common language…and theory" interfered with the Free School Movement's reform efforts (Marin, 1972, p. 40). Although this lack of commonality eventually tore the Movement apart, many of the ideas, both new and old, promoted by the Free School Movement helped promote a paradigm shift in educational thought. Those who took part in the Movement continued to advocate for educational change long after 1972.

In his work *Making Progress: Education and Culture in New Times* (1997), Dennis Carlson defines the idea of transformative change as the by-product of competing forces. Transformative conceptions of history are generally dialectical. That is, they understand culture in terms of struggle between opposing power blocs and ideologies, a struggle that ultimately ushers in a new synthesis and thus a new stage in history. Transformative changes involve a

dramatic or radical redistribution of power and the emergence of fundamentally new ways of understanding things (Carlson, 1997, p. 15).

The ideological struggle that characterized the Free School Movement helped to provide just such a transformational change. While this struggle ultimately divided the Movement, it forced a reorganization and realignment of goals and agendas that provided the fuel for a transformative change that has contributed to modern reform efforts including homeschooling, charter schools, and magnet schools (Miller, 2001, p. 2). The major significance of this study is to utilize an established set of criteria to determine if the Free School Movement can accurately be described as a social movement. The ability to provide a sociological framework like Tilly's to educational reform efforts would help to provide a common language for identifying, categorizing, comparing and analyzing other educational reforms. In addition this study creates a more complete of the Free School Movement and how it relates the history of educational reform in the United States. By highlighting ideas that have been ignored in other accounts of the Movement, this study provides a foundation for others who wish to study the long-term impact of the Free School Movement.

Conceptual Framework

This study utilizes the ideas of Charles Tilly and his work on social movements to determine if the Free School Movement can be termed a social movement. Tilly's work and the criteria and questions he developed serve as the interpretive lens for the study. Primary source documentary evidence relating to the Free School Movement is analyzed and interpreted in accordance with Tilly's criteria for social movements in order to answer this question.

In studying social movements, Tilly was clear to distinguish between what is popularly termed a social movement by the media, participants or opponents, and what he saw as a true

movement. In fact, several of Tilly's works spend a great deal of time tracing the origin of the term social movement as well as the characteristics of modern movements. According to Tilly, "the social movement, in the historically specific form that originated in northwestern Europe during the later 18th century, become widely available for popular making of claims there and in North America during the 19th century, then underwent combined spread and transformation across all the continents during the 20th and 21st centuries" (Tilly & Wood, 2013, p. 216).

Tilly credits German sociologist Lorenz von Stein with introducing the term "social movement" into discussion of political struggle in Stein's 1850 book, *History of the French Social Movement from 1789 to the Present* (Tilly & Wood, 2013, p. 6). "At first, it [social movement] conveyed the idea of a continuous, unitary process by which the whole working class gained self-consciousness and power" (Tilly & Wood, 2013, p. 6). However, as time passed, the term gained a broader meaning and began to be regularly pluralized into "social movements" as analysts applied the idea not just to class struggle but to other political, religious and social struggles (Tilly & Wood, 2013, p. 6). Today, "analysts and activists often extend the term "social movements" loosely to all protest activity or at least all relevant popular protest of which they approve" (Tilly & Wood, 2013, p. 7). However, by treating a movement as a "single unitary actor," these analysts and activists often obscure the "incessant jockeying and realignment that always goes on within social movements and the interaction among activists, constituents, targets, authorities, allies, rivals, enemies, and audiences that makes up the changing texture of social movements" (Tilly & Wood, 2013, p. 7). While this use of the term may help advance the actions of a current movement, it does little to further an understanding of how social movements work. It is this gap that Tilly attempted to fill with his own studies about social movements.

By focusing on the complex inner-workings of various historical social movements, Tilly was able to develop a more nuanced definition of the term. According to Tilly's research, "as it developed in the West after 1750, the social movement emerged from an innovative, consequential synthesis of three elements:

- A sustained, organized public effort making collective claims on target authorities; call it a "campaign,"

- Employment of combinations from among the following forms of political actions: creation of special-purpose associations and coalitions; public meetings; solemn processions; vigils; rallies; demonstrations; petition drives; statements to and in public media; pamphleteering; call the variable ensemble of performances the social movement repertoire,

- Participant's concerted public representation of WUNC: worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment on the part of themselves and/or their constituencies; call them WUNC displays (Tilly, 2005, p. 216).

While some collective actions may contain one of these elements, the combination of the three is what creates a social movement. Yet, even with this list of criteria, it is not easy to identify a true social movement from some other form of collective or contentious action.

For example, while a petition, declaration or major meeting may seem to fit the definition of a campaign, a true campaign, according to Tilly, is something more. For him, social movement campaigns must be centered on claims: "claims for the adoption or abolition of public programs, claims for recognition of the claimants' existence, and/or claims for ratification of the standing as specific kinds of political actors such as indigenous peoples or constituted parties" (Tilly, 2005, p. 216). More specifically, a campaign serves to link three parties: a group

of claimants, some object of claims, and a public. A solitary action focusing on only one of these groups does not constitute a campaign; it requires the interaction of the three groups.

Modern social movement tend "to combine three types of claims: program, identity, and standing" (Tilly & Wood, 2013, p. 13). Historically, movements involving program claims seemed to have developed first. This type of claim generally involves some sort of support for or opposition against an action taken by the object of the movement (Tilly & Wood, 2013, p. 13). This might include opposition to a social program, government legislation, religious doctrine or other action. Identify claims are more nebulous in that they try to assert the right of a group to exist as a unified force. These sorts of claims are most easily support by WUNC displays including marches, banners and costumes (Tilly & Wood, 2013, p. 13). Standing claims are the most difficult to define as they try to draw connections and assert ties between groups. It is important to note that the nature of these types of claims is specific to the history of the region. For example, program, identity and standing claims in the United States would not look the same as program, identity and standing claims in Egypt, China or the former Soviet Union. In each case, the validity of the campaigns, repertoires and WUNC displays are tied closely to the cultural heritage of the region (Tilly & Wood, 2013, p. 13).

Social movement repertoires may sound like the common actions of any collective group. But, for Tilly's purposes, social movement repertoires require the integration of the majority of these performances into a sustained and coordinated action (Tilly, 2005, p. 217). In Tilly's examples, a performance is considered sustained if it is repeated several times and/or is maintained in the face of opposition. (p. 217). For instance, any discontented political group can publish pamphlets, hold demonstrations or wear buttons. But, when these actions are sustained,

coordinated and combined with other performance, they form the basis for a social movement repertoire.

Tilly's third criterion, "WUNC" may sound strange, but as an acronym for worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment, it refers to behaviors that are very common and familiar to most people. During the life of a social movement, WUNC displays commonly employ petitions, statements and slogans that demonstrate the purpose of the movement itself (Tilly & Wood, 2013, p. 5). Historically, WUNC displays have been seen with "religious martyrdom, civic sacrifice, and resistance to conquest" and therefore are quite familiar to most people (Tilly & Wood, 2013, p. 5). However, the difference between these historic actions and Tilly's criteria is the integration with a sustained campaign and repertoire to create a modern social movement. Today, these WUNC displays are often acted out in "idioms that local audiences will recognize, for example:

- Worthiness: sober demeanor; neat clothing; presence of clergy; dignitaries; and mothers with children

- Unity: matching badges, headbands, banners, or costumes; marching in ranks; singing and chanting

- Numbers: headcounts; signatures on petitions; messages from constituents; filling streets

- Commitment: braving bad weather; visible participation by the old and handicapped; resistance to repression; ostentatious sacrifice, subscription, and/or benefaction (Tilly, 2005, p. 217).

If taken individually, these elements, campaigns, repertoires, and WUNC displays, grew out of previously existing political behaviors such as the "sporting of electoral colors; humble petition

to kings; marches of militias; artisan's guilds; and religious organizations" (Tilly, 2005, p. 217).

Alone, many of these behaviors were temporary and transient. However, when taken in combination, they developed a permanence that individual actions had never acquired. In addition, this combination created a "powerful assertion of popular sovereignty" stating that the common people have a right to their own voice (Tilly, 2005, p. 217).

While the creation of modern social movements seems almost like a checklist of characteristics, it is important to understand that once these characteristics, campaigns, repertoire performances and WUNC displays, emerged, they continued to develop "as a bloc rather than as a mere mail-order catalog of individual political tools" (Tilly, 2005, p. 218). For example, the characteristics comprising a social movement in the 19th century look different from those of the mid-20th century.

In many ways, the year 1968 "marked a significant transition in American public politics and a substantial expansion in the range of social movement activity. 'New' social movements oriented to autonomy, self-expression, and the critiques of postindustrial society was supplanting the 'old' movements" oriented towards class struggle and exploitation (Tilly & Wood, 2013, p. 70). May of these "new" movements were associated with program style claims supporting feminism, homosexuality, the environment, education, and drugs (Tilly & Wood, 2013, p. 71). Although Tilly created his definition based on the large, national movements of the 19th century, he found that even as the focus shifted from class struggle to more programs and identity-based claims, the key characteristics of the movement stayed the same (p. 71).

In his early work on social movements in Great Britain, Tilly stated the goal of a social movement was to "make publicly-visible demands for changes" against authority (Tilly, 1982, p. 26). Tilly also theorized that the success of any given social movement depends on two key

ideas. First, repertoire and WUNC performances aside, the real core of a movement's work

depends on organizers continuously working to form provisional coalitions among various

factions with slightly different agendas (Tilly, 1998, p. 468). In addition, these organizers must

decide which agendas to support with public actions and which actions are appropriate at a given

time. Second, these same organizers must make these difficult decisions while presenting a

public façade of solidarity and cohesiveness (p. 468). This concern with public perception is

vital to the success of the movement as groups with the appearance of long histories separate

from their claim-making agendas are more likely to find public support. For example, the

feminist movement of the 1970s strategically sought to align itself with earlier struggles for

women's rights from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to give the appearance of

longevity (p. 468).

In addition, Tilly found that it was possible for a social movement to have effects beyond

simply success or failure. In an article titled "Contentious Politics and Social Change," Tilly

wrote that while "more is known about how social change causes contention than about how

contention causes social change", there are several ways to categorize the effects a movement

may have beyond success or failure at achieving social change (Tilly, 1997, p. 63). These

categories, although they may overlap at times, are

- Reorganization: The effort of contention transforms internal and external social

  relations of the actors involved, including authorities, third parties, and objects of

  claims.

- Realignment: More specifically, struggle, defense, and co-option alter alliances,

  rivalries, and enmities among power holders, other contenders, and challengers.

- Repression: Authorities' investments in repression and facilitation of challengers produce both direct and indirect changes in the exercise of power – direct, for example, in the declaration of emergency powers, indirect in the effects of expenditures on surveillance, police activity, and military forces.
- Realization: Claimants make demands for specific changes, bargain successfully with existing powerholders, or even displace them." (p. 64)

Therefore, it is possible that even if a social movement does not meet its goals, it can lead to real and permanent change.

This conclusion points to an additional question: Can a reform effort that is not by definition a social movement still produce change? Is the label of "social movement" a prerequisite for change? According to Tilly, a "social movement" is just another form of contentious politics similar to electoral campaigns or religious movement (Tilly & Wood, 2009, p.8). Simply put, the term provides a label that helps to distinguish a particular effort from something different and to help group similar efforts together. Also, in the modern world, labels matter. To name something a social movement has a different cache than calling it a strike, riot, or brawl. In the 20th century, the term "social movement" carries positive overtones that make it appealing to participants and to those in power (p. 8). Given this, Tilly never states that a reform effort must fit his criteria in order to have an impact; he simply uses his criteria to help distinguish between different forms of contentious politics. In this study, it is important to separate the value of being able to term the Free School Movement a "social movement" to the participants of the Movement and the value of the term in an academic and analytic sense. The purpose of this study is not to provide the Free School Movement participants with an added sense of validity but instead of provide future researchers with a term that can be objectively

used to analyze social movement. Essentially, the ability to label to the Free School Movement a "social movement" does not alter the Movement's impact, but rather it helps to connect the Free School Movement with other reform efforts in the same category. For the purposes of educational research, this can be a very valuable tool.   If Tilly's criteria can be used as a test or threshold for categorizing reform efforts, it would allow researchers to judge the impact and importance of like efforts rather than drawing false comparisons.
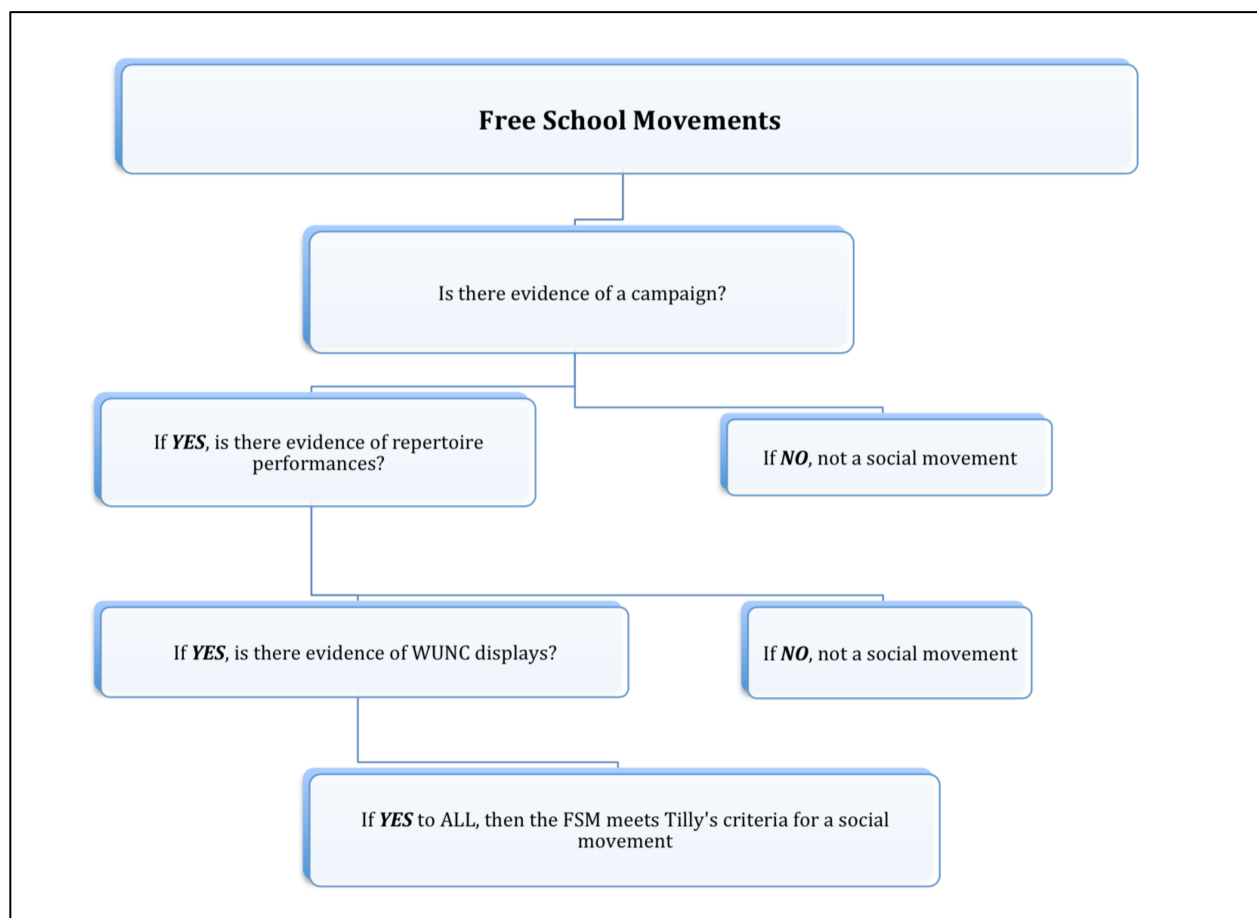
Figure 3 - Conceptual Framework

Research Questions

In his book, *Social Movement 1768-2012*, Tilly provides several test questions to assist in determining if a collective action can be termed a social movement. These questions include:

1. Does the proposed movement have an established campaign? In this case, a "campaign" is defined as a sustained, organized public effort making collective claims on target authorities.

2. Does the proposed movement employ a combination from among the following forms of political actions: creation of special-purpose associations and coalitions; public meetings; solemn processions; vigils; rallies; demonstrations; petition drives; statements to and in public media; pamphleteering? In this case, this ensemble of performances is considered the social movement's repertoire.

3. Does the proposed movement have a clear public representation of WUNC: worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment on the part of themselves and/or their constituencies? In this case, these examples of each of these elements are termed "WUNC displays." (Tilly, 2005, p. 216)

Design of the Study

This study attempts to analyze the history of the Free School Movement through the lens provide by Charles Tilly. Primary source documentary evidence relating to the Free School Movement provides the basis for the study. The vast majority of these documents are located in a The Free Schools Exchange collection in the Yale University archives, the only archival collection dedicated solely to the Free School Movement. The New Schools Exchange archive contains both published and non-published materials. The archive includes copies of a number of different newsletters available only to subscribers as well as unpublished drafts of articles

included in these newsletters. In addition, the archive contains a variety of personal correspondence between Free School Movement leaders. The documents collected are analyzed to determine whether the Free School Movement meets the criteria for a movement established by Tilly. For example, does the archive provide evidence of a sustained campaign? Is there evidence of repertoire performances or WUNC displays?

Working with archival materials is different from working with traditional library sources. In her essay, "Archival Survival: Navigating Historical Research," Lynee Lewis Gaillet (2010) writes that archival research "involves following trails that fork, branch, or dissipate" (p. 29). For Gaillet, and for the purposes of this study, the term "archive" is defined broadly to "include a wide range of artifacts and documents, such as (unpublished and published) letters, diaries and journals, student notes, committee reports, documents and wills, newspaper articles, university calendars/handbooks/catalogs, various editions of manuscripts and print documents (books, pamphlets, essays, etc.), memos, course materials, online sources" as well as a host of other sources (Gaillet, 2010, p. 30). Like with traditional secondary source research, archival work involves collecting information from a wide range of sources. However as Thomas Masters (2010) writes in his essay "Reading the Archives of Freshman English," working with archival material "is not the passive recording of objective data but a readers' constructive, subjective ordering and making meaning out of what he or she chooses to examine" (p. 157). Unlike typical research, primary source research using archival materials involves creating meaning out of bits and pieces of an individual's, or in this case an organization's, existence. It is not simply searching for quotations to support a thesis but rather examining pieces of information to create meaning.

In her essay, Gaillet sets forth a simple step-by-step method for conducting archival research. The process begins with a thorough reading of the secondary source material to gain an overview of the topic. In this case, the secondary literature would include most histories of the Free School Movement not written by Movement members. Once the foundation has been created with the secondary source material, the researcher must locate the archival material. In some cases, this material may be scattered in different libraries and collections around the country. In other cases, the material may be available online, as many institutions are moving to digitize collections (Galliet, 2010, p. 32). For this study, the only dedicated collection of primary source material is located in the Archives and Manuscripts collection at Yale University.

After locating the collection, Galliet suggest contacting the archivist for additional information as well as studying the finding aid for the specific collection. "The finding aid may be viewed as a map of a collection, designed to help the user find his or her way. The main purpose of the finding aid is to let researchers know that a collection exists, where it can be found, and how to access it; ideally, the finding aid also provides a general idea of the collection's contents so users can judge the material's relevance to their research projects" (Morris & Rose, 2010, p. 65). In the case of The New Schools Exchange collection, the finding aid, created in 1999, details contents of the 25 linear feet, or 60 boxes, of the collection. According to the summary provided in the aid, the collection is composed of publications, correspondence, miscellaneous writings and other information relating to the New Schools Exchange in particular and the Free School Movement in general. The collection includes hundreds of files on free schools in the United States, Canada and other nations in addition to newsletters, journals and additional publications on alternative education ideas. Finally, the collection includes information that helps to situation the Free School Movement in the context

of the Counterculture ("New School Exchange", 1999). A good finding aid is helpful in creating

a research plan allowing the researcher to make the most of the time on site. Because archival

research can often lead a researcher on tangents, it is important to enter the archive with a set of

research questions to guide the exploration (Galliet, 2010, p. 35).

   Working in an archive is vastly different from working in a library. It is important that

the researcher understands the rules associated with the specific archive and collection under

study. Some archives allow the use of computers for electronic note-taking. Others allow only

loose leaf paper and pencils. Some allow for photocopying, either by the researcher or by an

archivist, while others do not. Almost all archives require researchers to leave personal

belongings, including books, bags, and other papers, in lockers outside of the reading room

(Gaillet, 2010, p. 34). For the collection housed at Yale, researchers may pay $2.00 per day to

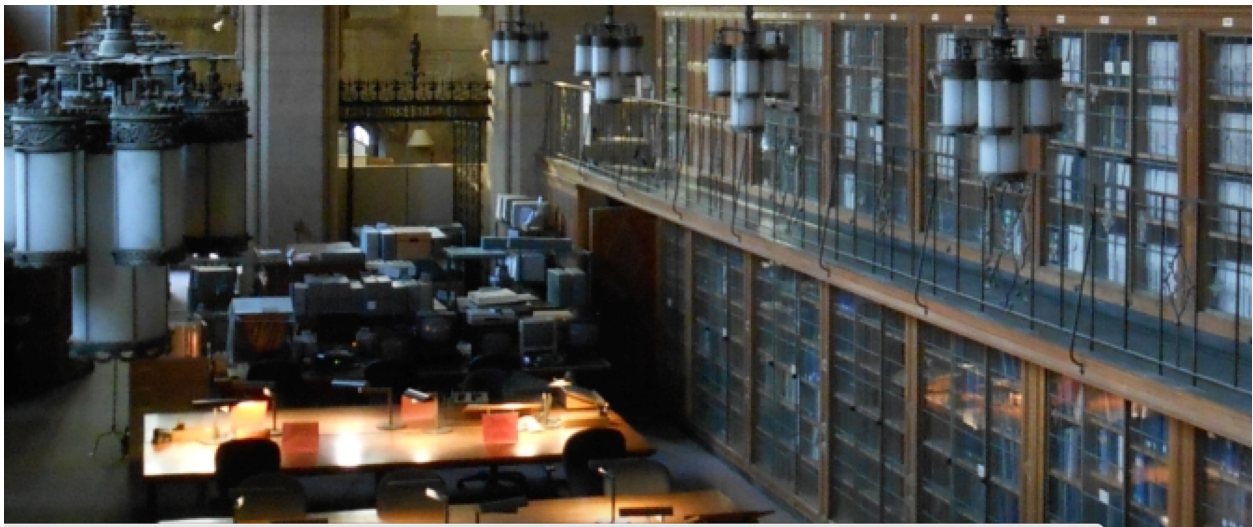take photos of the documents and may also take notes electronically.

Photo 1 – Sterling Memorial Library Manuscripts and Archives Reading Room. (http://mssa.commons.yale.edu/)

Photo 2 – Letter from Jonathan Kozol to Kat Marin (1.5.51). Note the fabric paperweight used to hold down the document for photographing.

Photo 3 – Letter from Allan Graubard to Kat Marin (1.5.43). Letter is written on a series of 5 x 8 note pad pages.

Archives tend to use their own methods for indexing and coding materials. There is no standard, such as the Library of Congress index, that is universal to all archives (Masters, 2010, p. 160). This is another reason why the finding aid is so important. Most archives will only allow a researcher access to a certain number of documents at any one time. For most, a researcher may only have one box of documents at a table at any given time. Each box contains numerous file folders of information. For this reason, it is important that the researcher carefully label notes to include the series, box, and folder information needed to properly cite the documents when writing (Masters, 2010, p. 160).

In addition to a practical explanation of how to work in an archive, Gaillet also sets forth a serious of steps for using the information found there. These steps include:

- Provide a physical description of the document or artifact.

- Categorize the findings.

- Couch both archival materials and personal analyzes within political, social, economic, educational, religious, or institutional histories of the time.

- Ask how best to corroborate assumptions and claims.

- Carefully analyze the original audience for the artifact, both intended and secondary.

- Decide how to tell the story. (Gaillet, 2010, p. 35).

These steps are useful reminders to help focus archival work. However, it is important to remember that historical research is not scientific research and therefore cannot be broken cleanly into a step-by-step procedure.

While it might not be possible to create a scientific procedure for working in archives, it is possible to systematically delineate several key thought processes to facilitate successful research. In her article, "Journeying into the Archives", Katherine Tirabassi (2010) establishes

four principles to help the thought process behind archival research. The first principle, the principle of selectivity, asks the researcher to understand how archivists select and omit artifacts from a given collection. Why are certain items kept and others omitted? Keeping this principle in mind when studying a collection may help the researcher understand gaps in the story. The second principle, the principle of cross-referencing, is a way of searching across documents to information to support, confirm or refute other findings. This principle is important in helping to find useful information that might otherwise be overlooked. However, it can also be dangerous, leading the researcher on time-consuming tangents. Therefore, a researcher must be careful to make sure that each new search is guided by the research questions. The third principle, the principle of categorization, involves the creation of key works and the collection of finding aids to facilitate research. Closely related to the principle of cross-referencing, this asks the researcher to be strategic when searching. The final principle, the principle of closure, reminds the researcher that at some point, the work must end. Much like a painter knowing when to put down the paint brush, a researcher must know when it is time to leave the archive (Tirabassi, 2010, p. 171). Taken together, these principles provide a roadmap to making archival research both useful and meaningful to the researchers.

The methodology used in this study begins with a strategic investigation of the New Schools Exchange collection at Yale University. However, as demonstrated above, archival research is not a straightforward process. It is one with many twists and terms. As a result, it is impossible to state exactly where the research will go as a result of this investigation. However, the research remains grounded by the research questions developed prior to entering the archives for the first time.

IRB, Human Subjects and Confidentiality

As the research method for this study is limited to documentary analysis of publically available records, the study does not meet the federal definition for "human subjects" (45 CFR 46.102(f)) and therefore does not fall under the purview of an Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Limitations of the Study

This study is limited, as are many histories, by the availability and reliability of sources. In addition, part of the study involves the use of narrative history, which comes with its own limitations. According to historian Lawrence Stone in his article "The Revival of Narrative: Reflections on the Old New History" (1979) narrative history "is taken to mean the organization of material in a chronologically sequential order and the focusing of the content into a single coherent story, albeit, with subplots" (Stone, 1979, p. 3). While in this case, the story of the Free School Movement is analyzed through the lens of Tilly's social movement criteria; it is still subject to the limitations of historical research. According to Stone, the job of the modern historian is to "discover what was going on inside people's heads in the past and what it was like to live in the past" (Stone, 1979, p. 13). Unlike anthropologists who might personally observe an event or phenomenon, historians cannot "actually be present, with notebooks, tape-recorders and cameras, at the events" described in a study (Stone, 1979, p. 14). However, the historian's goal is to "find a cloud of witnesses to tell us what it was like to be there" through the fragments they have left behind (Stone, 1979, p. 14). The validity of the historical study is only as strong as the evidence collected.

In his manual of historical research, *The Critical Method in Historical Research and Writing*, Homer Carey Hockett (1955) states that the difference between history and science is that "the historian usually does not make his own observations, and that those upon whose

observations he must depend are, or were, often if not usually untrained observers (p. 8). As a result, the historical method is "a process by which the historian attempts to test the truthfulness of the reports of observations made by others" in order to formulate a hypothesis (Hockett, 1955, p. 8). Therefore, this study, like any historical study, is limited by the ability of the researcher to access, interpret, analyze, and synthesize the available sources into a cohesive narrative.

Chapter 4

As described in Chapter 3, the central question of this study is whether the Free School Movement satisfies the criteria set by sociologist Charles Tilly for a modern social movement. As previously explained, according to Tilly, the idea of the modern social movement emerged in the West after 1750 and requires a combination of three crucial elements:

- A campaign, or a sustained, organized public effort making collective claims on target authorities,

- A social movement repertoire, or the employment of combinations from among the following forms of political actions: creation of special-purpose associations and coalitions; public meetings; solemn processions; vigils; rallies; demonstrations; petition drives; statements to and in public media; pamphleteering,

- A series of WUNC displays, or a concerted public representation of WUNC: worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment on the part of themselves and/or their constituencies. (Tilly, 2005, p. 216)

As Tilly argues, many collective actions may contain one or two of these elements, but the combination of the three is what differentiates a generic collective action from a full-fledged social movement.

In order to determine whether the Free School Movement meets Tilly's criteria, it is necessary to delve into the thoughts and writings of those who participated in the Movement. In order to do this, I draw on a publically available, but seldom studied, archival collection of the "New Schools Exchange," which is housed at Yale University. This archival collection contains newsletters, articles, and personal correspondence from those who played a key role in guiding

and developing the Movement. It was gifted to Yale University in 1978 by Bill Harwood and
Grace Dailey, the last editors of the New Schools Exchange Newsletter ("New School
Exchange", 1999).

Question 1

Does the Free School Movement contain an identifiable campaign as defined by Tilly?

In describing a "campaign," Tilly highlighted the importance of an organization making
an organized and public claim against some type of authority. For Tilly's purposes, a claim
linked three parties: claimants, objects of the claim, and the public (Tilly, 2005, p. 216).
According to Tilly's research, most modern social movement tend "to combine three types of
claims: program, identity, and standing" (Tilly & Wood, 2013, p. 13). In general, program
claims are the easiest to identify and the easiest to support with a variety of repertoire
performances and WUNC displays. A program claim generally involves some sort of support
for or opposition to an action taken by the object of the movement (Tilly & Wood, 2013, p. 13).
This might include opposition to a social program, government legislation, religious doctrine or
other action.

In defining "claimants," Tilly is vague about which individuals within a movement are
the claim-maker. In the case of the Free School Movement, I would argue that the claim-makers
are those who were recognized by the Movement's rank and file members as the intellectual
leaders and architects of the Movement. These intellectuals were the ones who were the most
prolific in their writings and the most widely read by those inside and outside of the Movement.

These individuals would include men like John Holt, Jonathan Kozol, George Dennison, Peter Marin, Michael Rossman, Frank Lindenfeld and Eric Davin among others.[3]

The primary claim made by the Free School Movement was that school structures and routines including tests, planned lessons and grades as well as walled classrooms and grouping by age, prevented genuine and meaningful learning. To those supporting the movement, personal relationships, emotional expression and active participation were as important, if not more important, than academic work as education did not exist to serve the political and economic interests of the state, but rather to support the goals and needs of the individual student (Krimmerman, c. 1968)

These claimants presented ideas that were counter to those of the education establishment, as created by the local, state and national government, the object of the claims. Instead of grouping children by age into specific grade levels, supporters of free schools encouraged a fluid mixing of students of all ages and abilities in various group activities. Instead of providing a rigid schedule of classes or events to govern the school day, students were encouraged to participate in activities that interested in them and to abstain from those that did not. And, perhaps, most importantly, there was no real curriculum, only open-ended learning based on student interest ("I can't teach", c. 1969). This idea of choice was the foundation of the Free School Movement's claim against the educational establishment.

In addition to a claim about the necessity of choice in guiding education came a claim about the necessity of deinstitutionalizing the entire educational system. In rejecting core American institutions and ideas, the Free School Movement called for both personal and collective liberation. These claims offered an opportunity to concretely and immediately change

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[3] As there was no elected leadership in the Free School Movement, I have decided to use the term "leaders" to describe those who spoke, wrote and published with a high degree of frequency about free schools. The other free school supporters will be considered "the membership" for the purposes of this study.

that social order for those who felt both oppressed and alienated by the existing social structures in the United States.

A look into the archival evidence seems to indicate the presence of a strong program claim. John Holt, one of the early supporters of the Free School Movement, wrote about the need to connect learning with the reality of present life and needs in order to appeal to students (Holt, 1972b). An article in *MANAS* magazine titled "The New Wave" highlights the "grass-roots, non-professional, individual concern and interest in teaching the young" which focuses on "de-institutionalizing" the process of education (Holt, 1969a). In addition, Frank Lindenfeld, a prolific author within the movement and a professor of social sciences at California Polytechic State University (Cal Poly), speculated that the Free School Movement developed as an outgrowth of "freedom schools" established in Mississippi by the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) in the early 1960s (Lindenfeld, 1974). While these SNCC-sponsored schools were clearly aimed at deinstitutionalizing the racism so prevalent in the American South during this period, Lindenfeld felt that the free schools of the later 1960s embodied this same anti-establishment message though aimed more at the educational establishment than society in general (1974).

If Tilly's criteria are taken strictly, these statements about the purpose and goals of the Free School Movement seem to clearly indicate the presence of a program claim, a key element in the existence of a campaign. The evidence also shows that this claim possesses the three requisite parts. The free school supporters were the claimants, the state-created educational establishment was the object of the claim, and the claim itself was that the current system was failing students.

In addition, Tilly requires that these claims be made publically against an authority, but does not describe a specific threshold for his definition of a publically made claim. A high bar for this criterion would be claims made public via the court system. In the case of the Free School Movement, I would argue for a lower bar, one that requires only public knowledge of a claim against the established authority. For the Free School Movement, these claims were made in a number of published books and magazine articles in addition to the *New Schools Exchange Newsletter*. It is impossible to know just how widely read some of the published books and article were during this time period. It is known that A.S. Neill's *Summerhill* had sold over a million copies in Britain and the United States by 1968 (Newman, 2003, p. 91). In addition, the *New Schools Exchange Newsletter* had a circulation of 6,000 by 1971 (Miller, 2002, p. 123). While these figures might not reach the level of widespread national media coverage, they do indicate that a small portion of the general public was aware of the ideas of the Free School Movement. Therefore, I would argue that the Free School Movement met the threshold for Tilly's requisite public through a variety of repertoire performances as well as through books, articles and the free schools themselves.

In addition, the anti-establishment claim made by the Free School Movement did not fail to reach the ears of those in power. One document in the New Schools Exchange archive details a conversation between the editors of the *New Schools Exchange Newsletter* and Martin Engel, the head of the Day Care Project for the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, the predecessor of both the current Department of Education and the Department of Health and Human Services. In the course of the conversation, Engel remarks upon the anti-establishment nature of the free schools and worries that the movement will become "a political weapon of 'liberation' in which the individual child is expendable" (Engel, 1971). The fact that the ideas of

the Free School Movement had reached an official in the federal government provides further support for the argument that the Movement satisfied Tilly's "public" threshold.

However, there are some problems with applying Tilly's criteria for a sustained campaign to the Free School Movement. The first problem is that, for all of the evidence seeming to support a clear and public claim against the educational establishment, the archival evidence also hints at problems with the Movement's message. In establishing his definitions for a "claim," Tilly never defines just how unanimous that claim needed to be or how to measure it. In the case of the Free School Movement, there is clearly a unified sense that the current system is broken and failing the students. If that idea is taken as the claim, then there is no question about just how unified the group was during its existence. However, if the claim is broken down further into the potential *response* to the problem, then there is a decided lack of uniformity.

In the early 1970s, Michael Rossman wrote an open letter to the readership of the *New Schools Exchange Newsletter* upon the birth of his son. In the letter, he declared that it is

> time for the 'free schools movement' to be a bit better – no, a lot – and
>
> braver at facing the need to create and articulate the theory of new education. All
>
> the movement's theory so far…is based on the Summerhill archetype. It affords
>
> us a first program of escape…but not much theory to go on from there – to show
>
> us how to avoid repeating old mistakes or making some stupid new ones.
>
> (Rossman, ca. 1971)

These statements do much to explain the problems the Movement encountered in the early years of the 1970s. It would seem that at first, a common opposition to the public education system joined those involved in the Free School Movement. These individuals actively embraced a vague new idea about education that was free from establishment control and supported the

ideals of the counterculture. However, as time passed, these vague ideas were no longer enough to sustain the enthusiasm of the participants. Therefore, this is another question of degree. A low threshold for a claim would allow the Free School Movement to satisfy the criterion while the Movement would fail to meet a higher threshold.

This failure to satisfy the criterion results in part from how the divided interests within the Movement grew even further apart as some within the Movement called for "recentralization of power rather than a decentralization" (Holt, 1972c). By 1972, instead of simply opposing the current system, those at the center of the Movement wanted to replace that system with a new one. This idea, while appealing to a portion of the group, went against the anti-establishment, anti-authoritarian beliefs of many in the Movement. Some, like Frank Lindenfeld of the California Polytechnic State University vocally advocated that the free schools were only the first step in a dismantling of "the huge government bureaucracy and the over-grown military machine" (Lindenfeld, 1974). Others, like Eric Davin, director of the Education Center in Cambridge, Massachusetts, felt that "anything short of a radical restructuring of the school system in concert with vast social transformation" was doomed to failure. And still others, like Dennison, had come to see that the Free School Movement was not "a base to change the world from, only to help a few people" (Dennison, ca. 1971c).

So, the question of the Free School Movement's ability to satisfy Tilly's first element depends upon how that element is interpreted. On one hand, if Tilly only requires a campaign to have "a sustained, organized public effort making collective claims on target authorities" without a unanimous opinion on potential responses, then the Free School Movement's claim that the established education system was failing student satisfies the criterion (Tilly, 2005, p. 216). However, if the threshold for the claim element requires a more unified and detailed response to

the problem, then the Free School Movement would fail to satisfy Tilly's test. The answer to this question of degrees seems to come from Tilly's own research. In *Social Movements 1768-2008* (2013), Tilly examines the calls from parliamentary reform in early 19th century Britain as an example of a social movement. He describes a coalition of forces composed of merchants, masters and factory workers who joined forces to advocate for greater enfranchisement among other reforms. These calls for change resulted in the Reform Act of 1832. However, while the Reform Act did provide voting rights for the merchants and masters of the group, many of the factory workers were still left out of the democratic process. This section of the group decried the law and protested that the more middle class portion of the coalition had abandoned them (Tilly & Wood, 2013). In this example, Tilly allows for a sustained, public campaign by a group that did not include a unanimous opinion on how to respond the problem of limited citizen participation in government.

In his article "Social movements and (all sorts of) other political interactions," Tilly provides a detailed discussion of the movement for Catholic rights in 19th century Britain. As part of the discussion, Tilly explains that in many cases, a social movement campaign required the melding of different groups, different agendas and different tactics. The key to successful campaign is the ability to keep this internal maneuvering and negotiation from public view, thus presenting a unified front (Tilly, 1998).   Taken together, his discussion of the Reform Act of 1832 and his discussion of internal movement politics provides an answer to the question of how uniform a campaign needs to be. In both cases, the social movements did not cease to exist because the participants failed to agree upon a response to their claim. Therefore, I argue that Tilly's own example supports the lower threshold for this criterion.

Question #2

Does the Free School Movement show evidence of a social movement repertoire?

Tilly's second criterion for a social movement is the presence of a social movement repertoire. For Tilly, this repertoire is composed of the various techniques that the social movement utilizes to advertise its claim. In effect, these are the tools that the movement uses to attract new supporters to the campaign. These techniques and tools can be any combination of political actions, including but not limited to, the creation of special-purpose associations and coalitions, the holding of public meetings, solemn processions, vigils, rallies, demonstrations, petition drives, the issuing of statements to and in public media and the publication of pamphlets, newsletters, and other forms of communication (Tilly, 2005, p. 216).

Early in the life of the Free School Movement, Michael Rossman, a key supporter, predicted that as interest in the Movement spread, newsletters would appear, conferences would be organized, urban and regional cooperatives would develop, books would be published, and a series of leaders would travel and speak about the Free School Movement to share experiences and to build capacity to continue the struggle. (Rossman, ca. 1970a). A look at the evidence shows that some of Rossman's predictions did indeed come to pass.

Throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s, free school supporters sought to spread their ideas in a variety of ways. They created journals such as *This Magazine is About Schools* and *The New Schools Exchange Newsletter* as ways of sharing information and creating a network of resources (Miller, 2002, p. 123). At one point, there were over eighteen different publications dedicating to supporting free school ideas.

The New Schools Exchange Newsletter was one of the earliest publications dedicated to the Movement.[4] Harvey Haber, one of the founding editors, first advertised it in the *Whole Earth Catalo*g in the fall of 1960, stating, "the *New Schools Exchange* is a good source of information about people starting their own schools…The weekly newsletter is a necessary extension of the *Exchange* (Haber, 1969). For much of the life of the Movement, the *New Schools Exchange Newsletter* served as a pipeline for information and thoughts on the Movement. Its widespread appeal to those within the Movement was not lost on the leadership. In a letter from Michael Rossman to Haber in 1970, Rossman asks, "what do you want to do with *NSE* [*New Schools Exchange*]? I sense it's on the edge of a great potential broadening" (Rossman, 1970). Unfortunately, the *New Schools Exchange Newsletter* would not realize this potential. After a series of editorial changes, the *New Schools Exchange Newsletter* published its final issue in 1974.

In addition to the *New Schools Exchange Newsletter*, the Movement also spawned the similarly named *New Schools Directory* in the late 1960s. Although the cause of much turmoil because of its association with the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, the Directory was seen by some in the Movement as a useful tool in connecting free school supporters. The *Directory* provided a list of all known free schools in addition to providing contact information to facilitate collaboration between schools. A letter from Terry Doran, a free school leader in Fort Wayne, Indiana, supports this view. Doran write that "the Directory has been very beneficial to me in establishing credibility for the Folk School, especially when you consider that 99% of the people in beautiful downtown Fort Wayne have never even heard of the term 'Free School," let alone *New Schools Exchange*, *Outside the Net*, Kozol, Holt, Illich, etc." (Doran,

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[4] It should be noted that the largest of the free school newsletter, the *New Schools Exchange Newsletter*, had a circulation of 6,000 in 1971 (Miller, 2002, p. 123).

1972). In addition, a handwritten note from Allan Graubard, an early supporter free schools,

urges the editors of the New Schools Exchange to "put a little block reminding people about the

Directory," in the next edition (Graubard, ca. 1971).

While these examples demonstrate that the Free School Movement made an attempt to

reach the general public through a variety of newsletters and publications, it also demonstrates

that a large portion of the general population was unaware of the Movement or its ideas (Doran,

1972). If the purpose of repertoire performance is to draw public attention and increase

awareness, then the Free School Movement did not meet the goal. The various newsletters and

publications were available to the general public but mostly targeted a niche audience of those

already interested in free schools. Few mainstream Americans would have enough awareness of

the Movement to subscribe to the *New Schools Exchange Newsletter* or to purchase a copy of

Summerhill. While these outlets did provide some public exposure, it was not at a level that

would greatly increase the public profile of the Free School Movement.

For those eager to participate in the Movement in a more tangible way, Rossman's

predications about conference and regional cooperatives also came to fruition. One such

cooperative, The Teacher Drop-Out Center (TDOC), at the University of Massachusetts,

Amherst, served as a conduit to positions in free schools around the nation (Miller, 2002, p. 4).

TDOC helped to connect those interested in working in or with free schools with schools

needing assistance. While newsletters and cooperatives created the beginnings of a real network,

it was the various conferences beginning as early as 1969 formed the backbone of the national

cooperative movement. Eager to spread the word about free schools, Movement leaders

organize a series of regional and national conferences to provide a forum where supporters could

put share their ideas and seek information and advice from those working within the Movement.

These conferences took place around the nation, including events in Menlo Park, California, Zaca Lake, California, New Orleans, Louisiana, as well as New York City, New York.

In one anonymous report from the March 1969 conference in Menlo Park, California, a supporter remarked that the conference brought together representatives from over fifty different schools, all eager to debate the developing ideology of free schools (Report on the Conference 1.1.7). This first formal national meeting of free school supporters offered a wide variety of sessions on the following topics.

- How do you finance a free school?

- How is a new school organized?

- How can public and free schools talk to each other?

- What expectations should a new school have?

- What assumptions about children and parents do free schools make?

- Can there be a dialogue between free schools? ([Conference notes] ca. 1969)

Conferences like those at Menlo Park helped to provide practical information for supporters who wished to establish free schools in their communities. It also served as a bridge between the leadership who dealt with free schools on a more theoretical scale and those who spent their days living and working in a free school.

The following year, another conference was held on a ranch in Zaca Lake, California. From the first hand accounts, this conference seemed to have more in common with the Woodstock Music Festival than any modern education conference, so much so that it was referred to as the "Woodstock of the free schools" in subsequent reports by participants. In his post-conference notes, Michael Rossman writes about various groups camping in the wild, standing in line at the food tent and other details of the loosely run conference. For Rossman, the

conference took the form that many free school enthusiasts would like their schools to take. Instead of pre-organized sessions, he encountered a "setting soft with life" (Rossman, ca. 1970b). Instead of standing around playing "expert," he spent his time with friends, "catching up or just digging each other." For Rossman, the conference provided a change to speak with those who wanted to meet him or vice versa, sharing ideas, stories and strategies. In his post-conference notes he laments the fact that "there wasn't enough time for a self-structuring conference to really unfold," and suggests that the next conference be termed a "live-in" to be held in a National Park "with camper capacity many times a thousands" (ca. 1970). Again, this conference provided the opportunity for those who were already interested in free schools to gain insights and information. However, there is no way to know if the conference was able to bring new converts to the cause.

The third major national conference took place in New Orleans in April 1972. The events of this conference would play a pivotal role in the future of the Free School Movement. Instead of coming together to support the movement's campaign, the 300 to 400 supporters who gathered in Louisiana broke along ideological lines, turning on each other instead of the establishment. It was at this conference that the fissures seen in the claims made by the portions of the Movement widened. According to Bill Harwood, a conference participant, "the romantic folks, characterized by the California contingent, were at odds with the folks who were working in urban areas with poor kids and concentrating on survival skills…and detested by both were the folks who were working within the established system" (Harwood, 1976). Yet, like the other conferences sponsored by the Free School Movement, this gathering targeted those already interested and involved in the Movement. There is little evidence that it drew outsiders into the group.

In addition to newsletter, cooperatives and conferences, the Free School Movement also generated a large number of books. Key figures like Holt, Graubard, Dennison and Kozol all published books outlining their view of the Movement. A 1969 review of Dennison's book, *The Lives of Children*, by John Holt describes the success of Dennison's First Street School. According to Holt, the children at the schools "were the kids that the giant educational system conspicuously, totally, and hopelessly fails to reach or to help," and yet, because of the nature of free schools, "the children got well, grew and learned" (Holt, 1969b). Dennison's book helped to make him one of the leaders of the Movement, demonstrating that it was possible to begin a successful free school that could survive financially while providing students with an education in line with free school ideology. This book served as a powerful public message in support of the Movement's campaign.

In his 1972 book, *Free Schools*, Jonathan Kozol, regales would-be free school founders with war stories about

> living on doughnuts, glasses of milk or hurried "pot-luck suppers" in the midst of wonderful, crazy nights of money-raising tactics, strategies, campaigns, decisions at midnight to put out a spectacular mailing the next morning, type up the stencils, ink over the millions of dumb errors, dig up the minister-friend of someone else's minister-friend who said it was okay to use the ditto machine in someone else's Unitarian Church or someone's store-front office, break into the office, run off the stencils, do it ten time badly, finally get it almost right, breathe in the new wonderful stink of the mimeograph-ether, pile the new copies, staple, fold, and label, find the misspelled headline just too late, argue and laugh, get out

a bottle of cheap wine, drink from paper cups, go home and sleep for four hours,

wake up feeling terrific, and then start all over. (Kozol, ca. 1971)

As if these tales were not enough to inspire supporters to join the cause, Kozol shares stories

about how teachers and students in a public school staged a "walk-out" in order to "walk-in" to

the free school located on a nearby corner (1971). Success stories like those shared by Dennison

and Kozol in their books helped to ensure that the message of the Free School Movement

reached the sympathetic ears of Movement followers.

Of all of the repertoire categories, the various books published by Movement authors had

the widest reach. Many students in teacher education programs during the late 1960s and 1970s

were assigned readings by Holt, Dennison and Kozol. This exposure helped to spread

Movement ideas outside of the circle of supporters reached by the newsletters and conferences

(Newman, 2003, p. 190). However, it is impossible to determine just how much of an impact

these assigned readings had on a future generation of teachers.

Just as Tilly's criteria for a campaign is open to interpretation, so too is his definition for

repertoire performances. He does not define how many individuals need to participate in a

conference or rally to allow it to qualify. He does not specify how many people must subscribe

to a newsletter to give it widespread circulation. In addition, Tilly's criterion does not require

that all participants agree about the message communicated in a newsletter or about the structure

of a conference. He does not specify that participants agree about the nature of published

statements, just that these statements exist so as to communicate something about the specific

social movement. If this criterion is viewed permissively, then it is possible to conclude that the

Free School Movement possessed the requisite newsletters, gatherings and associations to

qualify. However, given that the majority of these events targeted a small subset of the

population, generally those already interested in free schools, it could also be argued that the Free School Movement fails to meet the spirit of Tilly's definition.

In addition, a more nuanced analysis would need to account for degree of dissent among the free school supporters demonstrated during these repertoire performances. The same divisions that made it impossible for the group to agree on a solution to their claim become visible in an examination of some parts of the archival and published records. In a letter to the editors of the *New Schools Exchange Newsletter*, Genevieve Dawson of Norwich, New York expresses her relief that the "newsletter has decided to continue as a more 'informational' bulletin" instead of the "deeper-thought-provoking" publication of recent issues (Dawson, ca. 1971). Another letter to the same editors from C.P. Valentine of Argenta, Canada, also applauds the return of the newsletter to its original form, "a place where experimental schools could have their say and communicate with each other and with people looking for innovative education, rather than a platform for a few people to express their ideas and personal growings in education" (Valentine, ca. 1971). These letters are just a few that appear in the archival record to show the dissatisfaction of many within the Movement of the deepening rhetoric of a few key individuals. In response to these letters, the out-going editors of the *New Schools Exchange Newsletter*, Peter Marin and Vincent Stanley, admit that they were "the wrong people to be editing the Newsletter." They go on to explain that what they "want to discuss and understand has little to do with the expectation and self-conscious needs of the readers" (Marin & Stanley, ca. 1971). Indeed, the former editors go so far as to state that they are not upset about leaving the newsletter because at the moment, they "don't care much about schools…but the Exchange readers do" (ca. 1971). The admission by the editors of the premier newsletter servicing the Free School Movement that they cared little about schools seems to indicate a serious problem within

the movement itself. There seemed to be a growing disconnect between the leadership, concerned with theory and ideology, and the membership, focused on practical solutions.

The *New Schools Exchange Newsletter* was not the only newsletter to suffer setbacks during this period. The *KOA (Communications on Alternatives) Newsletter* served a similar purpose to the *New Schools Exchange Newsletter* but was focused mostly on free schools along the East Coast. In 1972, after only a year of publication, *KOA* was forced to cease distribution because of lack of funds. However, before it ended publication, *KOA* featured a series of articles about the 1971 Conference on Alternatives in Education at Fordham University in New York. In fact, the expansion of KOA into a permanent newsletter was one result of this conference. Although not dedicated solely to free school ideas, this conference provided another opportunity for supporters to meet and collaborate. Besides the founding of *KOA*, another result of this conference was an increased tension between the participants and the "alleged gurus of the free school movement" (Hentoff, 1971). While the proceeding further illuminates the growing distance between the leadership and the membership of the Movement, the conference itself did garner more widespread attention than most free school events, including a series of articles in the *Village Voice* (1971).

The publication of the *New Schools Directory* also illustrates some problems within the group. Designed as a vehicle to bring free schools together, the *Directory* project instead led to a serious disagreement between Allan Graubard, one of the founders of the Movement, and Tom Wilbur, director of the Goodman School in Michigan was put on display in the *New Schools Exchange Newsletter*. Graubard had been contracted by the Department of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW) to compile a directory of all free schools in the United States. According to Graubard, the *Directory* was "intended for use by a wide variety of people interest in the

possibilities of radical reform in education" (Graubard, ca. 1972b). However, according to Tim Wilbur, an opponent of the project, the real intent of the Directory was to discredit the free schools and to make it more difficult for them to operate (Wilbur, ca. 1972). At the heart of Wilbur's objection was the fact that Graubard, as lead investigator, was paid to conduct the survey and that free schools were granted a stipend for participating in the survey. To Wilbur, the presence of government money cast suspicion on the whole project. In response, Graubard questioned the sustainability of Wilbur's position on public funding. Graubard stated that given the current situation of many free schools, it would be difficult for these schools sustain themselves if they did not "begin to find ways to public funding of various sorts" (Graubard, ca. 1972b).

This epistolary argument expanded to include commentaries by a number of people inside the Movement. Some supported Graubard's positions and other Wilbur's. For example, Jonathan Kozol, who prefaced his response by stating that his personal positions was to "have nothing to do with the U.S. government in a direct or long-continued way," acknowledged that "there is no way to do anything that counts in terms of social change that does not call for large expenditures of money" (Kozol, ca. 1972c, ca. 1972d). Kozol continued by urging schools to seek whatever funding they could from private grants and government agencies, claiming that the decision to accept funding had nothing to do with "purity, revolution, or co-option" but rather with basic survival (ca. 1972c, ca. 1972d). John Patenaude, of Goddard College in Vermont and future editor of the *KOA newsletter*, contributed to the debate by writing that the central issue was survival. For Patenaude, the most "onerous" problem faced by many free schools was the question of funding, and however, distasteful the process, fundraising was a necessary evil to ensure survival. Therefore, he believed that there was no danger of co-option by the government

in pursuing every possible avenue of funding including grants, foundations, tuition, and vouchers so long as the purpose was school survival (Patenaude, ca. 1972).

Others, like David Clements from The Taproot School in Michigan, also acknowledged the importance of funding but also cautioned against becoming a "puppet organization" that would be forced to do the bidding of the government (Clements, ca. 1972). For Clements, the idea of private grants was more palatable than the acceptance of government funding, no matter how small (ca. 1972). Peter Marin, at that time the editor of the *New Schools Exchange Newsletter*, shifted the discussion slightly by claiming that the problem with the *Directory* project was not the money itself, but the way in which the money would be perceived by the Movement's followers. For Marin, the appearance of government co-option was counter to the "sense of outlawry and freedom" that characterized the Free School Movement (Marin, ca. 1972a). While Marin admits that the acceptance of government funding would be life-saving for some schools, he was wary of the possible image implications for the Movement (ca. 1972).

Given the degree of divide between elements within the Free School Movement, some might conclude that there was no unified movement at all. However, in spite of their differences, these individuals continued to identify each other as part of the same reform effort, at least until 1972. Close examination of the archival and published records on the Free School Movement can support the idea of a social movement repertoire. There is ample evidence that the Free School Movement engaged in a combination of political actions that would satisfy Tilly's requirements for a social movement. The Free School Movement created special-purpose associations and coalitions by establishing the *New School Exchange Newsletter,* the *New Schools Directory* and a variety of less formalized meetings. The Movement held a number of public meetings including at least four major conferences in the span of three years.

Individually, key Movement members chronicled and participated in a number of rallies and demonstrations including Kozol's "walk-in". Finally, the Movement supported a number of publications including but not limited to *The New Schools Exchange Newsletter*, the *KOA Newsletter* and a variety of books by Holt, Dennison and Kozol among others.

However, if the purpose of the repertoire performances is to increase the public profile of the social movement in question, then the impact of the newsletters, conferences, etc. of the Free School Movement is questionable. While these events and items did exist, they were targeted to a specific subset of the population rather than the general public as a whole. Given its smaller focus, the Free School Movement never attracted the type of widespread newspaper or television coverage that the Civil Rights Movement or anti-war movement received. In a time when riots, tear gas and mass marches were common on the evening news, the Free School Movement maintained a lower profile. Therefore, this element is another example of how Tilly's criteria can be interpreted and applied in different ways to support different conclusions.

Question #3

Does the Free School Movement contain "WUNC" displays?

The third and final criterion of Tilly's definition of a social movement is the presence of WUNC displays. In this instance, "WUNC" is an acronym for worthiness, unity, numbers and commitment and can take the form of statements, slogans, or labels that imply these characteristics (Tilly & Wood, 2013, p. 5). More specifically, these WUNC displays are often actions that people would easily recognize, for example:

- Worthiness: sober demeanor; neat clothing; presence of clergy; dignitaries; and mothers with children

- Unity: matching badges, headbands, banners, or costumes; marching in ranks; singing and chanting

- Numbers: headcounts; signatures on petitions; messages from constituents; filling streets

- Commitment: braving bad weather; visible participation by the old and handicapped; resistance to repression; ostentatious sacrifice, subscription, and/or benefaction." (Tilly, 2005, p. 217)

Traditionally, WUNC displays are associated with "religious martyrdom, civic sacrifice, and resistance to conquest" and therefore are quite familiar to most people (Tilly & Wood, 2013, p. 5). For example, the Selma March of 1965 would be a prime example of a WUNC display. In that instance, well-dress and well-manned Civil Rights protestors attempted to march from Selma, Alabama to the capital of Montgomery. These individuals were confronted by angry citizens and a hostile police force, yet they continued on their quest. After a number of attempts, the protestors finally reached Montgomery and provided a graphic illustration for the nation as to the dedication of those involved in Civil Rights work. When analyzed against Tilly's checklist, the Selma March demonstrates all four components of WUNC. The participants were worthy. They were well-dress and well-behaved and possessed a somber demeanor. The marchers included men, women, and children as well as religious leaders and nuns. There was unity in the march. The marchers linked arms at time, and sang and chanted Civil Rights songs. There were numbers. By one estimate, close to 3000 protestors completed the march. And, there was commitment. These marchers faced grave bodily harm in attempting the march. In previous attempts, several protestors had been beaten and killed by local police, yet the march continued

(Williams, 2002). In the context of the Civil Rights Movement, the Selma March would be a definitive example of WUNC displays.

Another event from the same year, the Watts Riots of August 1965 provide a stark contrast to Selma and an example of an event without WUNC displays. Unlike the well-behaved protestors in Selma who demonstrated the worthiness component of WUNC, the participants in the Watts Riots physically assault police officers, set fires and looted stores. During the six days of rioting, there was an estimated $40 million in damages (Williams, 2002). The unity and camaraderie seen in Selma was noticeably absent in Watts. Rather than a well-defined protest organized by Civil Rights leadership, the Watts Riots happened spontaneously and spiraled into mob violence. However, like the Selma March, the Watts Riots did involve a large number of individuals. It is estimated that between 31,000 and 35,000 adults took part in the riots (Williams, 2002).   It is difficult to determine the depth of the commitment of the individuals involved in the Watts Riots. Unlike those in Selma, the rioters in Watts faced several thousand National Guard soldiers and local police officers that eventually restored order with help of a curfew and a declaration of martial law (Williams, 2002). Yet, given the difference in the number of rioters and number of police, it could be stated that the participants did not need the same level of commitment as those who faced opposition in Selma. Therefore, given the obvious lack of worthiness and unity and the potential lack of commitment, the Watts Riots serve as a counter example of Tilly's WUNC criterion.

Unlike Tilly's previous two criteria, the WUNC criterion includes a number of very specific examples drawn from an analysis of large, national movements in Europe. For example, an examination of the archival and published records of the Free School Movement initially shows little that would support a strict definition of WUNC displays. There were no major

marches, uniforms or chants. However, if Tilly's terms are taken somewhat less strictly in light of the size of the Free School Movement, it is possible to find elements within the Movement to satisfy the criteria.

Worthiness is a relative term when applied to the Free School Movement. It is hard to determine how to define and measure worthiness. Tilly provides some very specific examples to illustrate worthiness, all drawn from his study of 19th century social movements. For these movements, "worthiness" was conveyed by the presence of clergy, of the elderly and of mothers with children, all neatly dressed and well behaved. I argue that Tilly uses these specific examples because the presence of these types of individuals sends a signal to the public and those in authority that this is a serious group deserving of time and attention. The respectability of such a group is an outward display of the seriousness of the movement that conveys an air of legitimacy to those in power.

In the case of the Free School Movement, the idea of "worthiness" is important to both those inside and those outside of the Movement. One measure of "worthiness" was determined by how forcefully someone supported the goals of the Movement. If worthiness requires that an individual directly participate in the creation of a free school, then individuals like George Dennison and Jonathan Kozol would serve as excellent examples. Both of these men wrote books detailing their personal struggles to create free schools that would serve under-privileged children. Dennison's book describes how his First Street School in New York City took equal numbers minority children from extremely poor backgrounds and provided them with the education that the public schools of New York could not (Dennison, 1969). Each of Kozol's books seems to provide yet another account of how Kozol and his colleagues worked in the poorest slums of Boston to provide a quality education to those that the public system had failed

(Kozol, 1972). By any definition, both of these pursuits would be considered demonstrations of worthiness to the general membership and by those in authority. These men were not just agitators out to cause trouble, but educators so dedicated to an idea that they invested their own time, effort and reputation to bring about change.

Those within the Movement had high standards for what could be termed worthy and were not hesitant to point out instances in which someone could be deemed not worthy and a potential drain on the legitimacy of the Movement. For example, in a letter to Kat Marin, editor of the *New Schools Exchange Newsletter* in the early 1970s, George Dennison calls to task those involved in free schools for the wrong reasons. To Dennison, it is not enough that someone should dedicate the time and effort to found a free school. The motivation for those actions was critical. Dennison writes derisively about individuals who turn "to free schools in a more or less desperate effort to do something meaningful and to solve their own problems" (Dennison, ca. 1971b). For Dennison, these personal motivations are not examples worthy of the Movement as they do little to legitimize the goals of the Movement as a whole.

Others critique the motives of those involved in the *New Schools Exchange Newsletter*. A letter, Barbara Mayers Keller of New Jersey rejoices in the transition to a new editorial staff at the newsletter. She expresses her disappointment "when the newsletter became dedicated to the mental masturbations of a few highly self-conscious men whose main virtue was their honesty in admitting that they have very little concern for the children and for the schools" (Mayers, ca. 1971). For Mayer and others like her, the admission by Peter Marin and Vincent Stanley that they cared little for actual schools demonstrated their unworthiness in being part of the Movement (Marin & Stanley, ca. 1971).

It would seem that the threshold for worthiness was set quite high by those involved in the Movement. As a result, there are numerous examples of actions that could and would be deemed worthy by some, the founding of schools to help children, and those that would be deemed unworthy, seeking glory and self-aggrandizement through Movement communications. It would seem that in the case of the Free School Movement, "worthiness" was synonymous with legitimacy in the eyes of those inside and outside the Movement. In Tilly's examples, worthiness was much more external and visible factor. However, I argue that the presence of neatly clothed and well-behaved individuals in concert with clergy, dignitaries and mothers with children served to provide a visual representation of legitimacy of a particular movement and of its goals. For example, the case of the Selma March, the presence of clergy and the dress and behavior of those marching stood in stark contrast to the actions of those opposing them. The behavior of the marchers signaled to the public and those in power that this was a group worthy of time and attention. This was not a group out to agitate without legitimate purpose. In contrast, the lack of this outward display of worthiness and legitimacy by the Watts rioters had the opposite effect. Instead of drawing positive public attention to their position, their lack of outward "worthiness" led to condemnation by the public and by those in power.

Since the Free School Movement did not engage in the type of mass protests that could provide these types of outward displays of worthiness, those in the Movement found another way of demonstrating to the public, to those in power and to the membership that their claim was a legitimate one. While those in the Movement never encountered armed resistance like the marchers in Selma, they did face opposition in the form of hostile school boards and building inspectors. In *Free Schools* (1972), Jonathan Kozol recounts numerous encounters with hostile building inspectors who looked for reasons to close down free school. Kozol laments that the

fact that in Boston it seemed easier "to start a whorehouse, a liquor store, a pornography shop or a bookie joint" than to open a free school (p. 24). In The Lives of Children (1969), George Dennison recounts similar struggles with the building inspectors in New York. Each of these accounts and the advice that accompanies them serves as a sign to those inside the Movement and to those in power, that this was a group deserving of attention.

The second component of WUNC is unity. Tilly's examples for unity include matching badges, headbands, banners, or costumes, marching in ranks and singing and chanting. Many of these components can be found in the Selma march of 1965. There, the participants marched with arms joined, sang freedom sounds and chanted various slogans. A single photograph of the event would be able to convey the idea of unity simply by focusing these external actions. However, the Free School Movement never enjoyed this level of visible, external unity. Unlike the Civil Rights Movement or the Anti-War Movement of the same period, the Free School Movement did not seek support through mass public demonstrations. As with worthiness, a literal interpretation of this characteristic would not apply to the Free School Movement.

It is important to determine if Tilly's idea of unity relies solely on a visible and external display of unified behavior, or if it simply uses those external displays as a way of uncovering the feelings, beliefs and motivations of those involved in an activity. For example, when a group gathers for a march in matching clothing, they are using that clothing as a visible display of their unity. But, it may also be true that matching clothing and special chants are simply ways that those involved in a movement can identify others with the same feelings, beliefs and motivations. The visible unity can be seen partly as a way of helping those with similar ideas identify each other by standing apart from the majority. In this case, the external unity is simply a reflection of a unity of idea and purpose that lurks beneath the surface of a movement.

Therefore, it could be said that it is this internal unity that is more critical to a movement than the external trappings of unity.

A less strict interpretation of unity could also imply a unity of ideas rather than physical unity. At the beginning of the Free School Movement in the late 1960s, there seemed to be a common sense of purpose among the participants. In general, there was a shared belief that the current education system was failing to meet the needs of students. Instead of academic work, those who sought reform stressed personal relationships, emotional expression and active participation. For the first four years of the Movement, from 1968 to 1972, there was a general feeling of unity about the failure of the public education system. In the early days of the Free School Movement, supporters believed that they wanted the same outcomes, and they did. They wanted to break away from the public school system and establish a network of free schools. But, after this initial step was accomplished, supporters found themselves splitting into different factions over how best to proceed with the work of the Movement. Eventually, these disagreements would prevent the Free School Movement from being able to advocate from change as a group. In 1972 after a fiery diatribe against rural free schools attended primary by white, upper-middle class children, Kozol shattered the image of a uniform free school ideology, writing to Kat Marin that he was afraid that he was going to be attacked by many of rural free school people at the New Orleans conference in April of that year. Yet, he continued he could not "get over a grim feeling that a lot of these kids are leaving a sinking ship and leaving black people locked in chains beneath the deck (Kozol, 1972b).

Given the inability of the Movement to agree upon a course of action, it would seem that the only unity within the Movement was an agreement that the existing system was broken and failing students. However, Tilly never actually specifies the degree of unity required. If a group

dons matching clothing and marches in the street for change, do they then need to agree on how to bring about that change? Those who marched in Selma did not necessary have a unified plan for bring about long-term change after the March. They were simply trying to march to Montgomery draw attention to the need to register voters (Williams, 2002). There was no long-range plan for what to do after that had been accomplished, just as there was no long-term plan for what the Free School Movement would do after breaking away from the public school system. Therefore, as Tilly is vague about just how solid and long-term the unity component of WUNC needs to be, it is possible to conclude that while the Free School Movement did not exhibit the outward trappings of unity, there was a degree of internal unity even if the group could not agree on a plan to reform the education system.

The third component of Tilly's WUNC criterion is numbers. For Tilly, headcounts, signatures on petitions, messages from constituents and filling streets illustrate numbers. The importance of number to a movement can be seen each time a group claims that a certain number of individuals attended a rally or protest. Central to this claim is the idea that the greater the number of participants, the more legitimate the organization. In addition, a social movement uses numbers to demonstrate a broad base of support for a cause or idea. The larger the number, the broader the base of support and the more legitimate and powerful the organization. While the Free School Movement never generated any mass public demonstrations in the streets, there was a great deal of headcounting as a way of illustrating the growth of the Movement.

One of the best examples of this figurative headingcounting is Michael Rossman's optimistic projection for the rapid growth of the Movement. Rossman projected that free schools would quickly become a major alternative to public schools. He wrote that free schools would drain "innovative teachers, responsive kids, and certain classes of parents, hip-liberal to the

main" from the public school system. As a result, mainstream education would "grow even less adaptable, and polarization between the two" would deepen and create a bitter divide (Rossman, 1972). More specifically, Rossman predicted that there would be 1,600 free schools by 1971, 7,000 by 1973 and 25,000 to 30,000 by 1975 (1972). In making these predictions, Rossman cites only three factors that might limit the expected growth of the Movement including "the radical reform of public schools; political repression of the movement; and economic depression in the nation" (1972).

Rossman's predictions were both a way to encourage new participants and a way to legitimize the actions of the group. Regardless of his motivations, there is little actual evidence that these figures were ever a true possibility. Throughout its existence, Free School Movement drew its support from the far left of the political spectrum. As such, it would be foolish to expect any type of massive, mainstream growth. However, Rossman's grandiose predictions do serve to show the importance of headcounting to a social movement. Without some of sort of numeric claim, however improbable, it is difficult to generate momentum. A protest with 5,000 participants is more likely to generate excitement than one with only 500. As such, Rossman's predictions provided numbers that could be used in the Movement's rhetoric regardless of their improbability.

While Rossman's predictions were among the most detailed, others also used less outlandish numbers to quantify the success of the Movement. In a letter to Peter Marin, Len Solo, founder of the Teacher Drop-out Center, declare the Movement a success, citing the fact that "hundreds of new schools are growing up each year" (Solo, ca. 1971). These figures are actually quite plausible during the four years of the Movement. What Solo fails to disclose is that these hundreds of schools may have had less than 40 students each (Graubard, 1972, p. 359).

Others took exception to speculation in the early 1970s that the Movement was not growing as expected. Allan Graubard writes in a letter that from his research "there is very substantial growth, and this growth continues" (Graubard, ca. 1972a). In another hand-written letter, Graubard takes exception to the fact that the *New Schools Exchange Newsletter* did not publish the correct figures when discussing the *New Schools Directory* project (Graubard, ca. 1971). Graudard feared that the Movement would suffer a loss of momentum if supporters felt that growth had stagnated.

The numbers component of Tilly's criteria is problematic when analyzing the Free School Movement. As a reform effort, the Free School Movement drew its support from those at the far left of the political spectrum. By its very nature, the Free School Movement was a fringe effort on the outside of the mainstream of American beliefs. As such, it would be impossible for such a group to obtain the large numbers seen in more mainstream reform efforts like those for voting rights or higher wages. However, as a fringe effort in the pre-Internet age, it is impressive that the Free School Movement was able to draw supporters from across the United States. With free schools established in states such California, Texas, Michigan, Massachusetts and Vermont, the Free School Movement was able to reach across the width of a continent for supporters. In this context, it would seem acceptable to determine that in spite of its limitations, the Free School Movement did meet the spirit of the numbers criteria by demonstrating a broad base of support from those with similar ideologies in different regions of the country.

The final component of Tilly's WUNC criterion is commitment. For Tilly, commitment is demonstrated by braving bad weather, visible participation by the old and handicapped, resistance to repression, ostentatious sacrifice, subscription, and/or benefaction" (Tilly, 2005, p. 217). Again, if commitment were to be interpreted strictly using Tilly's definition, the Free

School Movement would fail to meet the threshold. As the Movement did not utilize mass public demonstrations, there would be no need to brave bad weather or to demonstrate visible participation by the old and infirmed.

Just as with the unity and numbers criteria, the commitment element can be examined on both an external and internal level. External demonstrations of commitment such as braving bath weather or resisting repression are visible representations of deeply held beliefs. Individuals will not stand in the rain or cold or face tear-gas and riot police without a deeply held belief, a commitment, to a cause. However, once again, a looser interpretation finds elements within the Movement that could be used as examples of commitment in a less dramatic and visible way.

The examples of George Dennison and Jonathan Kozol setting up schools in the poorest areas of New York and Boston respectively could be considered evidence of commitment. In addition, both of these men continued to live and work in these areas throughout the course of the movement (Dennison, 1969; Kozol, 1972a). In speaking of these inner-city free schools, Eric Davin of the Education Center in Cambridge, Massachusetts states that if an individual does not see "free school involvement as a long-term commitment to the betterment of a child's future," than the individual will not last long in the Movement (Davin, 1973, March). Leaders like Dennison, Kozol and Davin had little patience for those who saw the Free School Movement as "part of a counter-culture retreat" from reality (1973).

In addition, these leaders questioned those who would seek to illustrate their commitment to a cause in extreme ways. While men like Kozol might be willing to spend an evening in jail to make a point, they were skeptical of the motivations of more extreme individuals (Kozol, 1972b). John Holt, an early leader in the Movement, expressed this skepticism in a letter to Peter Marin. Holt writes of a conversation with Marin about the Black Panthers putting their lives on

the line and questioned if Marin believed that "a great many young people felt that nobody can be taken seriously these days who is not constantly ready to risk his life" (Holt, ca. 1971). Holt continue to say that he is "very suspicious and distrustful of these people who are constantly laying their lives on the line" as they remind him of "preachers of a very bad doctrine, that life is cheap, all life including their own" (ca. 1971). Given that the point of the Free School Movement was to better the lives of children, Holt does not see a place for those who would willing throw their lives and the lives of their followers away. This level of extreme commitment runs counter to the basic tenets of free school ideology.

However, there are also a number of examples of free supporters who were unwilling to maintain a commitment to the Movement. For example, Peter Marin and Vincent Stanely, the editors of the New Schools Exchange Newsletter, turned over the management of the publication after informing readers that they were not concerned about the daily operations of schools (Marin & Stanley, ca. 1971). Instead, these individuals were interested in pursuing their own ideas rather than remain committed to the Movement.

Another example of floundering commitment can be seen in a January 1972 open letter from George Dennison in the KOA (Communications on Alternatives) newsletter which stated that he was "not talking or writing about Free Schools anymore…and was not currently part of the Movement" (1972, January). However, in a later letter to Eric Davin of the Education Center in Cambridge, Massachusetts, Dennison stated that he was "closing the door" on "all that school stuff" and refusing to discuss it anymore (Davin, 1973, May). Dennison's departure was so complete that by 1976, it had become "unfashionable to read Dennison *The Lives of Children*," a volume which only a few years early had been one of the touchstones of the Movement (Leueu, 1976, November).

At the same time that Dennison was quitting free schools, others began to question their

continuing roles in the Movement. By 1972, John Holt had also made the decision to move on to

other ideas. Holt, the target of much criticism at the Fordham conference in 1971 and again in

New Orleans in 1972, had written to a friend that he was becoming "frustrated when people

continue to ask him questions concerning curriculum or school reform because he [was] no

longer into that" (Davin, 1973, May). Kat Marin, editor of the New Schools Exchange

Newsletter, announced after the New Orleans conference that she "could no longer live with her

doubts" and was stepping down as editor (Davin, 1973, March). In a letter to Eric Davin, she

stated that she would be happy to turn the publication over to someone else and would even help

to relocate the clearinghouse (1973, March).

The application of Tilly's definition of commitment to the Free School Movement is

problematic. While the Free School Movement does not meet a strict interpretation of Tilly's

definition of commitment, the Movement is filled with numerous examples of commitment by

leadership and rank-and-file alike. Yet, there are also numerous instances of waning

commitment by key members of the leadership that undermine this conclusion. Therefore, as

with several of the other elements, it is possible to support both conclusions.

In setting the parameters for a social movement, Charles Tilly created a list of three key

components. A social movement must contain a campaign, a repertoire of tactics, and WUNC

displays. From an examination of the archival and published record, it is possible to conclude

that the Free School Movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s does qualify as a social

movement. Yet, that same evidence can be used to support the conclusions that the Free School

Movement was not a social movement. In attempting to apply Tilly's definition to the short-

lived Free School Movement, it become obvious that adjustments to Tilly's definition would

help to better interpret evidence pertaining to an effort as narrowly defined as the Free School

Movement.

Chapter 5

After applying Tilly's criteria for a social movement to the Free School Movement, it become clear that with a few adjustments for the nature of educational reforms that Tilly's framework can be used to help interpret those efforts as social movements. Using a loose interpretation of Tilly's criteria, the Free School Movement can accurately be termed a "social movement". While the ability to apply a label to a reform effort like the Free School Movement will not alter the overall impact of that effort, it does serve a greater purpose--an attempt to create a common language to discuss educational reforms.

In the modern world, educational reform efforts have become increasingly commonplace. Many teachers, parents and administrators live through a seemingly endless cycle of "new ideas" that promise to radically improve educational institutions. As Richard Elmore and Milbrey Wallin McLaughlin write in "Steady Work", "the history of American education is, in large part, the history of reform, or rather of recurring cycles of reform" (Elmore & McLaughlin, 1988, p. 1). With reform efforts including everything from new curricular ideas, new technologies, new facilities, new teacher training programs and new grading practices, it is difficult to find a way to compare them. There is no easy system for determining which efforts should be discussed as equals and which should be placed into a different category.

One goal of this study was to determine if Tilly's criteria for a social movement could be applied to educational reform efforts. If they could, then students of education reform would have a systematic way of comparing these efforts. By using Tilly's criteria, researchers would easily be able to compare and categorize the various elements of reform efforts because the established criteria would create a common vocabulary of terms and questions. Efforts that could be categorized and social movements would be compared to other efforts in the same category

thus creating a more leveled approach. The ability to conduct this sort of analysis would help

eliminate one variable in the study of educational reforms. As a reform effort with a fairly clear

beginning and end, the Free School Movement was a good candidate to use as a test subject.

However, the questions that arose when applying Tilly's criteria indicate that in order to create

this common language for education, a few changes to Tilly's test would be required.

In looking at Tilly's research, it is necessary to draw some type of distinction between the

claims made by a social movement and the goals of that movement. For Tilly, the presence of

claim is a required element of a social movement. However, he never speaks about the idea of a

goal. Part of the issue is that Tilly's criteria were established through an examination of very

clear national movements such as those for workers' rights, Catholic emancipation and

parliamentary reform in early 19th century Britain where the claims and goals were almost

indistinguishable. (Tilly & Wood, 2013, p. 31). It is easy to determine the success or failure of

the workers' rights movements of coal-handlers and silk-weavers for higher wages. The

movement by Catholics for equal rights in Anglican Britain is easy to categorize as a victory or

defeat. Each of these movements followed a predictable pattern.

1. Activists gather to develop goals and objectives for a specific problem.

2. Activists mount a sustained campaign against an authority.

3. Activists utilize a combination of tactics including public meetings, rallies, and marches to draw attention to their cause.

4. Activists consistently demonstrate unity and commitments to the cause.

5. Activists are successful or defeated in forcing change by the authority.

If the goal of the movement is higher wages or shorter working hours, the outcome is simple to

determine. The workers either get higher wages or shorter hours or they do not. At times there

might be a compromise negotiated by the parties, but the success or failure of the movement to achieve its goals can be clearly seen. In these instances, the overall claim of the movement and the goals, or methods for addressing the claim, are virtually identical.

The problem with attempting to apply Tilly's criteria to education reform efforts, especially those in the United States, is that the public education system tends to be open and diverse. Unlike efforts for increased voting rights, educational reforms are generally not simply about changing one factor but also about gaining enough influence and awareness to create systemic change. In these cases, groups may have similar claims, that the current system is flawed, but different goals, or ways of addressing the claim. For example, most reform efforts have a goal of improving student learning, improving student achievement, improving teacher training, improving school design, improving the use of technology, or some other form of improvement because they believe, or claim, that the system is fundamentally flawed. These types of goals become very difficult to measure because they involve a large number of integrated pieces. It is difficult to objectively state whether an effort seeking to improve teacher training is actually successful because there are too many factors that can influence teacher success or failure. Likewise, an effort to improve student achievement by utilizing standardized tests can be difficult to evaluate. Student test scores may improve but there can be many factors contributing to that improvement. Isolating a single cause and effect is problematic when analyzing reform efforts with so many different elements.

In creating his framework, Tilly was concerned primarily with being able to identify social movements as a distinct form of contentious politics rather than with analyzing their larger impact. He is more concerned with the presence of a claim than with a detailed analysis of the goals, or responses, to that claim. Given this, the framework does not provide a way for dealing

with the multiple dimensions found in many social movements. For instance, when discussing

the movements for Catholic rights in 19th Britain, Tilly states the movement's campaign was

focused on securing voting rights and other civil liberties for Catholics. This was the primary

goal of the movement. However, the underlying problem the movement was seeking to fix, the

prejudice against and marginalization of Catholics in an Anglican nation is not addressed. In the

case of the Free School Movement, the supporters were able to successfully open free schools in

different regions of the nation, an action that would be counted as a success. Yet, the Movement

was never able to gain the widespread support necessary to create systemic change because of

the open and varied nature of public education in the United States. Both of these results are

important in the study of any movement. Therefore, it is necessary to find a way to incorporate

the impact of a social movement on the larger problem when looking at the campaign element of

Tilly's framework.

Both the multitude of actors and the multiple spheres of public education complicate this

issue of claim and goal in educational reform. There is not simply one "authority" that a group

can oppose. In education reform efforts, actors can include policymakers, administrators, and

practitioners as well as students, parents and taxpayers, thus blurring the lines between the public

and private spheres (Elmore & McLaughlin, 1988, p. 4). Within the public sphere, education is

viewed as a public resource and concerned with large, systemic issues. Within the private

sphere, education is responsive to the needs and desires of a specific student, teacher or parent.

As a result, education reform efforts must "operate on three loosely connected levels: policy,

administration, and practice" and any successful reform effort must seek to address changes at

each level (Elmore & McLaughlin, 1988, p. 5). The policy level involves the official laws and

decisions that govern the basic institution of education and operates in a very public sphere.

Policy level decisions determine the funding and rules necessary to run a system. Decisions at this level involve a great deal of political consideration in addition to considerations about student welfare in a general sense. At the other end of the spectrum is the practice level, which generally operates within the private sphere. This level is the realm of the classroom teacher and focuses on the minute details necessary for teaching and learning at an individual student level. In between these two poles is boggy level of administrators. Depending on the size of the school or district, this level may contain many layers of bureaucracy, each further removed from the daily actions of a classroom than the one below. Like an estuary mixing fresh water and salt water, the administrative level operates in both the public and private spheres trying to balance the public good against individual need. For a reform to have any true impact on the state of education, there must be interactions at each of these three levels (p. 11).

In the case of the Free School Movement, there was limited interaction among these three levels. While the criticism of the existing educational structure was aimed at all three levels, the proposed changes and solutions were scattered at best. For example, there seemed to be a definite lack of cooperation between those at the policy level and those at the practice level. The most obvious example of this would be the statement by Peter Marin and Vincent Stanley, the out-going editors of the *New Schools Exchange Newsletter*, that what they "don't care much about schools…but the Exchange readers do" (ca. 1971). Instead, they wanted to focus on the theoretical ideas and policy debates while the readers of the *Newsletter* wanted to focus on the daily challenges of operating a free school (Dawson, ca. 1971). In general, the Movement's successes were confined to the private sphere, opening free schools to better the experiences of individual students rather than any significant systemic change within the public sphere.

In "Steady Work," Elmore and McLaughlin use a 1962 attempt to revolutionize biology instruction as an example of how a failure acknowledge the multiple levels in education reform can lead to failure. In their example, leaders at the policy level proposed a new initiative to improve biology instruction by calling for changes in instructional practices, curriculum, and teacher training at a systemic level. After the proposal, a small number of teachers and districts adopted the practices while the remainder either refused or adopted only a portion of the changes. Policy leaders alternately praised and criticized districts for their actions or inactions. Over time, the new ideas proposed by the initiative merged with the old methods of instruction making it difficult to determine which districts had adopted the changes. As a result, the experiment was labeled a failure (Elmore & McLaughlin, 1988, p. 11). In this instance, the "failure" was not the fault of the initiative itself, but rather of those who did not acknowledge the need to pursue change in conjunction with the actors at each level. The change proposed occurred within the public sphere driven by a need to correct a perceived systemic problem. Little attention was given to the same issue, needs and problems within the private sphere.

In order for Tilly's criteria to be successful at analyzing educational reform, an effort must be made to acknowledge the multiple layers with public education. For the Free School Movement, the criticisms were leveled at each of the three levels, policy, practice and administration, but there was no attempt to coordinate a solution that incorporated all three. Some, like Kozol, targeted the policy level, seeking a high level change that would help facilitate the social change he desired. This group sought to attack the problem primarily from within the public sphere and had little success in creating a systemic shift. Others, like rural free school supporters, were less interested in policy and administration, focusing instead on the daily

classroom practices. This group, operating in the private sphere, saw the greatest successes by opening a number of schools.

One criterion Tilly relies on is the presence of social repertoire performances including vigils, rallies, processions and demonstrations. Given the national scale of the movements Tilly studied, these types of activities would be relatively common and easy to identify. For example, in early 19th century Britain, workers in Stockport, the cotton-manufacturing center of nation, held mass open meetings to discuss ways of influencing Parliament to reform its practices. They sent a delegation over 1,400 participants waving banners and marching in neat rows to join with more than 60,000 others also calling for Parliamentary reform. Consequently, these protestors were met with armed resistance and cavalry charges at the Peterloo Massacre of 1819 (Tilly & Wood, 2009, p. 30). This type of demonstration typifies Tilly's idea of a social repertoire performance, but it not likely to be found in an education reform effort in the United States. Therefore, in order to apply Tilly's criterion to education reform, a different definition is needed. For example, education reform efforts can produce the special-purpose associations, newsletters, petitions and public demonstrations that make up social repertoire performances, just not on the scale called for by Tilly's examples. The key to utilizing this criterion is understanding that for Tilly, a social repertoire performance needs to be sustained, public and related to the claims made by a group (Tilly, 2005, p. 216). Therefore, for use in education reform analysis, the definition would need to be reduced in scale to fit the types of displays seen in education reform efforts. A reduction in scale would not undermine the core of Tilly's idea but would allow researchers to establish a threshold for what is and is not considered a repertoire performance when looking at education.

Tilly's WUNC displays also require a change in definition to fit education reform efforts. Again, these ideas were developed by looking at national-level reform efforts from the 19th and early 20th centuries and do not take into account smaller-scale protest and reform efforts. With the exception of the "numbers" element, each of the remaining elements can be interpreted on two levels, observable and philosophical. For example, when Tilly discusses worthiness as characterized by neat clothing, good behavior, presence of clergy, etc., he is providing an observable depiction of worthiness and legitimacy. In national level movements such as those for worker's rights in 19th century Britain, these observable displays of worthiness signaled a philosophical legitimacy of purpose to those in authority (Tilly & Wood, 2009, p. 31). With education reform efforts, the worthiness and legitimacy is less observable in many cases because of the general lack of large-scale demonstrations. Yet, it is possible to adapt Tilly's worthiness element to account for a philosophical legitimacy of purpose by setting a new threshold and definition for this element. This new threshold would need to account for the fact that in modern society, all demands for quality education are by default seen as legitimate. Therefore, the definition would need to look not at the demand but at the method for addressing these demands to determine worthiness and legitimacy. Reform efforts would need to demonstrate a philosophical legitimacy in their methods for responding to a problem or addressing a claim to meet this criterion. For example, a group that wanted to address bullying in schools by preventing students from having any contact with each other would not meet this new threshold. The general demand, ending bullying, would be legitimate, but the method of addressing the problem, isolating all students and preventing all interactions, would not be seen as philosophically legitimate.

The same argument holds true for the "commitment" element, requiring a slightly different definition of the term. Unlike those who marched for civil rights in Selma in 1965 or for parliamentary reform in Britain in 1819, education reform efforts rarely spark the level of visible commitment seen in other, more national, movements. Those advocating for educational reform are not likely to be faced with armed police or charging cavalry. While it is true that those attempting to desegregate schools in the South during the 1950s and 1960s were faced with hostility and even armed resistance, these efforts were less about educational reform and more about civil rights. However, these few examples aside, education reformers may face the opposition of school boards, the reluctance of tax-payers and the apathy of parents. The ability to maintain commitment and focus in spite of these challenges could be set as the threshold for a revised definition of "commitment" as it pertains to education reform efforts.

While Tilly's criteria were created based upon large, national movements, it is possible with a few adjustments to use his ideas as a basis for creating a test to classify education reform efforts. While Tilly himself might never have imagined that his framework would be applied to something like educational reform, his criteria can be easily adapted to make such a use possible. By making changes to some of definitions and examples Tilly uses to define his social movement elements, education researchers could create new thresholds that would honor Tilly's ideas while still being relevant to education reform efforts. This adaptation would maintain the spirit and core of ideas of Tilly's criteria while still providing a useful tool for education reform analysis. If these changes could be made to account for the concerns specific to education reform efforts, then Tilly's criteria would allow researchers to classify reform efforts into categories that could be easily compared, analyzed and evaluated.

Conclusion

During the heady days of the late 1960s, it seemed impossible to believe that those

working to change society would fail. Between the successes of the Civil Right Movement and

the growing antiwar effort, movements for change in education seemed destined to follow the

same path of growth and success. As one of those many movements, the Free School Movement

enjoyed a great sense of hope for the future. But, by the early 1970s, this sense of hope began to

give way to sense a impending doom. As changes in the nation began to return power to the

"silent majority," the calls for radical, widespread change began to shift to calls for something

more subtle. The desire to work outside of the education system, gave way to a desire to reform

that system from within. Given this the question of whether the Free School Movement can be

termed a social movement under Tilly's criteria has little bearing on whether it was successful in

achieving its goal. In fact, it was not. The Movement was not able to bring about the

widespread educational change called for by its leadership. In a very real way, the Movement

had very little impact on the educational landscape in the United States. However, the

importance of the Free School Movement is less about its ability to bring about change in the

educational system and more about what an examination of its existence can add to the

scholarship on educational reforms. A careful study of the rise and fall of the Free School

Movement provides evidence for a larger debate over the purpose of education itself. In this

way, the Free School Movement can be seen as a microcosm of the larger, enduing struggle for

education reform in the United States. The major tensions that can be found in many historic

reform movements are easily visible in the brief life of the Free School Movement.   According

to David Labaree, education as an American institution is caught between "political ideals and

economic realities" (Labaree, 1997, p. 41). As a nation, the United States has been unable to

decide whether the institution of education will serve the needs of the individual or the needs of the masses.

This struggle over the fundamental purpose of education is not new. In fact, it can be traced to the earliest schools in colonial America. These first public schools, established in the New England colonies, served the "public good"[5] mission of education. Puritan leaders saw education as vital to preserving the freedom and success of the religious communities they had carved out the New England wilderness (Labaree, 2011, p. 382). The focus on public need can been seen in the language of the 1647 Massachusetts law mandating the creation of public schools:

> It being one chief project of that old deluder, Satan, to keep me from the
>
> knowledge of the Scriptures, as in former times by keeping them in an unknown
>
> tongue, so in these latter times by persuading from the use of tongues, that so at
>
> least the true sense and meaning of the original might be clouded by false glosses
>
> of saint seeming deceivers, that learning may not be buried in the grave of our
>
> fathers in the church and commonwealth, the Lord assisting our endeavors,…It is
>
> therefore ordered that, every township in this jurisdiction, after the Lord hath
>
> increased them to the number of fifty householders, shall then forthwith appoint
>
> one within their town to teach all such children as shall resort to him to write and
>
> read." (Cremin, 1970, p. 181)

To these early colonists, education was the key not only to personal salvation but also to the maintenance of a community of the godly.

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[5] It should be noted that for the purposes of this study, the term "public good" simply means a resource that addresses the needs of the general citizenry. In this instance, the term is not used to imply any type of economic considerations. Put another way, it simply means the "needs of the many".

Yet, according to Labaree, these colonists may have also had another, more individual, purpose for establishing a system of public education. Successful trade and commerce depended on a merchant's ability in basic reading, writing and arithmetic. Without these fundamental skills, it would be almost impossible to establish and maintain a profitable business venture. So, for those with a less noble view of education, schooling became a "private good,"[6] a way to ensure individual economic success (Labaree, 2011, p. 382). Even in the earliest incarnation of American public education, it is already possible to see the struggle between the public and private goals.

These tensions continued during the early days of the American republic. Instead of the need to maintain a religious community however, those in favor of education as a public good saw schooling as a way to instill democratic principles in the citizenry. The ensuing conflict between those interested in using education to promote democratic ideals and those interested in supporting capitalist philosophy were delineated by the arguments of Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton. Jefferson, espousing traditional liberal philosophy, saw education as "public good," or as a way of ensuring that the nation produced the type of citizen necessary to maintain the newly formed nation. Hamilton, focusing on the economic needs of that newly emerging nation, saw education as a "private good," a way to produce the type of competition necessary to drive a developing capitalist economy (Labaree, 1997, p. 41). With each successive generation, reformers and activists sought a way to reconcile the need to preserve democratic ideas and individual liberties and the need to create a sustainable, capitalist economy. Or, more simply stated, these reformers struggled to balance the public and private agendas of education into a single institution.

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[6] For the purposes of this study, the term "private good" implies something that exists for the wellbeing of an individual. It should not be read to have any economic undertones. Put another way, it can be read as "the needs of the one".

According to Labaree (1997), in addition to the tension between the public and private agendas, there is also a struggle between three competing goals of American public education. These three goals, democratic equality, social mobility and social efficiency are the engines driving all educational reform movements in the United States (p. 41). Closely attuned to Jefferson's beliefs about democratic ideals, the goal of democratic equality was a central tenant of early education efforts. In order to maintain a democratic government, children must be educated in the skills necessary to be a good citizen. In later reform movements, the focus of this goal shifted from citizenship to equality, serving in part as the impetus for desegregation efforts (Labaree, 2011, p. 45). The goal of democratic equality is clearly tied to the belief that education is a public good serving the needs of the population as a whole.

If the goal of democratic equality aligned to Jefferson's beliefs, then the goal of social mobility is the most closely related to Hamilton's ideas of education as a private good, serving the needs of the individual. This goal focuses on the needs and wants of the individuals by seeking to provide students with the skills necessary for personal growth and success. This is not a goal focused on the needs of the national economy but rather one focused on helping the individual to improve their specific social and financial situations (Labaree, 2011, p. 50).

The final goal, social efficiency, is also concerned with economic success and security, but instead of focusing on the needs of the individual, it focuses on the needs of society as a whole (Labaree, 2011, p.50). In working towards this goal, schools attempt to align curriculum and instruction with the predicted needs of the market to ensuring a plentiful workforce with the skills necessary for continued growth and success on a national level. Here too, education is a public good designed for the success of society with any individual success as a fortunate by-product.

While Labaree traces the interactions and struggles between the different educational agendas and goals through some of the major reform movements in American education, I suggest that it is possible to see these interactions within the Free School Movement. In fact, one of the core areas of disagreement within the Movement can be simplified into the debate over education as a public or a private good. When attempting to predict the future growth of the Free School Movement, Michael Rossman wrote that "only the growth of collective consciousness and commitment can keep the Free School Movement, school by school, and as a whole, from being blunted, moving off into dead ends, or being reabsorbed into the dominant system" (Rossman, ca. 1970a). The collective consciousness that Rossman spoke of never emerged. In the early days of the Movement, some of the participants saw free schools as places where personal relationships, emotional expression and active participation were at the center of the education experience.

At the end of the 1960s, key Movement organizers like George Dennison, Paul Goodman, John Holt and Jonathan Kozol joined forces to create the New Nation Seed Fund to provide some financial support for new free schools. According to the open letter appearing in the *New Schools Exchange Newsletter*, these individuals saw free schools as an antidote to the current education system which ignored ideas about personal growth in favor of supporting the power of centralized bureaucracy (Dennison, Goodman, Hentoff, Holt and Kozol, ca. 1970). In numerous books, articles and newsletters, supporters of early free schools espoused a generalized ideology that encouraged personal choice and freedom from the establishment. In essence, they saw education as a private good that helped students on an individual rather than societal level.

However, by the early part of the next decade, some of these same individuals began to shift towards a view of education as a public good designed to address the needs and problems of

society. Jonathan Kozol, who would eventually become the defacto leader of the public good

coalition seemed to initially shy away from any discussion that would clarify the core of the

Movement by cautioning against any "kind of hardening of the Free School lines to try to force

others to share this consciousness; or again, to try to force others to accept a single direction of

some sort" (Kozol, ca. 1971b).

As the Movement continued to gain momentum in the early 1970s, the struggle between

the public good and private good factions became increasingly obvious even as these groups

continued to claim to support the same ideas. In reality, while each faction supported the idea of

freedom and liberation from authority, their definitions of those terms varied dramatically. In the

parlance of the Movement's writers, these groups were generally labeled as the "rural" and

"urban" groups although their beliefs had less to do with geography and more to do with

fundamental ideals. In general, the rural group saw the free schools as a way to liberate an

individual child from the oppressive nature of the public school system and to provide that child

with the freedom to learn and develop in a more natural, holistic way (Graubard, 1972, p. 353).

These schools tended to be located in rural areas like the woods of Vermont, hence the label, and

were organized by white, upper-middle class parents to educate white, upper-middle class

children. A rural free school rejected an academically-oriented curriculum in favor of a non-

academic, less structured learning experience that highlighted choice and emotion. These rural

free schools embraced the idea of education as a private good. For its proponents, the purpose of

education was to provide a specific student with the freedom to learn and grow. This group did

not see education as a means of achieving social change but rather individual change. For this

group, the goal of education was social mobility and individual success. These rural, oasis

schools could be seen as an outgrowth of the anti-authoritarian counterculture movement of the 1960s.

The urban free schools were dramatically different in location, appearance and purpose. Instead of focusing on individual freedom, the urban schools emphasized the collective struggle for freedom and equality by under-served, primarily minority, populations (Graubard, 1972, p. 353). For these schools, the term "freedom" did not mean freedom from the establishment, but rather the ability to free themselves from the vicious cycle of poverty and neglect through education and opportunity (Kozol, 1971d, May). For those who supported urban free schools, education was most definitely a public good designed for the betterment of society. The goal was both democratic equality and social efficiency. These schools focused on ideas of equal treatment and equal access regardless of race or socio-economic status. They also sought to provide all students with the education and skills necessary to function in a capitalist market. Given this, these schools were not an outgrowth of the counterculture with its focus on the individual, but rather children of the Civil Rights movement with its focus on social change. Urban free schools had more in common with the freedom schools of Mississippi than the therapeutic, Summerhillian compounds of the rural schools (1971d, May).

While it was possible to see evidence of this fundamental division earlier in the Movement, the stark reality of the conflict became inescapable with the 1972 publication of Jonathan Kozol's *Free Schools*, a scathing condemnation of the rural free schools and their focus on the individual. Kozol was particularly angry at those "most conscientious and reflective" people from the rural free schools who saw these schools as an "escape valve" and claimed to have "retired for the North American system as a whole, and especially from its agencies of devastation, power and oppression" (Kozol, 1972, p. 9). These individuals would sit on the banks

of lazy rivers and "shuttle their handlooms back forth and speak of love and of organic processes…These beautiful children would not wish cold rooms or broken glass, starvation, rats or fear for anyone; nor would they stake their lives, or put their bodies on the line, or interrupt one hour of the sunlit morning, or sacrifice one moment of the golden afternoon, to take a hand in altering the unjust terms of a society in which these things are possible" (p. 10). As Kozol writes in *Free Schools*,

> an isolated upper-class rural Free School for the children of the white and rich within a land like the United States and in a time of torment such as 1972, is a great deal too much like a sandbox for the children of the SS Guards at Auschwitz. (Kozol, 1972, p. 11)

In attempting to remove themselves from the current system, the supporters of rural free schools embraced the idea of education as a private good, serving the interest of their individual children at the expense of the rest of society.

During the late 1960s and early 1970s, Kozol continued to refine his view of the urban free schools as a mechanism for wide-spread change on a societal level, or, more simply put, as a public good. During this time, he became a disciple of sort of Paolo Freire, author of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Focusing on the developing world, Freire believed that education was a crucial tool in allowing the oppressed to regain their humanity. In essence, Freire saw education as a public good capable of bring about widespread social change. For Freire,

> no pedagogy which is truly liberating can remain distant from the oppressed by treating them as unfortunates and by presenting for their emulation models from among the oppressors. The oppressed must be their own example in the struggle for their redemption (Freire, 1970, p. 54).

While Freire applied his ideas about education to the challenges of the developing world, Kozol saw a parallel with the ghettos of American cities. In a letter, Kozol wrote that he believed "Freire's ideas to be directly relevant to the struggles" facing the United States and "in areas far less mechanical and far more universal than basic literacy alone" (Kozol, ca. 1971c). In this same letter, Kozol discussed his work with Freire and his followers to "bring his ideas to bear on the problems of cultural oppression in the public schools" (ca. 1971c). For Kozol, Freire's work helped to coalesce his own ideas about how the goals of democratic equality and social efficiency could combine to bring about monumental social change (Kozol, ca. 1972b). With the 1972 publication of *Free Schools*, the extent of Freire's influence on Kozol became obvious. Under Freire's tutelage, Kozol had come to see the Free School Movement as an "existential struggle and upheaval to escape the bondage and to undermine the socializing influence of the" current education system (Kozol, ca. 1971c).

As a leader in the Free School Movement, Kozol was painfully aware of the fact that he would face anger and condemnation from at least a portion of the membership upon the publication of his ideas. In fact, in May of 1971, Kozol sent an early draft of *Free Schools* to Kat Marin of the *New Schools Exchange Newsletter*, asking for her opinion and stating that at this point it would be better to know what friends were thinking rather than what the enemy was thinking (Kozol, ca. 1972b). While his language may seem dramatic, by this point, Kozol, now a student of Paulo Freire, really did see these rural free schools as the enemy, as those who turn a blind-eye to the struggles of the oppressed. The influence of Freire's radical ideas about the struggle between the oppressed and the oppressors can been seen in the fiery opening of Kozol's Free Schools. Taking aim at those rural free schools that would dismiss the problems of the

inner-cities in favor of their own pastoral sanctuaries, Kozol draws a comparison to those who

might during World War II, keep

> right on somehow throughout the war with no experience of rage or need
>
> for intervention in the lives of those defined by the German press and media as
>
> less than human, but kept right on with waterplay and innovative games while
>
> smoke rose over Dachau…I think that we would look upon people now as some
>
> very fine and terrifying breed of alienated human beings. (Kozol, 1972, p. 11)

While extreme in its language and imagery, this statement from someone as dedicated to the idea

of education as a vehicle for social change as Kozol, seems more than plausible. Kozol had as

little tolerance for those who abdicate their responsibilities to society by removing to the

Vermont woods as he would for any Nazi collaborator. [7]

For Kozol, the problem with rural free schools, besides their overwhelming white, upper-

class composition, was that their "non-credentialized, pseudo-survival-oriented bent" was not

"relevant to the plight of America's oppressed" (Daniels, 1972). In Kozol's inner-city world,

there was no need for a "generation of radical basket weavers," but rather, a real need for

"radical, strong, subversive, steadfast, skeptical, rage-minded, and power-wielding obstetricians,

pediatricians, lab technicians, defense attorneys…and brain surgeons" (Kozol, 1972e, May). In

essence, there was no place for those who would see education as a private good focused on the

desires and mobility of a single child. Instead, for Kozol, there was a desperate need for those

who would see education as the key to pivotal social change, equality and social efficiency.

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[7] In his 1982 reimagining of Free Schools titled *Alternative Schools*, Kozol writes, "This is the sort of swashbuckling rhetoric that does nobody any good. It does injury to history; at the same time it does not help anyone at all to deal with less apocalyptic but intensely serious problems in our own society. I leave it as it stands: a record of my anger and my sense of desperation circa 1972. Inaccurate anger and intemperate desperation of this kind did grave injustice to a number of good people (some of them then, as now, out in the rural communes of Vermont) whom I have later come to know, to trust, and to admire. We still disagree; we no longer try to kill each other, or destroy each other's spirits, with our words." (p. 117-118).

Although the publication of Kozol's book in early 1972 generated some discussion within the Movement in the form of book reviews and commentary in various newsletters, it was not until the national conference in New Orleans, Louisiana in April of that year that the true impact of the book became apparent. As Mary Leueu of the Albany Free School wrote, "Jonathan Kozol's book, *Free Schools,* came into some heavy shit" at the conference (Leueu, 1972). Colorful description aside, Leueu was not wrong. Terry Doran, founder of the Fort Wayne Folk School, wrote in his post-conference notes that Kozol was the center of heated criticism and controversy during the conference due in part to the forceful and blunt nature of the book. For Doran, the conference demonstrated some major problems within the Movement. Instead of serving as way to bring "people together to share ideas and to strengthen each other," the conference turned into forum for personal attacks on those "willing to live on the fine edge of despair in the midst of continual struggle" (Doran, 1972). In essence, the conference, and the argument over Kozol's book, helped to illuminate the struggle for the heart of the Movement. Kozol's book had shattered any illusions the membership may have had about a unified vision. In his notes from the conference, Peter Marin of the *New Schools Exchange Newsletter* wrote that the discussions at the conference broke into two distinct groups. Some remained committed to a "Summerhillian-style, counterculture approach," while Kozol and others were "concerned with the blacks and poor and recognized that struggle as the central one"(Marin, 1972b). In other words, the struggle between those who would see education as a public good and those who would see it as a private good was now on display for everyone to see.

Although Kozol was the most vocal proponent of education as a vehicle for widespread social change, he was not the only one to express doubt his distain for the supporters of rural free school. With the publication of *Free Schools*, the Free School Movement was forced to take a

hard look at its own focus. Some supported Kozol's view of education as a public good and added their own condemnations of those of the "leisure class too afraid of their own rage" to face the problems of those left behind in the nation's cities and who would rather pay thousands of dollars a year to send their children to "learn about macramé and wheat germ" (Holman, Kozol & Tackeff, ca. 1971). These supporters of Kozol compared the "rich people's free school" and their "festivals of love and joy" and discussion of "handlooms, wheat germ and geodesic domes" with the realities of inner-city schools and their "talk of meat and milk and rent and doctors for sick children, heat in winter" and money to survive (Holman et al., ca. 1971).

While short in duration, the Free School Movement adds another example to the long string of education reform movements that have struggled with a general purpose for education. For some, education would serve a Jeffersonian purpose and produce educated citizens capable of leading the nation. For others, education was a means to individual economic success. As David Labaree states, each education reform effort in the United States has attempted to find a solution to this issue, and none has succeed (Labaree, 2011, p. 41). Instead, each successive reform effort, including the Free School Movement, has added weight to each side of argument, creating a seemingly endless cycle of reform. If it accomplished nothing else, the Free School Movement served as one more example of the entrenched struggle for the purpose of education in the United States.

While the Free School Movement of the 1960s failed to achieve the widespread educational and social change it sought, this reform effort deserves a mention in the annuals of education history. As a reform effort, the Free School Movement never achieved the unity or momentum necessary to bring about widespread change. Yet, for the four years of its existence, the Free School Movement provided an outlet for individuals like Jonathan Kozol, John Holt and

George Dennison to refine and develop their ideas. In a very real way, it served as a incubator for those who would later add their voices to other efforts. And while eventually these voices would grown more and more disparate, for a short time, they existed together under the umbrella of the Free School Movement.

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