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AUTHOR Martinek, Sharon S.  
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ABSTRACT

This paper defines revolutionary education as a qualitative change in the structure of educational institutions and the ideology surrounding the functions and goals of those institutions. After conducting an extensive study of the literature on inner city schools, free schools, and student protest, the author concludes that revolutionary education resulting in major social changes has not yet occurred in the United States, and that it is unlikely to occur in any of these three movements as they are now constituted. The author hypothesizes concerning revolutionary education in the future and socioeconomic classes in a revolutionary setting. A substantial bibliography, representative of the author's researches, is included. (Author/MLF)

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REVOLUTIONARY EDUCATION:  
REASONS AND WAYS

SHARON S. MARTINEK  
YALE UNIVERSITY

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This paper was read at the American Sociological Association meetings August 30, 1972 in New Orleans under the title Revolutionary Education and the Future in the United States.

Revolutionary education is not equal to revolutionary social change. Revolution in education, as it is developed in the literature on education, is defined as a qualitative change in the structure of the educational institutions (the environmental settings for teaching and learning) and the ideology surrounding the functions and goals of those institutions. Revolutionary change is a broader social phenomena which would include a revolution in the educational institutions only as a minor factor in the major social transition. Revolutionary education, however, is an effort to promote revolutionary changes in the individual, in groups (classes) and in society. One problem is in defining which educational practices are, in fact, revolutionary - that is qualitatively different and destructive to the traditional educational practices. In my research I have discovered that often what is termed revolutionary education by educators, writers, parents, and students is often actually supportive of the status quo in various ways or consistent with values, norms and social structures of the given class or group identity of the movement. The attached paradigm is the data on which I base this conclusion.<sup>1</sup>

Judging from extensive study of the three educational movements listed, one can see that revolutionary education resulting in major social changes has not yet occurred in the United States. It is also unlikely to occur in any of these three movements as they are now constituted. This working hypothesis has led to a study of what revolutionary education in the future would look like and what classes would look like in a revolutionary setting. First, I want to discuss some of the problems with the category and clarify its meaning in the United States.

Revolutionary education begins with an analysis of the present educational system and its functions. Present day education is a crucial socializing

institution in society. Its primary functions are a) filtering individuals into the labor market, b) maintaining a workable division of labor and stratification system, c) perpetuating the educational bureaucracy, d) inculcating the values and norms of society into children to promote an orderly and efficient economic system and responsible political behavior. Educational institutions, as Coleman and others have noted, essentially replicate the larger society. The most important variable in educational achievement is socio-economic status of parents and family educational background, which can be translated into social class. Education, then, is crucially related to one key variable in revolutionary theory - inequalities in wealth and resources which create class antagonisms. Education, thus, has a revolutionary potential for social change, if it is promoting values, norms and behavior that contradict or necessitate the destruction of the present educational and social structures. The question is under what conditions does this potential in education exist or is likely to exist?

As can be seen from the data in the paradigm, 'revolutionary education' in the United States is coming not from the underprivileged, nor the working class, but from the intelligentsia and the middle classes. These "educational revolutionaries" (self-labeled), although their goals may be political, are not necessarily political revolutionaries. Some are avowedly apolitical, particularly in the free school movement. Thus, although educational alternatives are being created in the United States their revolutionary potential for viable social change in the future is, presently, non-existent.

The conditions for revolutionary education are quite complex in highly developed countries like the United States. Some studies substantiate that experimental education in groups does produce different kinds of individuals with different values.<sup>2</sup> However, experimental education should not be equated with revolutionary education as happens in much of the literature; for, the individuals it produces can function, even thrive, in the society as it is. Their practice need not be

revolutionary. There is little evidence, as of yet, to indicate that educational alternatives deemed revolutionary by some, lead to significant social changes in highly developed, pluralistic societies. Why? A certain amount of ideological conflicts over values and structures can exist in pluralistic societies as long as they remain a minority or a scattered phenomena. They can be absorbed by the society through minor reforms (as the inner city movement), or persecuted and repressed until they fade out or quiet down (as the student protest movement). To keep revolutionary educational movements from being squelched, those involved must plan their goals and strategies to eliminate the unintended consequences that mean their own destruction and disappearance. So far little future oriented planning has existed in such movements.

The following are some areas critical to revolutionary education in the future which should be taken into account, however, they have been of little importance to the radical educators in the United States. 1) Size - In the future we can assume that more individuals will seek education at increasingly higher levels. This has been a growing trend since World War II. Even if population growth decreases, equal access to all levels of education, especially college, could mean the increased size of educational groups. More research is needed on the large group experience and its educational advantages, such as lectures, rallies, conferences, concerts, etc. 2) Time - Geographical mobility within the United States is increasing every year, especially among young people. Educational groups will need to provide more intense and lasting learning experiences in increasingly shorter periods of time.<sup>3</sup> Or, perhaps, educational groups will adjust to high transient populations over time. The education of individuals under these circumstances would necessitate challenging new experiments in continuing education. 3) Knowledge Resources - As revolutionary change leads to greater economic security, it should lessen the economic motivation for learning (jobs). For adults and children,

knowledge above literacy and outside of their chosen skills should be provided. How to allow individuals to teach others what they know best from their own life experience will pose a problem for educational facilitators. For example, Indian culture, a subject often requested by high school students, would best be taught by an Indian who has grown up within that cultural milieu. (I am assuming they will still exist, a tenuous assumption.) Revolutionary educational groups would utilize our natural knowledge resources. 4) Technological Skills and Literacy - To maintain a standard of living in which all individuals can spend time in the pursuit of knowledge, i.e. free public education, we must use all our technological skills and resources. To do so we must have not only a totally literate population, but a skilled one as well. The obstacle to full literacy and social participation, as I see it, is political. In order to use our technological resources to provide full equality in education, revolutionary educators must have as their goal the political transference of power and control over resources from the present elite to the working peoples. The redistribution of wealth and power and public ownership of industry would be part of this social transformation. In a word - socialism. As it is, no amount of educational innovation can teach hungry children reading. Behavior modification cannot eliminate heroin addiction and the crime that goes with it because it cannot eliminate the cities. More education does not lead to assured job security or even future employment in the present economy. Political change must precede major educational changes. Revolutionary educators must presently work for political change concurrently, while attempting educational experiments. You may ask, why is this so? Why can't we simply confine ourselves to our classrooms?

If assured participation in the growth of society and assured freedom to learn were in the future of every child then many learning and teaching problems of today would disappear. This is validated in the many studies of middle class achievement in which this is the case. The problem of learning in the present

is bound up with the child's perception of the future. Often, to children without middle or upper class security, the future appears futile and hopeless. To the adults around them it appeared futile and hopeless, and it most often was. This "sense" or "atmosphere" is picked up by the child at a very early age. Children perceive their future as being the same as their parents, even though their parents want something better for them, and, by the way, this is true for all parents, not just the middle class. In spite of current efforts to equalize opportunities, poor and black children that make it to college and job success are very few compared to those who don't. Empirical evidence shows that working class youth become in large percentages workers like their parents with similar adult values and behavior. Middle class children, oppressed in another way spend years of grinding out busy work for the credentials that lead them to the empty lives and jobs of their parents, albeit success as socially defined. They are in the largest percentages "dropping out" of mainstream America in search of new ideals. Upper class children are, as always, educated to maintain their position as a leisure class, however, they, too, are dropping out into the current youth movements. Thus, for large numbers of children present day education or "schooling" is seen as and is irrelevant to a good and productive future. This is surely a reflection on present day society. One must conclude that children and adults need viable new images of the future in order to create a society in which they can fully participate. Revolutionary educational groups are proposed as new models for future families, classes, schools and communities. In the present, their establishment is a vehicle to the future. They are agents of social change via educational change via individual change. The changes, of course, are dialectical not linear.

Revolutionary educational groups would accomplish some changes currently called for by radical educators. 1) The elimination of the educational bureaucracy which has maintained the system and its values intact while absorbing all attempted reforms.<sup>4</sup> 2) The decentralization of control over learning and teaching from

administrators to teachers, parents and children. 3) The restoration of education for the learning of skills without the class bias, racism and sexism implicit in the teaching of current values and attitudes. 4) The elimination of compulsory education with the concurrent elimination of credentials and certifications as status indicators. (The use of state certification for certain skills such as medicine would of necessity be used, however, anyone who chose to be a doctor could study medicine and apply for licensing.) It must be remembered that these changes can only occur in the midst of general social and political transformation. On this point, I disagree with Ivan Illich and his followers. The elimination of compulsory education without the above social change would have disastrous consequences for the already handicapped poor children. The educational institutions alone cannot precipitate and maintain revolutionary change, however we can still work to promote social and political change from the classroom and from the university.

This brings me to the final section - the construction of revolutionary educational groups. The following is a model of how they will work in practice for any size group up to 35. Research on large groups is now in progress. My suggestion is that by following this model in our classrooms we can do something now and also create steps toward future revolutionary goals. This model is derived partially from Paulo Friere, his work in Brazil and his philosophy as described in The Pedagogy of The Oppressed. It is adapted to fit my own experience in the American classroom and the American society in general.

A revolutionary educational group has both a different method and a different content than traditional classes. As much learning results from the process of the group as from its content. A revolutionary educational group is voluntary, not compulsory. It functions in an institutional setting or the community, and it forms around a task. The task could be anything from political action groups



to learning chemistry to learning about oneself. The group needs a facilitator (teacher) for many subjects and the particular facilitator would be of their choosing. A facilitator may offer a specific learning experience to a group, then the members of the group would decide along with this person how the authority and responsibility would be divided. In other words, what techniques would be used for evaluation. There would be no techniques for sanctioning purposes. The responsibility for learning always lies within every individual in the group and there are no requirements announced to the group by one member. This does not exclude the use of tests or assignments suggested for the students benefit in learning. Requirements or contracts for learning are set up by the learner with the facilitator or set up by the group as a whole. Paulo Friere calls this a "problem-posing" educational method as opposed to a "banking" concept of education where the teacher is the depositor (Subject) and the student is the bank (Object) into which knowledge is deposited.

Those truly committed to liberation must reject the banking concept in its entirety, adopting instead a concept of men as conscious beings, and consciousness as consciousness intent upon the world. They must abandon the educational goal of deposit making and replace it with the posing of problems of men in their relations with the world. "Problem-posing" education, responding to the essence of consciousness - intentionality - rejects communiques and embodies communication.<sup>5</sup>

The "problem-posing" education is the practice of freedom for the student/teacher and the teacher/student. Teaching based on power relationships are against freedom in learning. The dialogue is the method of problem-posing education. The dialogue starts with "the word" which has two elements "reflection" and "action". A sacrifice of action results in verbalism and a sacrifice of reflection results in activism.<sup>6</sup>

There is no true word that is not at the same time a praxis. Thus, to speak a true word is to transform the world... Dialogue is the encounter between men, mediated by the world, in order to name the world.<sup>7</sup>

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Through dialogue individuals seek to demythologize and unveil reality. Thus, the revolutionary educators emphasis on transforming the methods of teaching and learning means implicitly that the content will also be changed. They do not suggest that knowledge as already accumulated by history will not be learned, only that knowledge of ones own learning environment or situated social reality will be the basis of ones initial accumulation of knowledge. The accuracy of ones reality construction must be the learner's interpretations rather than "one-dimensional" facts accumulated and deposited by teachers into their minds. This is called intersubjective learning.

Every revolutionary educational group must locate itself in the reality of the world. A group of peasants in Chili learning to read would strive to understand where they are, why, and why they remain there, etc., by examining the social reality around them as projected through the printed word. A group of students at Yale would locate themselves in their institutional context in the same way. A group learning technical skills, such as flying or horse back riding, would also locate themselves in reality. Why are they learning this technique, how did they attain the liesure time, to whose benefit, to whose detriment? Revolutionary education as is obvious here, does not have efficiency and speed as goals in learning, rather it follows the natural learning rhythms in individuals and groups. Revolutionary education is questioning and reflective and it is not geared toward efficient production of educated persons for the labor market. It does not exist to perpetuate the bureaucracy. Bureaucratic structures, in fact, can be eliminated, for they are not necessary to the learning process.<sup>8</sup>

A revolutionary educational group always has as its point of departure men in the here and now; this constitutes the situation within which they are submerged, from which they emerge and in which they intervene. In deepening one's consciousness of the group, one must come to grips not only with oneself in ones relation to the world, but with oneself in relation to other selves. Inquiry in a group can only proceed from the 'self-with-the-other' experience. In decision making with

reference to ones place in the world, individuals must be engaged with each other, not alienated from each other as objects. To become engaged, located in reality and in fellowship with the group, certain issues that block learning and communication must be discussed by the entire group.

The issues that often appear first as problems in the group are authority and boundaries. Unlike a traditional educational group neither authority nor boundaries are controlled by the teacher. The members of a group, however, often perceive certain individuals as having authority. They might project authority and power on to one member, usually the facilitator, resulting in an uncomfortable and impossible learning posture in the group. To maintain a free environment the group must deal with individual feelings of fear, discomfort or hostility. Often these issues are combined with that of boundaries. Who will be let into the group after its formation? What if a member leaves the group? How will membership in the group be controlled? If one person has control over the group's membership, it is likely that that person will be seen to have additional authority within the group. If no one deals with new members, or with members leaving, then a feeling of anxiety is often aroused in the members. Often one individual in the group takes on the role of group protector in order to alleviate this anxiety and insecurity. Other complexities of group interaction, such as dealing with hostility, latent conflict, dependency relationships, pairing (two individuals establishing a relationship over and above their relationship in the group usually for protection of security), flight (leaving the group physically or psychically to avoid an unpleasant experience), and phantasies,<sup>9</sup> are dealt with as they arise in the learning of or accomplishing of the task.

In a revolutionary educational group the group dynamics are key and are used as learning experiences for two reasons. One, because group interactions will sometimes block the groups effort to work on its task. Relationships or problems

develop that continually reassert themselves taking up the time and energy of a group and alienating individual members until they are aired and resolved.

and teachers

(Currently students must suppress their problems and hostilities with others in the group or suffer severe psychological sanctions for deviant behavior.)

In a revolutionary educational group learning from our experience, immediate and past, becomes the norm. It should be stressed that the group deals with issues and problems among individual subjects, they do not 'deal with' individuals, thereby translating them into objects. Every individual in the group and her/his learning is important. It is not acceptable to consider a certain number as residual or impossible to take along. There are no flunk-out rates, drop-outs or categories of slow learners, rather if a group does not suit an individual she/he may freely leave at any time.

The second reason group dynamics are crucial to a learning group is that dynamics in the group often mirror the dynamics in the larger institutional or societal setting. Individuals coming into a group bring the outside world with them. A revolutionary educational group is devoted to understanding themselves and their subject within the total setting not simply within the group as a closed entity. Often the dynamics of a group will help its members to understand the dynamics of an institution or society, and the individuals relation to them. Stereotypical judgements about and behavior toward individuals, previously strangers to each other, in a group will reflect something going on in the persons outside life, i.e. family, work place, or it will reflect problems between interest groups in the community or society in general. Male/female, black/white, student/teacher hostilities developing among members of a group are reactions to social contradictions. The group, itself, is part of the solution to these social contradictions and functions explicitly for that purpose along with the purpose of learning.

Over time as these issues are investigated by a group its potential for learning and accomplishing a task or goal will continually rise. This does not mean that the group will have not already learned a great deal. As trust is developed in the group and interpersonal conflicts are resolved (they are never resolved once and for all) the purpose of the group will become clearer and extend to a different realm of questioning. The group may disband or individuals with different questions may move to different learning groups. The individual will go through what might be called an educational metamorphosis. The intentions of a revolutionary educational group are never solely for the development of sensitivity and interpersonal competence, as many have suggested, for, this is only one small part of an individuals necessary education. Revolutionary education is both more individualized and more collectivized than traditional education. It encompasses a faith that when individuals comprehend their own freedom to learn in a self-directed way and understand their learning as action in the world, they will seek to concretize the abstractions they have learned through praxis. The truly liberating education which overcomes the individuals "fear of freedom" is the development of a critical consciousness. In Friere's words this is

learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality.<sup>10</sup>

In the context of a small group revolutionary education must begin with our own oppression of ourselves and others by revealing how one actually perceives oneself with others and how one actually behaves compared to ones belief about how one should behave. This can be discovered through the discovery of freedom and the elimination of reliance on others to instruct us. From this form of education and introduction of the experiential into every learning group whatever its task, revolutionary educators hope to create a future that embodies permanent revolution. That is continual explorations into the nature of freedom and change, permanent faith in creating a better existence in the world and critical questioning of all non-human reified social structures and patterns of behavior.

The attached paradigm originally comprised the body of this paper. For purposes of condensation and brevity it has been simplified into its present form. The analysis rests on one year of pouring over the immense amount of literature on radical and innovative education beginning with 1960. The major works that each movement is based on are listed below as the first note. The problems with content analysis are considerable, however, what started out as an interesting project has become an important personal commitment, for I as much as you have suffered under the educational system as it is and when facing my own students I simply could not go on with business as usual.

# 1. The Inner City Movement

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#### The Student Protest Movement

This section is based primarily on the examination and critiques of over 200 empirical articles (too numerous to list) on student protesters and student protests. They are abstracted and critiqued in a forthcoming volume, Militants and Radicals: Empirical Research on Campus Unrest, Kenneth Keniston with Sharon Martinek.

2. Freedom to Learn, op. cit., p. 117-119.
3. Alvin Toffler, Future Shock, N.Y.: Random House, 1970.
4. Michael Katz, Class, Bureaucracy and Schools: The Illusion of Educational Change in America, Praeger, 1971.
5. Paulo Friere, The Pedagogy of the Oppressed, N.Y.: Herder and Herder, 1971.
6. *ibid.*, p. 75.
7. *ibid.*, pp. 76-77.
8. Katz, op. cit.
9. This particular section has been influenced by several different works on groups and how they operate. The most influential are:



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# PARADIGM FOR RECENT RADICAL MOVEMENTS IN EDUCATION

	Inner City Teachers*	Free School Movement	Student Protest Movement
Origins:	White, middle-class, liberal teachers, sympathetic to civil rights movement and urban poor problems. Some educated black reformers and later black parents and community. (White pressure from guilt over the "black" problems - discrimination, violence, addiction, poverty, ghettos, etc.)	White, upper-middle class intellectuals, well-educated professionals and academics. Sympathetic to white counter-culture, i.e. drugs, organic foods, back-to-nature, rural movement. Often disillusioned political activists, anti-war. Culturally radical, but reject politics as impossible to change. Interested in individual liberation.	White, upper-middle class, Jewish or non-religious, urban, politically liberal or radical backgrounds. Northeastern or far western origins in the better state and private institutions. Professional parents. Usually tend toward social sciences or the humanities in school.
Goals & Time Orientation:	To teach black and poor children literacy skills, to change the material conditions under which they learned, i.e., hunger, fear of teacher, old prison-like buildings, inadequate supplies, etc. To give black and poor children more control over their lives by increasing their abilities to compete for jobs and colleagues and thus increasing their self-confidence and power to change their lives and their communities. Emphasis on survival in the present and immediate future. Practical and realistic political concerns predominate.	To provide free learning environments that are non-directive non-authoritarian in which "teaching" is minimized and learning is guided by the child's curiosity. Emphasis on natural skills, cooking, gardening, etc., and on interpersonal skills. Children would learn to be self-actualizing, autonomous individuals free of sexual, social and psychological hang-ups of modern society. Each would live in an "existential now" oblivious to material or external (outside the school or commune) problems and depravities, i.e. war. Love, peace, sharing stressed. Emphasis on return to past, existential present and far future - idealistic and utopian.	To eliminate racism, war, militarism, corruption in politics, and prevailing authoritarian power structures. To end the contradiction between the white middle class and the exploited races and classes. To reduce alienation materially and psychologically. In education to change the authoritarianism of the classroom. To free the student to learn and criticize without sanctions. To sit and vote on faculty committees that relate to their education. To make their education political by increasing the political responsibility of the institutions and the classroom relevance. To orient education to current social problems and concerns. Future emphasis - idealistic, but not utopian.
Consequences:	Increased hiring of black teachers, more media attention	Learning becomes freer, more creative, less reproductive	New civil rights legislation, increased awareness and protest
Intended			

### Inner City Teachers

to problems of ghetto and urban education. Some new programs of community control. More efforts by communities and school boards at ameliorative reforms within the schools. Some efforts at adult education. Awareness of necessity of changing structures but not massive workable efforts to do so. Growth of minority consciousness and pride.

### Intended

to problems of ghetto and urban education. Some new programs of community control. More efforts by communities and school boards at ameliorative reforms within the schools. Some efforts at adult education. Awareness of necessity of changing structures but not massive workable efforts to do so. Growth of minority consciousness and pride.

### Free School Movement

and more productive. Interest in philosophical and spiritual questions increased. Children less competitive, less argumentative, more autonomous and self responsible. Separation from dominant culture provides supportive, happy and care-free environment. Increase in organic skills and possibly rural survival skills.

### Student Protest Movement

about the war. Increased public concern and some legislation about abortion, population control, drug reforms, draft reforms, prison conditions, etc. More students involved in faculty committees and university decision making processes. Some efforts to provide classroom feedback to the instructors and some experimental educational programs.

### Unintended Consequences

School boards and trustees remain suburban white. Real power is not transferred. Most talented children leave the ghetto and the city. They go into middle class jobs or colleges. The economic structure is unable to absorb an additional pool of skilled labor and white collar workers. Blacks and poor find that even better education won't positively mean a way out. Increased unemployment of educated individuals leads to disillusionment and anger. Increased competition for college placement filters the minority groups up into the middle class values and behavioral patterns. New ways develop to maintain the filtering out mechanisms in colleges, i.e. flunk out rates. A conservative guarding of modest accumulations. Increased consumerism. Possible destruction and

Children without credentials unable to compete for jobs or colleges in later years. Extended parental dependency. Skills possessed are non-salable in modern society and this makes unemployment or farming only viable choices. Children unable to cope with complex, technological, bureaucratic system. Death of schools from lack of financial support or sustenance from larger society. Feelings of powerlessness in the outside world. Lack of political critique and inability to engage in political action for social change. Isolation from reality leads to reactionary attitudes toward modernism. Ideological distaste of institutionalizing free school will make its survival precarious, thus jeopardizing those who have this background. Isolation from blacks and poor could lead to stereotypical and prejudicial

Polarization of the left and the right around emotional issues. Deaths of several students. Growth of police brutality and violence toward youth. Increased federal and state legislation to jail political activists. Repression of student freedom of speech and assembly. The splitting and disintegration of major student organizations over ideological disputes. A pessimistic reaction to the continued fragmentation of the movement. Growing political alienation, despair, fear and hopelessness leading to high drop out (movement) rates into cultural activity, i.e., drugs, communes, religion, free schools, etc. Stiffer legislation surrounding expulsion and scholarship aid to students and faculty engaged in protest, including new university rules for this purpose. Some purges of radical students and faculty ostensibly for academic reasons, i.e. Wisconsin.

Inner City Teachers

disintegration of neighbor-  
hoods. Increased transience.

Free School Movement

attitudes. Re-enforcement of  
the current value - individual-  
ism.

\*This category includes some urban free schools such as those described in Kozol's new book Free Schools. In this book he attacks the great majority of free schools which are described here as the Free School Movement. Needless to say there is some overlap in all of these categories.