

Dr. Seuss and Dangerous Citizenship¹

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Mac The Turtle, Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and Other Threats to Students in BC Schools

First, Dr. Seuss' *Yertle the Turtle* was deemed too political for British Columbia classrooms, then the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms—specifically the provision that protects free speech—was the subject of censorship in the Prince Rupert School District (No. 52). In an effort to “shield children from political messaging,” Prince Rupert school administrators and trustees have been vigilant (to the point of absurdity) in their attempts to enforce a 2011 arbitrator’s ruling that BC students must be insulated from political messages in schools.

Yertle the Turtle—one of six Dr. Seuss books that have repeatedly been banned or censored—is a story of the turtle king of a pond who stacks himself on top of other turtles in order to reach the moon, and then yells at them when they complain (Baldassarro, 2011). Last year, a Prince Rupert teacher was told a quote from the story is a political statement that could not be displayed or worn on clothing in her classroom. The quote in question is: “I know up on top you are seeing great sights, but down here on the bottom,

¹ I would like to thank the organizing committee of the Equity and Social Justice Conference for the invitation to participate in this year’s conference as a keynote speaker.

we too should have rights.”²The teacher had included the quote in materials brought to a meeting with school officials after she received a notice about union material that was visible in her car on school property. The story, written in 1958 by Theodor Seuss Geisel—whose birthday happens to be today—is an allegory of the subversion of fascism and authoritarian rule. Ironically, the Prince Rupert School District website prominently displays a message that “everyone should be safe from bullying. Don’t let them control you and keep you down.”³

In January 2013, the Prince Rupert school district struck again, banning several teachers from wearing t-shirts that displayed the Shakespearean question “2(b) or not 2(b)” on the front and excerpts from section 2 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms on the back: “Everyone has the following fundamental freedoms: (a) freedom of conscience and religion; (b) freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, including freedom of the press and other media of communication; (c) freedom of peaceful assembly; and (d) freedom of association.”

Three Prince Rupert teachers were told to remove or cover the black shirts they wore during a “dark day for education” event organized to mark the anniversary of Bills 27 and 28, legislation that stripped BC teachers rights to collectively bargain class size and composition. The BC Civil Liberties Association (2013) called on the district to reverse the ban, comparing the district’s action to a “badly-written” comedy sketch” and stated that, “As a government body, [Prince Rupert] School District No. 52 is bound by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, including the guarantee of freedom of expression

² Watch video of *Yertle The Turtle* here:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=9FFfbSWbLWw

³ <http://www.sd52.bc.ca/sd52root/%5D>

and freedom of association. Governments can only limit such rights in a narrow range of circumstances, according to legal tests established by the Supreme Court of Canada.”

Since 2004, there have been a series of disputes between teachers and the British Columbia Public School Employers’ Association (BCPSEA) over teachers’ rights to express their views on public issues. Most recently, arbitrator Mark Thompson delivered a ruling in response to a 2009 grievance filed by teachers after the Southeast Kootnay School District (No. 5) told teachers to remove materials from bulletin boards and classroom doors related to the British Columbia Teachers’ Federation “When Will They Learn” campaign⁴The union’s campaign focused attention on school closures, overcrowded classrooms, and lack for support for students with special needs. Thompson’s decision came eight months after arbitrator Emily Burkes found that the Kamloops/Thompson School District (No. 73) was justified in it’s infringement of teachers’ freedom of expression when district administrators ordered teachers to remove and refrain from talking to students about the black arm bands they were wearing to protest the BC’s Foundation Skills Assessment tests. The British Columbia Teachers’ Federation (BCTF) is appealing Thompson’s decision.

In the case before Thompson, the BCPSEA argued that limiting teachers free speech rights was justified in light of several objectives including: (a) schools must be politically neutral; (b) prohibition of partisan political messages is necessary for the maintenance of public confidence in the school system; (c) students must be insulated from partisan political messages while at school; (d) prohibition of political messages

⁴ View a BCTF television commercial from this campaign here:
<http://bctf.ca/publications/NewsMagArticle.aspx?id=17420>

displayed by teachers is needed to ensure professionalism of the teaching staff; and (e) regulation of partisan buttons is a necessary exercise of a principal's authority to manage and organize schools.

The union, in line with the employers, argued that protecting students from hateful or discriminatory speech or indoctrination is an important objective, but that students did not need to be sheltered from political controversy. The materials in this case—which focused on class size and composition and support for special needs students—the union argued, did not fall into the category of partisan political messages. On this point Arbitrator Thompson agreed describing the materials in question as “issue advertisements.” In other words, the materials addressed educational issues, the messages were political, but not partisan. Thompson’s reasoning was that while the materials appeared in conjunction with elections, “they did not mention a political party, let alone endorse one” (p. 37).

Nonetheless, using narrow logic, Thompson reasoned that “insulating students from political messages in the classroom is a ‘pressing and substantial objective’” (p. 45) and concluded that teachers may not introduce the “When Will They Learn” campaign material “either in the form of printed matter or buttons worn on their garments into the classroom or the walls or doors immediately adjacent to classrooms” (p. 47). Further the arbitrator concluded:

that the messages in question were worded to influence parents, not students.

However, the location for posters and buttons worn by teachers were unlikely to reach many parents compared to the number of students who would see them. In other words, the impairment on [teachers’] expression directed at parents was

minimal. The deleterious effects of the restriction on teachers' expression were proportional to the salutary effects of the insulation of the students." (p. 46).

While Thompson found the limits on teachers' expression in this case "proportional" and "minimal" he established a foundation for much more extensive restrictions on teachers' expression by accepting at face value the school employer's objective of "insulating students from political discourse in the classroom." In a similar case the United States (*California Teachers Association v. Governing Board of San Diego Unified School District*, 45 Cal App. 4th 1383 (1996), that involved teachers wearing button, the court stated that "the only practical means of dissociating a school from political controversy is to prohibit teachers from engaging in political advocacy during instructional activities" (p. 6).

Of course it is easy to identify the potential problems of partisan electoral politics in schools. (Although I would classify electoral politics in North America as generally serving to distract the people from issues that matter in the same way that watching the National Football League and drinking beer does.) The issues of the teacher as authority figure and students as impressionable and "vulnerable to messages from teachers" are always at the forefront of these discussions. And, inevitably someone uses the phrase about "the role of teachers moulding young minds," and that is exactly the point. In his decision Arbitrator Thompson writes that, "when a teacher advocates political views ... this intrudes on the political neutrality of the school" (p. 25). Indeed, all the parties in the Cranbrook arbitration, including the teachers' union, agreed (albeit with slightly different levels of significance) that "maintenance of political neutrality in schools" was an objective. Is this naiveté? Or the result of arguments undone by a logical fallacy? Either

way, the belief that schools are or could be politically neutral belies the nature of schools and the way they function in society.

What Exactly Are We Protecting Kids From? - Ideology of Neutrality

It's not really surprising that the BCTF agreed with the schools employers that schools should be "politically neutral." Educators often eschew openly political or ideological agendas for teaching and schools as inappropriate or "unprofessional." The question, however, is not whether to allow political discourse in schools or to encourage particular social visions in the classroom, but rather what kind of social visions will be taught?

There is a misguided and unfortunate tendency in our society to believe that activities that strengthen or maintain the *status quo* are neutral or at least non-political, while activities that critique or challenge the status quo are "political" and inappropriate. For example, for a company to advertise its product as a good thing, something consumers should buy, is not viewed as a political act. But, if a consumer group takes out an advertisement charging that the company's product is not good, perhaps even harmful, this is often understood as political action.

This type of thinking permeates our society, particularly when it comes to schooling and teaching. "Stick to the facts." "Guard against bias." "Maintain neutrality." These are admonitions or goals expressed by some teachers when I ask them about keys to successful teaching. Many of these same teachers (and teacher educators) conceive of their roles as designing and teaching courses to ensure that students are prepared to function non-disruptively in society as it exist. This is thought to be a desirable goal, in part, because it strengthens the status quo and is seen as being an "unbiased" or "neutral"

position. Many of these same teachers view their work in school as apolitical, a matter of effectively covering the curriculum, imparting academic skills, and preparing students for whatever high-stakes tests they might face. Often these teachers have attended teacher education programs designed to ensure that they were prepared to adapt to the status quo in schools.

Anyone who has paid attention to the debates on curriculum and school reform knows that schooling is a decidedly political enterprise (DeLeon & Ross, 2010; Mathison & Ross, 2008a; Mathison & Ross, 2008b; Ross & Gibson, 2007; Ross & Marker, 2005a, 2005b, 2005c). The question in teaching (as well as teacher education and school reform) is not whether to allow political discourse in schools or whether to advocate or not, but the nature and extent of political discourse and advocacy. “The question is not whether to encourage a particular social vision in the classroom but what kind of social vision it will be” (Teitelbaum, 1998, p. 32).

It is widely believed that neutrality, objectivity, and unbiasedness are largely the same thing and always good when it comes to schools and teaching. But, consider the following. *Neutrality is a political category*—that is—not supporting any factions in a dispute. Holding a neutral stance in a conflict is no more likely to ensure rightness or objectivity than any other and may be a sign of ignorance of the issues. Michael Scriven (1994) puts it this way, “Being neutral is often a sign of error in a given dispute and can be a sign of bias; more often is is a sign of ignorance, sometimes of culpable or disabling ignorance” (p. 68). Demanding neutrality of schools and teachers comes at a cost. As Scriven points out these are “clearly situations in which one wants to say that being neutral is a sign of bias” (p. 67). For example, being neutral in the debate on the

occurrence of the Holocaust; a debate on atomic theory with Christian Scientists; or a debate with fundamentalist Christians over the origins of life and evolution. To rephrase Scriven, it seems better not to require that schools include only neutral teachers at the cost of including ignoramuses or cowards and getting superficial teaching and curriculum. Absence of bias is not absence of convictions in an area, thus *neutrality is not objectivity*. To be objective is to be unbiased or unprejudiced. People are often misled to think that anyone who comes into a discussion with strong views about an issue cannot be unprejudiced. The key question, however, is whether and how the views are justified (e.g., Scriven, 1994).

“A knowledge claim gains objectivity...to the degree that it is the product of exposure to the fullest range of criticisms and perspectives” (Anderson, 1995, p. 198). Or as John Dewey (1910) argued, thoughts and beliefs that depend upon authority (e.g., tradition, instruction, imitation) and are not based on a survey of evidence are prejudices, prejudgements. Thus, achieving objectivity in teaching and the curriculum requires that we take seriously alternative perspectives and criticisms of any particular knowledge claim. How is it possible to have or strive for objectivity in schools where political discourse is surcircumscribed and neutrality is demanded? Achieving pedagogical objectivity is no easy task. The objective teacher considers the most persuasive arguments for different points of view on a given issue; demonstrates evenhandedness; focuses on positions that are supported by evidence, etc.

This kind of approach is not easy, and often requires significant quantities of time, discipline, and imagination. In this light, it is not surprising that objectivity is sometimes regarded as impossible, particularly with contemporary social issues in

which the subject matter is often controversial and seemingly more open to multiple perspectives than in the natural sciences. However, to borrow a phrase from Karl Popper, objectivity in teaching can be considered a “regulative principle,” something toward which one should strive but which one can never attain. (Corngold & Waddington, 2006, p. 6)

The “ideology of neutrality” that dominates current thought and practices in schools (and in teacher education) is sustained by theories of knowledge and conceptions of democracy that constrain rather than widen civic participation in our society and functions to obscure political and ideological consequences of so-called “neutral” schooling, teaching, and curriculum. These consequences include conceptions of the learner as passive; democratic citizenship as a spectator project; and ultimately the maintenance of status quo inequalities in society.

Education for Dangerous Citizenship⁵

Schools has always been about some form of social or citizenship education—about helping students to become good or effective citizens—framed primarily from an essentialist view of good citizen as knower of traditional facts but there have been attempts to develop a social reconstructionist view of the good citizen as agent of progressive (or even radical) social change or from some other competing view (e.g., Kincheloe, 2011). Given its fundamental concern with the nature of society and with the meaning(s) of democracy, social studies education has always been contested domain, struggled over territory in the classroom and curriculum. In the time I have left, I will consider what a contemporary critical social education might mean, both in terms of the

⁵ The ideas in the balance of this paper were developed in collaboration with Kevin D. Vinson.

challenges such an approach might face and in terms of the mechanisms by which such an approach might be actualized.

Social Control and Dangerous Citizenship

Yes, citizenship—above all in a society like ours, of such authoritarian and racially, sexually, and class-based discriminatory traditions—is really an invention, a political production. In this sense, one who suffers any of the discriminations... does not enjoy the full exercise of citizenship as a peaceful and recognized right. On the contrary, it is a right to be reached and whose conquest makes democracy grow substantively. Citizenship implies freedom... Citizenship is not obtained by chance: It is a construction that, never finished, demands we fight for it. It demands commitment, political clarity, coherence, decision. For this reason a democratic education cannot be realized apart from an education of and for citizenship. (Freire, *Teachers As Cultural Workers*, 1998, p. 90)

The nature of citizenship and the meanings of citizenship education are complex, as are their multiple and contradictory implications for contemporary schooling and everyday life. The issues citizenship education presents are critical and inexorably linked to the present and future status of public schooling and the maintenance, strengthening, and expansion of individual and democratic rights.

In his classic book *Democracy and Education*, John Dewey (1916) opens with a discussion of the way in which all societies use education as a means of social control. Dewey argues that education as a social process and function has no definite meaning until we define the kind of society we have in mind. In other words, there is no

“objective” answer to questions about the means and ends of citizenship education, because those purposes are not things that can be discovered.

In *Normative Discourse*, Paul Taylor (1961) succinctly states a maxim that has the potential to transform our approach to schooling, curriculum, and educational reform: “We must decide what ought to be the case. We cannot discover what ought to be the case by investigating what is the case” (p. 278). We—educators and citizens—must decide what ought to be the purpose of education. That means asking what kind of society, what kind of world we want to live in and then taking action to make it a reality. And, in particular, in what sense of democracy do we want this to be a democratic society? In order to construct meaning for education, we must engage these questions not as merely abstract or rhetorical, but in relation to our lived experiences and our professional practice as educators.

Not surprisingly then, civics and citizenship education—which is generally accepted as a primary purpose of the school curriculum—has always been a highly contested curricular area. The tapestry of topics, methods, and aims we know as social studies education has always contained threads of social reconstructionism (e.g., Hursh & Ross, 2000; Stanley, 2006). Social reconstructionists in North America, such as George S. Counts, Harold Rugg, and later Theodore Brameld, argued that teachers should work toward social change by teaching students to practice democratic principles, collective responsibility, and social and economic justice. Dewey advocated the democratic reconstruction of society and aspects of his philosophy inform some aspects of citizenship education. The traditional patterns of social studies teaching, curriculum, and teacher education, however, reflect little of the social reconstructionist

vision of the future, and current practices in these areas are more often focused on implementing standardized curriculum and responding to high-stakes tests than developing and working toward a vision of a socially just world (Gabbard & Ross, 2008; Mathison & Ross, 2008; Vinson & Ross, 2003). Indeed, in North America, self-described social studies “contrarians” who advocate the “transmission” of “facts” and reject pluralism in favor of jingoistic nationalism and monoculturalism (e.g., Leming, Ellington, & Porter-Magee, 2003) seem to have the upper hand in most schools and classrooms, despite spirited resistance (Ross & Marker, 2005a; 2005b; 2005c).

Undoubtedly, good intentions undergird North American citizenship education programs such as *Expectations of Excellence*, *CIVITAS*, and *National Standards for Civics and Government*. And yet, as my close collaborator Kevin D. Vinson (2006) points out, too often their oppressive possibilities overwhelm and subsume their potential for anti-oppression, especially as states, the national government, and professional education associations continue their drive to standardize, and to impose a singular theory and practice of curriculum, instruction, and assessment (e.g., The National Governors Association’s Common Core State Standards Initiative).

Making Dangerous Citizens?
The Tucson (AZ) Mexican American Studies Program

The Mexican American studies program at Tucson (AZ, USA) High Magnet School provides a vivid example of the oppressive and anti-oppressive possibilities of civics and citizenship education (as well as an illustration of how education functions as normative social control). In response to a 1974 racial desegregation order, Tucson schools established an African American studies program and later added Mexican American studies to the curriculum. The Mexican American studies program included

course work about historical and contemporary Mexican American contributions, social justice, and stereotypes. Students examined U.S. history from a Chicano perspective, reading highly acclaimed works such as Rodolfo Acuña's *Occupied America: A History of Chicanos* in addition to classics such as Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Lacey, 2011; Reinhart, 2011). Studies conducted by the Tucson schools have shown that Mexican American students in the program scored higher on statewide tests (AIMS), were twice as likely to graduate from high school, and three times as likely to go on to college as Mexican American students who do not participate (Reinhart, 2011).

Early in 2010, Arizona passed anti-immigration legislation, which was widely condemned as undermining basic notions of fairness by politicians and commentators on the left and right as well as by religious, business, and law-enforcement leaders (Nichols, 2010). Less well known was the passage of another law, written by Arizona schools chief Tom Horne, which targeted Latino/a and other students in the state's public schools. The law (known as House Bill 2281) banned schools from teaching ethnic studies. And in January 2011, Horne, who was by then Arizona's Attorney General, declared the Mexican American studies program in Tucson schools "illegal" stating it violated the law's four provisions, which prohibit any classes or courses that:

1. Promote the overthrow of the United States government;
2. Promote resentment toward a race or class of people;
3. Are designed primarily for pupils of a particular ethnic group; or
4. Advocate ethnic solidarity instead of the treatment of pupils as individuals.

(Horne, 2010; House Bill 2281, 2010)

Despite the solid curriculum and academic success of the program, Horne described the program as “propagandizing and brainwashing,” less about educating than about creating future activists. If the program is not immediately scrapped, Horne said the Tucson school district would lose ten percent of its funding, which amounted to \$15 million.

The New York Times reported that students asked teachers if they were now considered terrorist since Horne described them as wanting to overthrow the government. If not terrorists, the state of Arizona declared these students, and their teachers, enemies of the state—dangerous citizens—for studying the history of the U.S. from a Chicano perspective, a perspective that makes it impossible to ignore the historical and contemporary manifestations of racism, imperialism, as well as social, economic, and political inequalities. Indeed, what Horne and the Arizona legislature did was to make it illegal for students in Arizona to examine the key elements of capitalism: social relations, people and their struggle with nature to produce and reproduce life and its meanings, human beings seeking rational knowledge in order to survive, and individuals and groups fighting for freedom (Gibson & Ross, 2009).

Social Control and the Rewriting of History in Texas

In another example from the U.S., the 2010 revision of the Texas state curriculum standards was judged by historians as undermining the study of history and social sciences in schools by misrepresenting and distorting the historical record of U.S. society (e.g., stressing the superiority of capitalism, questioning the secular state, and presenting conservative philosophies in a more positive light). The Texas curriculum standards are important not just to the education of students who reside there, but to the whole of the U.S., because Texas is such a huge market for social studies and history textbooks its

curriculum standards are a template for the content textbook publishers produce for all U.S. schools.

The Texas curriculum standards, which outline the content of history and the social sciences for kindergarten through secondary school, and present an ideologically conservative vision of history and society. Historian Eric Foner (2010) notes that,

Judging from the updated social studies curriculum, conservatives want students to come away from a Texas education with a favorable impression of: women who adhere to traditional gender roles, the Confederacy, some parts of the Constitution, capitalism, the military and religion. They do not think students should learn about women who demanded greater equality; other parts of the Constitution; slavery, Reconstruction and the unequal treatment of nonwhites generally; environmentalists; labor unions; federal economic regulation; or foreigners. (para. 3)

The curriculum revisions approved by the elected Texas Board of Education include removing mention of key events, documents, and people related to the women's rights movement (e.g., Declaration of the Seneca Falls Convention, John and Abigail Adams, and Carrie Chapman Catt). Thomas Jefferson (author of the Declaration of Independence and third President of the U.S.) was removed from a list of people who inspired 18th and 19th century revolutions and replaced by the religious and conservative figures St. Thomas Aquinas, John Calvin, and William Blackstone.

As examples of "good citizenship" for third graders, the new curriculum deletes African American abolitionist Harriet Tubman. And the "role of religion"—but not the separation of church and state—receives emphasis throughout. For example, religious

revivals are now listed as one of the twelve major “events and eras” from colonial days to 1877. Curriculum revisions also include a reduction in the discussion of slavery (the trans-Atlantic slave trade is even renamed “Triangle Trade”); the Double-V Campaign of World War II (in which African Americans demanded that victory over the Axis powers be accompanied by the end of racial segregation and discrimination in the U.S.) was deleted from the curriculum.

In economics, Texas students will now study the free-market economic theories of Milton Friedman and Friedrich von Hayek and be required to understand the “benefits,” but none of the deleterious effects, of capitalism, which has been re-named the “free enterprise system.” *The New York Times* quoted one conservative member of the Texas Board of Education as saying, “Let’s face it, capitalism does have a negative connotation, you know, ‘capitalist pig!’” as a justification for the name change (McKinley, 2010). The kindergarten curriculum deletes food, shelter, and clothing from its list of “basic human needs.” And, third graders taking geography no longer need to identify the Amazon or the Himalayans and so on (Foner, 2010).

The new Texas social studies curriculum is so distorted that the American Historical Association (AHA) condemned its “arbitrary selections and deletions” and noting among other things, that the Texas curriculum discounts “the importance of human activity in North America before the British colonization of the Atlantic Coast” and “omits the key elements of Indian, Spanish, African, and Mexican people’s presence and actions” thus resulting in a historical narrative that cannot be described as accurate (AHA, 2010).

I believe educators must pursue, as obviously some already do, an agenda dedicated to the creation of a citizenship education that struggles against and disrupts inequalities and oppression (DeLeon & Ross, 2010; Ross & Queen, 2010). Classroom practice must work toward a citizenship education committed to exploring and affecting the contingencies of understanding and action and the possibilities of eradicating exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence in both schools and society. Freire, as illustrated in the quotation above, like Dewey, teaches us that citizenship education is essential to democratic education, and that democratic education is essential to a free and democratic society. Students must know that birth, nationality, documents, and platitudes are not enough. They must understand that the promises of citizenship—that is, for example, freedom—and the fulfillment of its virtues, are unfinished, and that they remain an ongoing, dynamic struggle. And they must come to act in a variety of creative and ethical ways, for the expansion and realization of freedom and democracy, the root of contemporary notions of citizenship, is in their hands, and it demands of them no less than the ultimate in democratic and anti-oppressive human reflection and human activity.

Contemporary conditions demand an anti-oppressive citizenship education, one that takes seriously social and economic inequalities and oppression that result from neoliberal capitalism (Ross & Gibson, 2007; Gibson & Ross, 2009) and builds upon the anti-oppressive possibilities of established and officially sanctioned approaches. Some new and potentially exciting directions and alternatives exist, however, within the recent scholarship surrounding Freirean and neo-Freirean pedagogy, democratic education, and cultural studies.

The pedagogical power of “dangerous citizenship,” which I will explore in my final minutes, resides in its capacity to encourage students and educators to challenge the implications of their own education/instruction, to envision an education that is free and democratic to the core, and to interrogate and uncover their own well-intentioned complicity in the conditions within which various cultural texts and practices appear, especially to the extent that oppressive conditions create oppressive cultural practices, and vice versa. My point here is that too often citizenship education implies “docile” and “conforming,” spectatorial behavior and thought, a setting imposed and reinforced by controlling images, power-laden and reproductive sociopedagogy.

Dangerous Citizenship

So what to do? Against these problematics I have just described, I propose an admittedly idiosyncratic notion, “dangerous citizenship.”

As I see it, the practice of citizenship, critical citizenship, or social justice-oriented citizenship, requires that people, as individuals and collectively, take on actions and behaviors that bring with them certain necessary dangers; it transcends traditional maneuvers such as voting and signing petitions, etc. For in some ways citizenship today, from this perspective, requires a praxis-inspired mindset of *opposition and resistance*, an acceptance of a certain strategic and tactical stance. Of course, the implication here is that dangerous citizenship is dangerous to an oppressive and socially unjust status quo, to existing hierarchical structures of power.

As I construe it, as pedagogy, dangerous citizenship embodies three fundamental, conjoined, and crucial generalities: *political participation*, *critical awareness*, and

intentional action. Its underlying aims rest upon the imperatives of resistance, meaning, disruption, and disorder.

Political participation implies partaking in the “traditional” rights and responsibilities of democratic citizenship. It does not intend, however, and should not be read to intend any sort of complacency or comfort relative to the dominant status quo. In fact, political participation might ironically insinuate *non-participation*. At its most simplistic political participation suggests such activities as (1) acting on the feasibilities of the freedoms of speech, assembly, religion, the press, and so on; and (2) undermining the actions of corporate-state government relative to, for example, abusing personal privacy and to contradicting the principles of justice, freedom, and equality (e.g., consider marches, demonstrations, petitions, etc.).

The second key component, *critical awareness*, builds on such constructs as Paulo Freire’s (1970) *conscientização*. Overall, its point and purpose is to enable the range of interested stakeholders to understand: (1) how things are; (2) that things can be different; and (3) how things might or should be. It is grounded, in part, within Freire’s conception of “reading the world” and Marx’s construction of “class consciousness” among other critical views (see Lukács, 1967).

The third and easily most complicated factor, *intentional action*, clearly could connote a range of useful activities. Intentional action refers most directly to those behaviors designed to instigate human connection, the true engagement with everyday life, meaningful experience, communication, and change. Behaviors that forcefully passivity, commodification, and separation.

Among these behaviors I will briefly describe the Situationist International's techniques of *dérive* and *détournement*. However, de Certeau's (1984) understanding of *la perruque* (e.g., "the workers own work disguised as work for his employer"; Vaneigem, 1967/1972), Foucault's *parrhesia*, and anarchists' use of sabotage (DeLeon, 2010) also easily fit under the heading of practicing dangerous citizenship as would certain other aspects and practices of post-left or insurrectionary anarchism. Regarding the latter there are myriad examples of dangerous citizenship (and/or politically inspired art) to be found in the book *The Interventionists: User's Manual for the Creative Disruption of Everyday Life* (Thompson & Sholette, 2004), which includes interviews, commentary, and images of:

- Artists producing work that encourages individual mobility and freedom (Ruben Ortiz-Torres);
- Artists who produce actions that occur within the public sphere (Surveillance Camera Players);
- Artists who deploy aesthetic strategies in other discourses including anthropology and urban geography (e.g. simulating "dirty bombs", recreating germ warfare tests) (subRosa; Critical Art Ensemble); and
- Artists who produce tools and clothing to augment the wearers' sense of personal autonomy (The Yes Men, Center for Tactical Magic).

Dérive and Détournement as Insurrectionist Pedagogy

In the mid-twentieth century, Guy Debord and other members of the Situationist International (SI) advocated techniques not yet extensively explored for their conceivable and critical pedagogical significance, yet of special interest given their promise vis-à-vis

the controlling and enforcing propensities of standards-based education its companion, high-stakes testing.⁶

The first, the *dérive*, literally “drifting,” implies “a mode of experimental behavior linked to the conditions of urban society: it is a technique of transient passage through varied ambiances” (Situationist International, 1981, p. 45). According to Debord:

In a *dérive* one or more persons during a certain period drop their usual motives for movement and action, their relations, their work and leisure activities, and let themselves be drawn by the attractions of the terrain and the encounters they find there. The element of chance is less determinant than one might think: from the *dérive* point of view cities have a psychogeographical relief, with constant currents, fixed points and vortexes which strongly discourage entry into or exit from certain zones. (Debord, 1981, p. 50)

For the SI “psychogeography” referred to “the study of the specific effects of the geographical environment, consciously organized or not, on the emotions and behavior of individuals” (Situationist International, p. 45).

On the second technique, *détournement*, literally “diversion,” which is short for: *détournement* of preexisting aesthetic elements or the integration of present or past artistic production into a superior construction of a milieu. (Situationist International, p. 45-46).

⁶ The published works of Guy Debord and other members of the Situationist International are widely available online. The Bureau of Public Secrets (<http://bopsecrets.org>) and the library at nothingness.org (<http://library.nothingness.org/articles/SI/all/>) are excellent resources.

Détournement involves a quotation, or more generally a re-use, that “adapts” the original element to a new context, the theft of aesthetic artifacts from their contexts and their diversion into contexts of one’s own device. In short, a *détournement* is a variation on a previous media work, in which the newly created one has a meaning that is antagonistic or antithetical to the original.

Examples of *détournement* can be found scattered across the landscape of popular culture. For example, culture jamming in the form of conceptual artist Barbara Kruger’s (1987) black and white photographs with overlaid captions such as “I shop therefore I am” and Adbuster magazine’s “Subvertisements” aim to disrupt and subvert corporate advertising (Adbusters spoof ads, n.d.; Discussion, n.d.; Lasn, 2009).

Artist and punk rocker Frank Discussion is known for his adaptation of Situationist tactics and the development of “antistasiology” or the study of resistance (Antistasiology, n.d.). Discussion subverts or derails events by intervening with an out of place element in the physical world, aimed at raising critical consciousness and critiquing society. For example, Discussion created and distributed 5,000 copies of “Bored With School”, a broadside against school and work, which was made to look like an official statement from the elected chief of the Arizona Department of Education (Discussion, 1981). His “Bush spells out ‘War is Peace’ policy” is a *détournement* of a CNN.com news report that brilliantly illustrates the doublespeak of contemporary politicians and the mainstream media (Discussion, n. d., War is Peace).

In the early 1980s, Discussion and his band, Feederz, *détourned* an image of Ronald Reagan for the cover of the album *Let Them Eat Jellybeans!*, which was one of the earliest compilations of punk rock/art rock in North America (Let Them Eat

Jellybeans!, 1981). More recently Jello Biafra and the Guantanamo School of Medicine followed suit by adapting the Barack Obama “Hope” poster for the cover of their album *Audacity of Hype* (Biafra, 2009).⁷

Together *dérive* and *détournement* sprang from Debord and his colleagues’ “dreams of a reinvented world,” a world of experiment and play. According to Greil Marcus (1989):

These means were two: [jointly] the “*dérive*,” a drift down city streets in search of signs of attraction or repulsion, and “*détournement*,” the theft of aesthetic artifacts from their contexts and their diversion into contexts of one’s own device. ...

[Ideally] to practice *détournement*—to write new speech balloons for newspaper comic strips, or for that matter old masters, to insist simultaneously on a “devaluation” of art and its “reinvestment” in a new kind of social speech, a “communication containing its own criticism,” a technique that could not mystify because its very form was a demystification—and to pursue the *dérive*—to give yourself up to the promises of the city, and then to find them wanting—to drift through the city, allowing its signs to divert, to “detourn,” your steps, and then to divert those signs yourself, forcing them to give up routes that never existed before—there would be no end to it. It would be to begin to live a truly modern way of life, made out of pavement and pictures, words and weather: a way of life anyone could understand and anyone could use. (pp. 168, 170)

⁷ For additional examples of *détournement* see Ross (2010, 2011).

Dérive and Détournement in Schools—Examples

As techniques of resistance aimed toward the enforcement elements of standards-based education and high-stakes testing, what might *dérive* and *détournement* mean? What might they look like? How might they be applied? And how might they work?

Applied to schooling and high-stakes testing, the *dérive*, the more difficult of the two, demands first a re-understanding of the geographical shifts brought on by changes in gaze-based technologies and advanced state capitalism. *Dérive* is a social act, and might include students and teachers would move communally, cooperatively, drifting as it were through buildings, courses, curriculum, but also through cyberspace, virtual space, hyperspace, through the various architectures of contemporary schooling, as they were attracted or repelled, as their emotions and behaviors were piqued.

Perhaps the most recent and best example of *dérive* is from China's "Jasmine Revolution" (named in homage of the Middle East uprisings) where, on February 20, 2011, anonymous tweets from a blogger (Jason Ng aka Shudong) produced public gatherings in more than a dozen cities (2011 Chinese pro-democracy protests, 2011). The protests did not escalate beyond large roaming crowds, such as the one that formed at a McDonald's restaurant in Wangfujing, Beijing's major retail shopping district. Yet, journalists reported an "ambiguous revolutionary atmosphere" even though the crowds were not actually protesting (Demick & Pierson, 2011). What turned into regular Sunday strolls, became a highly effective psychological operation against the Chinese government. These *dérives*, where people simply come out and pschogeographically walk, circumvent the bans on public protest in China, but they brought on serious responses from China's massive security apparatus, which included the arrest of over 30

pro-democracy activists (including prototypical dangerous citizen Ai Weiwei, an internationally known artist, cultural critic, and dissident whose work blurs the boundaries of art and politics), as well as censorship, stepped up security measures, and the banning of the jasmine flower.⁸ By March 2011 *dérives* were taking place at 55 locations in 41 cities, all of them popular gathering spots such as Starbucks in Guangzhou and in front of the statue of Mao Zedong in Chengdu (Boxun, 2011; “Jasmine Revolution” Beijing Wangfujing assembly, heavily guarded, 2011).

Taking their lead from China’s Jasmine Revolution, student drifters might, for instance, freely enter or exit schools (both physical and virtual) as they were encouraged or discouraged to do so, and they would seek simply to experience, to disrupt, or to play. They would surf websites, confronting relevant images, come and go, utilize monitors and web cams for “travel,” compelled toward or away from various zones, from, say, “official” image bases, from control, and from the enforcing effects of standardization schemes.

Conceivably, albeit in the extreme, they could drift in and out of—even hack into—testing locales and interrupt them, create with them, toy with them, occupy them. They could, moreover, enter and exit classrooms, schools, central offices, government domains, and media positions where high-stakes testing is enacted and where, in the end, controlling images are most oppressively enacted. All as a means of resistance.

Consider too the lessons to be learned by civic educators from Wikileaks (<http://wikileaks.org/>)—the non-profit media organization that enables independent

⁸ Videos of the Wangfujing strolls are available on the internet, see for example, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DkBceA-WEmQ>

sources to leak information, including state secrets (e.g., Afghan War Diary; Iraq War Logs; and hundreds of thousands of U.S. State Department cables), to journalists.

Wikileaks is not the one-off creation of a solitary genius; it is the product of decades of collaborative work by people engaged in applying computer hacking to political causes, in particular, to the principle that information-hoarding is evil. (Ludlow, 2010)

Wikileaks, and hacktivist culture in general, are based upon the “hacker ethics” of (1) all information should be free; and (2) mistrust of authority and the promotion of decentralization (Levy, 1984), two ideas that must be seriously engaged with in any educational endeavor that claims to promote democracy and freedom.

With respect to *détournement*, the implications for resistance are perhaps clearer, especially within the contexts of surveillance, and spectacle.

Consider, for example, this plausible newspaper headline:

PRESIDENT OBAMA, SECRETARY DUNCAN ANNOUNCE

“RACE TO THE TOP”

Plan Emphasizes Paying Teachers Based On Student Test Scores

In and of itself, this seems (or may seem to some) innocuous, even positive, in that the administration will be devoting billions of dollars to schools, seeking to ensure that data collection tells us whether improvements are actually happening, and tying student achievement to assessments of teachers. Suppose, however, that as a mode of resistance the headline is juxtaposed next to a poster illustrating what we know about the history of paying teachers for student performance, which is that pay for performance gains are mostly illusions:

- In England, when payment-for-results was finally dropped in the 1890s, the overwhelming judgment was that it was unsound policy. Cynics referred to schools as “grant factories” and children as “grant-earning units.”
- Payment-by-results appeared briefly in Canada in 1876, causing conservatives to rejoice because it made teachers and students work harder to avoid failure. The Canadian experience showed that test scores could be increased quickly, so long as the subject matter could be narrowed and measured. But, as in England, the system caused teachers to focus their energies on students who were most likely to succeed, helping them cram for examinations while ignoring the others. In 1883, a public outcry ended the experiment abruptly.
- Nearly a century later in the U.S., a “performance contracting” experiment in Arkansas produced only scandal and the lack of results ultimately doomed performance contracting, and it was declared a failure. Like the earlier English and Canadian experiments, performance contracting once again showed how financial incentives failed to produce expected gains, while at the same time generating damaging educational effects.

As a second example, imagine this newspaper headline:

HALF OF STATE’S PUBLIC SCHOOLS DON’T MAKE THE GRADE
IN READING AND MATH

Schools Rated Poorly Could Lose Students or be Closed⁹

⁹ The Pittsburg *Post-Gazette* ran this headline on August 13, 2003: “Half of Pa. public schools don’t make the grade in math and reading—Under new U.S. law, schools rated poorly could lose students.” Retrieved from <http://www.post-gazette.com/localnews/20030813schoolreport0813p1.asp>

Suppose, further, an accompanying chart with the names of schools or districts in one column and mean standardized test scores in a second column, perhaps with pass-fail cutoff scores indicated.

Now consider recent (mind-boggling but true) news reports that within a particular state funding has been provided to equip school system administrators with smart phones at a cost of thousands of dollars, while because of budget cuts at the school level parents have been asked to donate supplies, including toilet paper, as a means to save money that might otherwise have to be diverted from instruction. (According to some reports, some schools actually have engaged in a system of bartering donated supplies, again, including toilet paper, in order to obtain necessary educational material.) Now, re-imagine the image. The headline:

HALF OF STATE'S PUBLIC SCHOOLS DON'T MAKE THE GRADE
IN READING AND MATH

The chart? Column One: names of schools or districts. Column Two: number of rolls of donated toilet paper (with appropriately arbitrary pass-fail levels reported). As with the first case, both meaning and significance have been changed.

At the heart of *détournement* rests the notion that in all instances either the image is altered to “fit” the context, or the context is altered to “fit” the image. Such processes—or pedagogical strategies—enable students, teachers, and others to confront and combat the enforcing/enforcement properties of high-stakes testing *as* image.

What they require, though, are access to and facility with those technologies that make such enforcement possible, as well as an understanding—a *critical consciousness*—of controlling images, surveillance, and spectacle. Joined with *dérive*

(and, perhaps, *parrhesia*, sabotage, *la perruque*, etc.), *détournement* provides an untapped mode of situated and critical resistance.

Conclusion

I offer the practices of *dérive* and *détournement* not as absolutes or final statements on what the practice of dangerous citizenship is or could be, but as quotidian and incremental praxis, a tentative set of steps toward reestablishing the place of living and authenticity as against alienation, passivity, antidemocracy, conformity, and injustice. For in the end, standardized education and high-stakes testing is not the whole story, but merely a piece of the bigger story, one in which we and our children are author and character, subject and object, player and played on. Perhaps this is our true test. If so, then the stakes are high indeed.

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