# ARTICLES

*Abstract*

This paper examines several contemporary social theorists and commentators who have focused on conflicts in contemporary social values and beliefs and have pointed to what has been called the 'cultural contradiction of capitalism.' These contradictions, it is argued, turn on the conflict between traditional notions of bourgeois morality and attitudes, and those that have been spawned by a consumption-oriented capitalism. The paper suggests that it is within this context that many of the problems and predicaments presently faced by schools become comprehensible. School may now constitute the final bulwark for the socialization of the young into the work-oriented, instrumentally-motivated values of traditional bourgeois society. In so doing it has become *the* public battleground for the struggle to resolve the contradictory nature of culture in contemporary society.

H. Svi Shapiro

## Schools, Work and Consumption: Education and the Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism

It is clear that in recent times the attempt to develop a critical theory of schooling has undergone a major revision. At the center of this revision has been the rejection of what was seen as an overly cohesive or functionalist (albeit neo-Marxist) view of the social system, and the place of schools in it. There has been a rejection of a social model in which the elements comprising it appear to be linked together with an almost seamless 'fit'. Earlier attempts to employ Marxian categories in the analysis of schooling — whether through studies of the 'hidden curriculum', revisionist versions of educational history, or perhaps most notably, in the use of the 'Correspondence Principle' — talked, overwhelmingly, of the way in which school 'mirrored' the industrial/bureaucratic infrastructure. Education, as a part of the ideological 'superstructure' did little more than reflect, correspond with, or provide a homologue to, the economic 'base'. Not only did schools seem to function so as to achieve a thorough and unadulterated accommodation of their students to the dominant ideology, but schools themselves fitted into a broader process of socialization to produce an effect that was, in every way, cohesive and mutually reinforcing.

In the work of authors such as Henry Giroux[1] or Michael Apple[2] in the United States, and Paul Willis[3] and R. Dale[4] in Britain, an amended version of the radical analysis of schooling has began to emerge. Drawing on the wider theoretical perspectives of Antonio Gramsci, Louis Althusser, Nicos Poulantzas, and others, the work has begun to recognize the extent to which opposition, disjuncture and autonomy must be seen as a part of the description of any social system. Society, and especially capitalist society, is a precarious articulation of frequently discordant elements. In such analysis there is a growing awareness of schools as

* School of Education, The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

part of a social system in which, while the economic process and class domination may be determinant in the 'last instance', we cannot assume the existence of an entirely coherent or integrated set of cultural meanings.[5] While some students develop a 'counter school culture' to resist the imposition of dominant values and attitudes, schools themselves encourage beliefs and meanings which are, in no certain manner, congruous with all the demands of industrial capitalism.[6] Neither in the internal cultural processes of schools, or in the larger ideological area of which schools are a part, can we expect the existence of a smoothly harmonious or seamless process of socialization.

While this brief introductory note indicates the development of a view of schooling which reflects, more fully, the dissonant nature of our social experience, we still, in many ways, have assumed a functionalist standpoint. An adequate recognition of the conflicting and contradictory nature of liberal-capitalism as the matrix for our study of schools is still far from complete. Thus, even in the study by Willis, with its extraordinary sensitivity to the issue of disjuncture and conflict, there is still a view of the dominant capitalist ideology that is unitary and undivided. Indeed, he argues that the "crucial divisions, distortions, and transferences which have been examined arise very often not so much from ideas and values mediated *downward* from the dominant social group, but from internal cultural relationships."[7] It is, of course, more typical of Marxist analysis to view cultural and ideological divisions as occurring along a vertical axis as opposed to a horizontal one; it is the cultural conflicts *between* classes that form the usual focus of attention. The result of the focus on this kind of conflict has led to an inadequate consideration in critical studies of schooling, of the tensions and oppositions that characterize the dominant ideology itself. For far from bring an unitary entity, such ideology is itself fraught with important divisions.

In this paper then, my general concern, is to add to the development of a literature which is attempting to develop a critical understanding of schooling through a recognition of the often contradictory and dissonant nature of contemporary capitalism. In particular, I am concerned here with the contradictory nature of the ideology that legitimates, or attempts to legitimate this society. The major portion of the paper attempts to draw together the work of several social theorists and commentators who have, in recent years, focused on the 'horizontal' conflict in contemporary ideology, and have described what has been called by one of them, the 'cultural contradictions' of capitalism.[8] My hope is that such a synthesis will bring attention to a substantial body of sociological work that has been inadequately considered by those interested in schools.

Indeed, in the final section of this paper I will argue that the results of such work are indispensible for understanding the problems of cultural reproduction in this society, as well as the growing crisis of public education in the United States and other advanced capitalist societies.

*A Culture Divided: 'Production' vs. 'Consumption'*

One of the most interesting statements concerning the conflicting nature of the culture of capitalist society is made by Daniel Bell. Bell notes that from about the 1920's on, the traditional notions of bourgeois morality and values have been under attack from cultural attitudes spawned by the rise of a mass consumption society. The emergence, in the United States, of the 'consumption-oriented society' with its emphasis on spending and material possessions undermined the traditional system of values that emphasized thrift, frugality, self-control, and impulse-renunciation. In place of a culture concerned with how to work and achieve the focus was now on how to spend and enjoy. Bell argues that despite "some

continuing use of the language of the Protestant ethic, the fact was that by the 1950's American culture had become primarily hedonistic, concerned with play, fun, display, and pleasure — and, typical of things in America, in a compulsive way.''[9] The abandonment of Puritanism and the Protestant ethic creates, says Bell, an important contradiction in the norms of the culture: ''On the one hand, the business corporation wants an individual to work hard, pursue a career, accept delayed gratification — to be, in the crude sense, an organization man. And yet, in its products and its advertisements, the corporation promotes pleasure, instant joy, relaxing and letting go. One is to be 'straight' by day and a 'swinger' by night.''[10]

Bell argues that the transformation of society and the erosion of a traditional bourgeois ethic was made possible by a number of social inventions which made possible and facilitated a consumption-oriented culture. Among these was the spread of installment buying which broke down the old Protestant fears of debt; the development of marketing ''which rationalized the art of identifying different kinds of buying groups and whetting consumer appetites.''[11]; as well as, of course, the revolution in technology and the introduction of mass production on an assembly line. In addition to the availability of automobiles which allowed escape from the repressive sanctions of small town society, the introduction of movies offered ''a window on the world, a set of ready-made daydreams, fantasies and projection . . .''[12] And the use of intense advertising and planned obsolescence ensured that selling ''became the most striking activity of contemporary America. Against frugality, selling emphasized prodigality; against asceticism, the lavish display.''[13]

In the stimulation of a culture that applauded immediate gratification, fun and consumption, the idea of installment selling struck at the very notion of saving or abstinence which is at the moral heart of the Protestant ethic: ''Being moral meant being industrious and thrifty. If one wanted to buy something one should save for it.''[14] For years, writes Bell, such was the grim spector of middle class morality that people were afraid to be overdrawn at the bank. By the end of the 1960's however the banks were strenuously advertising the services of cash reserves that would allow a depositor to overdraw up to several thousand dollars. No one, he says, need be deferred from gratifying his impulses at auction or sale. The hedonistic values of the consumption culture have all but destroyed the Protestant concern with work, and the Puritan emphasis on a 'forbidding attitude towards life.' In place of the traditional virtues of industry, thrift, discipline, and sobriety, the contemporary world of hedonism is a world of fashion, photography, advertising, television and travel: ''It is a world of make-believe in which one lives for expectations, for what will come rather that what is. And it must come without effort.''[15]

While within the traditional culture gratification of forbidden impulses aroused guilt, now failure to have fun and successfully pursue pleasure lowers ones self-esteem. The contradictions, described by Daniel Bell, between what might be called a culture of 'production' and a culture of 'consumption' (the former emphasizing the values of work, perseverance and discipline. and the latter, relaxation, pleasure and gratification) are paralleled in a number of studies which focus on the effects of the division of labor in capitalist society.[16] Eli Zaretsky,[17] for example, describes how the family which, in the 19th century, declined as a commodity-producing unit, in the 20th century received a new importance as a market for individual commodities:

> Mass production forced the capitalist class to cultivate and extend that market, just as it forced it to look abroad for other new markets. As a result, American domestic and personal life in the

> twentieth century has been governed by an ethic of pleasure and self-gratification previously unknown to a laboring class. Working people now see consumption as an end in itself rather than an adjunct to production, and as a primary source of both personal and social (i.e. 'status') identity.[18]

The result of all this, says Zaretsky, has been a profound democratization of the idea that it is good to live well, consume pleasurably, and enjoy the fruits of ones labor. The rise of mass consumption he says, has vastly extended the range of 'personal' experience available to men and women — though characteristically in a 'passive' form; the purchase and consumption of commodities: "Taste, sensibility, and the pursuit of subjective experience — historically reserved for leisure classes and artists — have been generalized throughout the population . . . by advertising and other means."[19]

For Zaretsky the split between 'production' and 'consumption', contains within it a second split — that between our 'personal' lives and our place within the social division of labor. So long, he argues, as the family was a production unit based on private property, its members understand their domestic life and 'personal' relations to be rooted in their mutual labor. With the rise of industry 'work' and 'life' were separated: "Proletarianization split off the outer world of alienated labour from an inner world of personal feeling . . . it created a 'separate' sphere of personal life, seemingly divorced from the mode of production."[20] Under capitalism, he argues, the ethic of personal fulfillment and self-cultivation which in previous centuries was restricted to the leisure classes and to artists and courtiers, has now become the property of the masses of people (though Zaretsky points out, it has different meaning for men and for women, and for different strata of the proletariat). Underpinned by the ethic of consumption with its imperatives of gratification, enjoyment and relaxation, the search for fulfillment is centered on 'personal' life and 'personal' relations that is outside ones 'job' or role in the division of labor. Zaretsky argues that much of the search for personal meaning takes place within the family and is one reason for the persistence of the family in spite of the decline of many of its earlier functions. The contemporary formulations of the notions of individualism and subjectivity, personal feeling and inner need, emphasizes its existence as an autonomous realm independent of the society and the world of production: "It take place on a vast new social terrain known as 'personal' life, whose connection to the rest of society is as veiled and obscure as is the family's connection."[21]

Following a similar line of analysis in Britain, Arthur Brittan[22] refers to the process by which individuals find meaning and identity outside of the bureaucratized world of work as 'privatization.' While Brittan notes that the concept of privacy has been around a long time (The slogan an Englishman's home is his castle is resonant of a bourgeois style of life) its more contemporary meaning is associated with the emergence of a consumer orientation in western capitalism. Indeed, the 'separation of spheres' (work from consumption, personal life from society) has become the lynch pin for analysis of the family and of women in modern society. The separation of the family from production and social life has made of it an emotional battleground in which women have found themselves in an increasingly isolated and exploited situation. Of course, as Brittan notes, such 'privatization' is supported by a vast advertising industry which has made it the key to providing individual fulfillment:

> Advertisers sell privatizaton — they sell the means whereby individuals isolate themselves from the demands and obligations of political and social relationships; they sell the glorious picture of the 'good life' lived by beautiful people in suburban utopias.[23]

Stanley Aronowitz[24] argues that the split between private life and work, consumption and production is the necessary mechanism by which culture makes palatable the dissatis-

factions arising from the boredom and frustrations of work. He believes that it makes it possible to accept the inevitability of alienated labor. Consumerism as an ideal has developed, Aronowitz says, precisely as the older religious belief in the work ethic has declined. The sanctity of production is not now offered for its own sake, but, instead, as a purely instrumental activity — a means rather than an end of human action.

*The Emerging Hegemony of 'Consumption' Culture*

The pivot of the 'privatization' argument is the belief that capitalism has been fundamentally transformed; from an economy of production into one of mass consumption. Such a view suggests a notion of culture in capitalist society in which the conflict between the ethic of production and that of consumption has been resolved in favor of the latter. The impulse towards pleasure, gratification and fun (to whatever extent these are, in Marcuse's terminology, 'repressively sublimated') has become the defining feature of contemporary bourgeois society. Such a view is indeed found in the conclusions of writers as diverse as Alain Touraine, Christopher Lasch, Richard Sennett, Herbert Marcuse, Ralf Dahrendorf and Kenneth Galbraith.

The French sociologist Alain Touraine, for example, argues:

> We are witnessing the weakening of cultural expressions bound to a particular social group. Nothing could be clearer than the decline of the traditional 'worker culture' . . . For the mass of semi-skilled workers, participation in the culture is no longer based on professional life or traditional social roles but on consumption of items and products produced for the entire society.[25]

Such arguments must be seen as part of the larger discussion concerning what is sometimes called the 'new working class' or the 'embourgeoisement' thesis in western society. At its root is the belief in a model of society in which divisions, loyalties and ideology have declined to be replaced by a 'middle class' consumption ethic in which the 'private' individual is encouraged to retreat into the confines of home and garden. Such a retreat, as has been described by Herbert Marcuse, is fueled by a culture whose internal dynamic is the stimulation of an 'insatiability of wants'.[26]

More recently the thesis that a consumption-oriented culture has become dominant in American society is found in Christopher Lasch's influential work. Indeed its title *The Culture of Narcissism* has almost become emblematic of such a viewpoint.[27] According to Lasch the cultural ethic in American society must be seen to have undergone a fundamental transformation. The 'production' culture of work, deferred gratification, self-discipline, industry, moderation, and avoidance of debt has been overturned. Its place has been taken by a 'present-oriented hedonism' and an ethic of pleasure (though, Lasch asserts, contemporary hedonism originates not in the pursuit of pleasure but in a struggle for interpersonal advantage):

> In an age of diminishing expectations, the Protestant virtues no longer excite enthusiasm. Inflation erodes investments and savings. Advertising undermines the horror of indebtedness, exhorting the consumer to buy now and pay later. As the future becomes menacing and uncertain only fools put off until tomorrow the fun they can have today. A profound shift in our sense of time has transformed work habits, values and the definition of success. Self-preservation has replaced self-improvement as the goal of earthly improvement . . . The happy hookers stands in place of Horatio Alger as the prototype of personal success.[28]

For Lasch the 'culture of narcissism' has invaded every area of our social lives. The deterioration of the educational system, for example, reflects the waning social demands for initiative, enterprise and the competition to achieve. The decline of critical thought and

the erosion of intellectual standards reflects the ascendence of a hedonistic culture which has encouraged a pedagogy of easy indulgence. Like Marcuse, Lasch argues that the American economy, having reached a point where its technology was capable of satisfying basic material wants now relied on the creation of consumer demands:

> In a simpler time, advertising merely called attention to the product and extolled its advantages. Now it manufactures a product of its own: the consumer, perpetually unsatisfied, restless, anxious and bored. Advertising seems not so much to advertize products as to promote consumption as a way of life. It 'educates' the masses into an unappeasable appetite not only for goods but for new experience, and personal fulfillment.[29]

*An Alternative Perspective — The Emerging Ethic of 'Self-Fulfillment'*

The erosion of the culture of production, and its transformation into one concerned with subjectivity, consumption and 'personal' life, finds expression in other studies — though in terms that are more laudatory than in the ones cited above. While these studies have emphasized the extent to which a consumption-oriented culture is a repressive and alienating phenomenon, other writers have noted what they have seen as its liberating or humanizing effects. Perhaps the most prolific and influential of these has been Theodore Roszack. In his most recent book[30] Roszack speaks of our passing through a revolution, though one concerned with more than the traditional demands of bread, work and physical security:

> Behind these obvious and absolute necessities — but no less fierce in its demands — there stands an appetite for personal recognition, for the recognition of each of us as a special and significant event in the universe, a center of delicate sensibilities and radical originality. On a scale that has no historical precedent, we are becoming *interesting* to ourselves and to one another as beings who carry unexpected destinies into the world.[31]

In strong disagreement with the assertions of Lasch, Bell and others, of the rise of a 'pathological narcissism', Roszack claims that the new 'personalist sensibility' challenges the orthodox culture; the "sensitive quest for fulfillment", he says, must not be confused with the riotous hedonism of our consumption economy. Their critical perspective fails to distinguish a true revolt of the people on behalf of the human need for personal growth, and against 'massification', assigned roles, restrictive social routines, institutions (work, education, government, corporation, etc.) that seems to have been designed for *everybody* in general, but for nobody in person. In place of the 'traditional sublimated virtues' — self restraint, dutiful citizenship, the work ethic (and above all) deference of needs, Roszack detects the inauguration of a society "whose every imperative and policy must yield to the demand of personal fulfillment."[32]

While Hans Dreitzel in his study of the 'Political Meaning of Culture'[33] warns against the dangers of drawing general conclusions from the California scene, he concurs, nevertheless, that the search for a new personal and communal identity is spreading within the middle class as well as among working class youth. Central to this search is the emphasis on the value of 'self-fulfillment'. The youth movement of the sixties, argues Dreitzel, initiated a general search for a new integration of the moral, religious, and aesthetic dimensions of life which threatens the motivational foundations of the industrial system. In place of the instrumentalist ethic and achievement motivation of bourgeois 'economic man' there is now a rising demand for "spontaneity and fantasy, for communal solidarity and communicative experience, the need, last but not least, for a noninstrumental, aesthetic approach to nature."[34]

Dreitzel cautions, however, that such cultural movements are in constant danger of being swallowed up by a descent into consumerism among those who seek self-fulfillment, or a

regression into a romantic and reactionary individualism (an anti-social search for the naked 'authentic self' outside the world of our everyday experience). Such dangers notwithstanding there is now among many in the middle class a growing skepticism towards the benefits of instrumental rationality "and an increasing inclination towards a reinterpretation of the natural conditions of human life.'[35] The growth of such sentiment, Dreitzel believes, is demonstrated in a number of areas: in the growth of an ecological consciousness; the increase in public debate on issues of physical and mental health; and the use of syncretistic religious movements which emphasize a cosmological equilibrium between nature and consciousness; and in the growing awareness of the repression of human needs. (reflected in the proliferation of psychotherapeutic and consciousness — raising activities). There is also the development of single issue movements and grass-roots politics which have challenged and offered alternatives to 'technocratic standards' in political life.

Whatever the more obvious limits of its methodological approach, support for Roszack and Dreitzel is provided in the studies undertaken by Daniel Yankelovitch and his associates.[36] Like them Yankelovitch argues that the 'new consciousness' which developed in the 1960's on the campuses and in the counter-culture have now worked their way through large sections of the middle class, and parts of the working class:

> By the seventies . . . most Americans were involved in projects to prove that life can be more than a grim economic chore. Americans from every walk of life were suddenly eager to give more meaning to their lives, to find fuller self-expression . . . The search for self-fulfillment has developed into a prime source of energy in American culture . . . The life experiments of self-fulfillment seekers often collide violently with traditional rules, creating a national battle of moral norms. Millions of Americans are hungry to live their lives to the brim, determined to consume every dish on the smorgasbord of human experience.[37]

The challenge to traditional norms, says Yankelovitch has found a variety of expressions in the larger society - in the women's movement, in the consumer, environmental and quality-of-life movements, in the greater acceptance of sexuality, in the emphasis on self-help, in a new preoccupation with the body and physical fitness, and above all, "in a search for the 'full, rich life,' ripe with leisure, new experience and enjoyment as a substitute for the orderly, work-centered way of earlier decades."[38]

*Schooling and the Battle for Cultural Dominance*

The hopeful prognostications of these latter writers do not, it is clear, reveal the precise relationship between the rising expectations of self-fulfillment, the development of a 'personalist sensibility', and the existence of a consumption-oriented culture. Perhaps Aronowitz offers the best insight into their relationship when he argues that:

> far from being simply a new-form of the old repressive swindle, the new life-styles and modes of consumption, along with their reflections in the capitalist cultural industry, also contain the anticipation of something new, something which transcends the existing system. More specifically, the seemingly superficial pseudo-satisfactions offered by mass culture signify also forms of satisfaction which attempt to escape from the realm of mere appearance and become reality.[39]

Whatever the nature of this culture it is clear that it stands on one side of a societal divide on the other side of which is a culture whose values and beliefs stand in fundamental opposition to it. Culture in contemporary society is neither unitary or monolithic, but characterized by the deep fissure that exists between the values of 'production' (discipline, restraint, deferral, etc.), and 'consumption' (pleasure, gratification, subjectivity, etc.). It is a division that must be fully incorporated into any model that purports to understand the nature of schooling in America. Failure to do so has, in my belief, contributed to the

functionalist - albeit radical or neo-Marxist — explanations of schooling so common in the recent literature.[40]

Despite the insistent claims of conservative critics during the last decade that school has become a place of easy indulgence, catering only to the whims of students' desires, such assertions remain at odds with much of the empirical evidence. There is, for example, little reason to believe that the voluminous descriptions of a decade ago asserting that schools in America are, for the most part, grim, joyless, places dominated by 'mindless' procedures and authoritarian practices, are any less accurate now than when written.[41] Indeed the work of these earlier 'romantic' critics supplemented by the more rigorous studies of recent times has made increasingly clear the extent to which the institution of schooling in this country is molded by the values and norms of a production-oriented culture. It distinguishes, for example, at an early age the notions of 'play' and 'work' — the latter being associated with the serious 'business' of education, while play is rapidly relegated to the interstices of the school-day (similar, as we have seen, to the relation between work and leisure in adult society).

Crucial to successful schooling (and successful socialization) is the willingness to forego ones own concerns, interests, desires, for the ones determined by those in authority. As Aronowitz points out, it is precisely the willingness to enter into a relationship of exchange with those in authority — to undertake activities now that offer little intrinsic satisfaction for the promise of future reward — that characterizes so much of the experience of both education and adult work. If, as Bell claims, 'deferral' is the very essence of the production culture then school surely is its quintessential expression; we do no more admit this when we stress to students that, first and foremost, education ought to be seen as a future 'investment.' Indeed the present crisis of public education may be understood as related to its declining value as an investment; schooling no longer seems to pay off. Contrary to so much of contemporary experience (not the least of which is the media obsession with 'overnight' successes and sudden stardom), school is perhaps the last cultural institution committed to the Protestant mythology in which work is presented as the precursor to success.

Nor is the emphasis on work and the commitment to deferred gratification the only characteristic of schooling which connects it to a production-oriented culture. It is also true that whereas the consumption culture emphasizes notions of individuality, subjectivity and personal taste, such standards are far removed from the explicitly bureaucratic nature of schooling. It has become clear the extent to which successful schooling in America demands conformity to generalized forms of behavior, standardized expectations regarding academic pursuits, and adherence to impersonal procedures (not the least of which is a uniform regulation of all individuals' activities by the clock). Those who 'succeed' at school do not do so by virtue of the depth of personal expression, creative originality, or individual 'style', but through their ability to conform as closely as possible to the expectations of teachers and administrators. The much celebrated Individualized Education Plan clearly reflects this bureaucratic ethos. Its goals are frequently highly circumscribed, minutely fragmented and quantifiable; they exclude a concern with imaginative, creative or divergent thinking. Through the IEP (no less than with other techniques) education is a process in which the student attempts to come as close as possible to he outcomes already anticipated by the teacher. It replaces a process that is open-ended and exploratory with

one that awards conformity with pre-selected answers.[42] In few senses can such education be seen as a subjectively-oriented expression of individuality.

Indeed in contrast to the values of a 'self-fulfillment' culture the bureaucratic, production-oriented values of contemporary education stand in stark relief; as opposed to concerns with holistic experience and personal meaning, schools emphasize the fragmentation of tasks and the attempt to arrange actions into rationalized measurable quantities. Such concerns do indeed permeate every aspect of the educational process from the forms of highly routinized, 'teacher-proof' curriculum packages to the 'competency-based' evaluations of student knowledge, from the linear and segmented forms of reading instruction, to the rationalized measures of efficiency through which teachers are held accountable for their teaching.[43] As studies in the 'hidden curriculum' make so clear school emphasizes predictability, control, and a concern with organizational efficiency, at the cost of human satisfaction. The individual is expected to see himself not as a 'center of radical originality' but as a passively-determined player in a hierarchically-ordered institution, engaging in tasks that frequently appear as disconnected, and having only an instrumental rationality (i.e. being a means to some end that is external to the task itself — such as a grade or diploma).

It is apparent I hope, even from this brief resume of the nature of schooling to what extent it is at odds with other elements of culture in contemporary society. And to what extent the reproduction of culture in this society is fraught by fundamental disjunctures and conflicts. While among the 'apparatuses' of cultural transmission school may be closely identified with the reproduction of production-oriented values and behavior, other 'apparatuses' are engaged in the transmission of values that are their antithesis. T.V., movies, popular music and fashions, for example, powerfully disseminate the culture of consumption: against school's emphasis on deferral is the insistence on immediate gratification; in place of the concern with future investment and career planning is the demand for present satisfaction and 'letting things happen'; and instead of discipline or restraint is a demand for spontaneity or 'letting go'. And in place of the disconnected abstractions of school-work are experiences related in some way to the existential anxieties and concerns of the young (the 'cloth' from which the language, forms of expression, and pastimes of popular young culture are cut).

Given these kinds of conflicts many of the predicaments faced by schools become comprehensible. School has indeed become a central battleground for the 'hearts and minds' of today's youth. It may indeed constitute the final bulwark for the socialization of the young into the work-oriented, instrumentally-motivated values of traditional bourgeois society. And given the depth and intensity of the divisions which now pervade American culture it must be less than surprising that the process of cultural transmission in schools (especially high schools) is resisted or treated with the ambivalence that it is. We speak here of the violence, vandalism, apathy, etc. that have become, and continue to be, endemic to American education. School and the popular culture face each other in a relationship of increasing confrontation and dissonance, each being the focus of values, beliefs and behaviour that are the very antithesis of one another. To be young in America is to be the focus of a process of socialization that is, at best, schizophrenic and at worst, irreconcilable.

It is within this context that the conservative movement in education during the last 10 years must be placed. While its focus is education, its real meaning must be found, of

course, in the wider tensions generated by this cultural schism. And though we believe that schools remain a bastion of the production culture the claims of conservatives to perceive an undermining of the school's commitment of this culture is not without some foundation. As I have argued elsewhere the 'basic skills' movement, for example, with its demand for a 'return' to a clearly demarcated hierarchical epistemology and an authoritarian pedagogy, must be seen, in part, as a reaction to education change that gained momentum in the 1960's[40] — change related in no small way to the use of what was earlier referred to as a 'personalist sensibility.' The increased stress on the concept of individualization in instruction provides a case in point. Zvi Lamm[44] argues, for example, that the implication of individualizing education leads to an emphasis on the notion of the distinct or unique in each human being. Learning becomes less concerned with the acquisition of social roles or the internalization of the values and norms of a specific culture. Instead, creativity becomes central to pedagogy, and subjectivity a test of the validity of knowledge. And, Lamm argues, the criteria of subjectivity in the learning process rests on an epistemological choice in favor of an existential position. It is the subjective experience of knowledge which imbues it with validity:

> The moment the teacher recognizes subjectivity as the test of meaning, he grants the student the status of hard factor in education, and knowledge becomes the soft-factor which must be adapted to meet his requirements. At the same time he also abolishes the authority implicitly granted knowledge in traditional conceptions of education, and with it his own authority as the one who imparts knowledge.[45]

It is clear that commitment to such an epistemology, and the pedagogy that follows from it, violates the norms of discipline, conformity and authority that are associated with traditional learning. It encourages, instead, a stress on subjectivity, diversity and self-expressiveness. And, of course, such an emphasis contradicts the production values traditionally associated with schooling. It must be noted, however, that while Lamm is correct in detecting the radical implication of a truly individualized pedagogy, the notion of individualized learning more frequently receives quite a different, and much less radical, interpretation (as we have already noted Individualized Education Plans, for example, are more often exercises in behavioral engineering with an extreme stress on doing pre-selected activities in pre-scheduled times).

Despite this the concerns of those on the 'Right' towards the infiltration of notions of subjectivity and expressiveness into education are not merely over-zealous reactions to the 'radical sixties.' Such notions, with their inevitable demands for greater choice, freedom and control, and the erosion of the fixed hierarchies of subject matter, are likely to be even more firmly resisted by their opponents as school, as a cultural institution, becomes increasingly belequered — in the sea of 'consumer' or 'personalist' culture. The increasing demand for discipline, testing and a curriculum that offers little in the way of immediate satisfaction, all enforce schools' role as an agency that socializes individuals into the values of deferred gratification and an acceptance of hierarchical authority. School, in short, has become perhaps the most visible symbol of those attempting to resist the final erosion of 'production' culture. It has become *the* public battleground for the struggle to resolve the contradictory nature of culture in contemporary bourgeois society. Theories of cultural reproduction and schooling which ignore this struggle will fail to understand many of the tensions and conflicts, as well as the possibilities for change, that characterize present-day education in the United States.

Notes

1. Henry Giroux, *Ideology, Culture and the Process of Schooling* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1981).

2. See, for example, Michael Apple, *Education and Power* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982).

3. Paul Willis, *Learning to Labour: How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs* (Farnborough, England: Saxon House, 1977).

4. See, for example, R. Dale, 'Education and the Capitalist State: Contributions and Contradictions,' in M. Apple (ed.), *Cultural and Economic Reproduction in Education,* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982).

5. The notion of the economic process or mode of production as determinant in the 'last instance' belongs, of course, to the French philosopher Louis Althusser.

6. The development, among working class students, of a 'counter school culture' is the subject of Paul Willis' ethnography *Learning to Labour.*

7. Willis, *Learning to Labour,* p. 160.

8. Daniel Bell, *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism,* (N.Y.: Basic Books, 1976).

9 .P. 70.

10. Pp. 71-72.

11. P.66.

12. P. 67.

13. P. 69.

14. P. 69.

15. P. 70.

16. See, for example, Philip Rieff, *The Triumph of the Therapeutic: Uses of Faith After Freud* (Harper and Row, 1966).

17. Eli Zaretsky, *Capitalism, The Family and Personal Life* (N.Y.: Harper Colophon, 1976).

18. P. 68.

19. Pp. 68-69.

20. P. 30.

21. P. 30.

22. Arthur Brittan, *The Privatized World* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977).

23. P. 64.

24. Stanley Aronowitz, *False Promises* (N.Y.: McGraw-Hill, 1973).

25. Alain Touraine, *The Post-Industrial Society* (N.Y.: Random House, 1971) pp. 196-197.

26. Herbert Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man* (Boston: Beacon, 1964).

27. Christopher Lasch, *Culture of Narcissism* (N.Y.: W.W. Norton, 1978).

28. P. 53.

29. P. 72.

30. Theodore Roszack *Person/Planet* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1978).

31. P. 4.

32. P. 4.

33. Hans Peter Dreitzel, 'On the Political Meaning of Culture,' in Norman Birnbaum (ed.), *Beyond the Crisis* (London, Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1977).

34. P. 99.

35. P. 113.

36. Daniel Yankelovitch, *New Rules* (N.Y.: Random House, 1981).

37. P. 5.

38. P. 4.

39. Aronowitz, *False Promises*, p. 123.

40. See, for example, H. Svi Shapiro, 'Functionalism, The State, and Education: Towards a New Analysis; forthcoming in *Social Praxis*, (Fall: 1982).

41. Such descriptions include, for example, Jonathan Kozol, *Death at an Early Age* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1967); James Herndon, *The Way It Spozed to Be* (N.Y.: Simon and Schuster, 1968); Herbert Kohl, *36 Children* (N.Y.: New American Library, 1967); and Edgar Z. Friedenberg, *Coming of Age in America* (N.Y.: Vintage, 1963).

42. For a further discussion of this see H. Svi Shapiro, 'Society, Ideology, and the Reform of Special Education,' in *Educational Theory* (Summer, 1980).

43. For a good discussion of some of these issues see Michael Apple, *Ideology and Curriculum* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979).

44. Zvi, Lamm, 'The Status of Knowledge in the Radical Concept of Education,' in David E. Purpel and Maurice Belanger (eds.), *Curriculum and the Cultural Revolution* (Berkley, Ca.: McCutchen, 1972).

45. P. 134.