Loving and Hating High School: Divided Opinion among Adults in a Rural University Town

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Introduction

In the fall of 2008, the members of the Michelle Connavino Honors Program at Ohio University's College of Education—all first-year university students fresh from high school—began exploring issues and tensions inherent in the American educational system. Their very first education course (taught by the lead author) included designing and conducting an empirical research project.[1] This report is one of several proceeding from that experience.

In brief, in this report, we characterize the differences between those we interviewed who loved school and those who did not. To enable this comparison we created two sets of comparison groups: (1) interviewees divided into upper and lower halves on one item, "I loved school" and (2) the top and bottom quartiles on the same item. Our brief methods section provides further details.

The discussions in the course raised a number of questions, all intended to evoke the spirit of skepticism. What does schooling accomplish and for whom? Can teachers really know better than others what is "best for children?" Who benefits most from schooling? Do schools have a responsibility to their local communities and not only to "the children"? Can people learn to think? Can people be taught *not* to think? Do people really *like* school? What good do adults think their high school experience did for them? Good questions all—and none with ready-made, easy answers.

The class could have debated and decided what its members believed, but more to the point, they decided, was what the general public might think. Motivated by skepticism and curiosity, our class determined to interview ordinary adult citizens about the purposes that they believed high school had served in their lives. The overarching question was "What are high schools preparing students *for*?" Our approach was somewhat unusual, as we will explain.

Study design began with a discussion of educational purpose; the class consulted the relevant literature; and, with help from the first author, determined the overall research method (structured interview, purposive sampling), drafted and piloted the interview protocol, and gathered the data by the end of the Fall quarter, 2008.

Relevant Literature

Research from the 1960s (e.g., Downey, 1960) and earlier had identified four broad purposes for public education: (1) intellectual or academic; (2) instrumental or productive; (3) social or political; and (4) personal (spiritual or aesthetic). The questions on our interview schedule addressed these domains broadly but did not seek to develop measures of each dimension per se, a task that seemed both beyond the scope of the effort and detractive of the critical intent of the study (i.e., understanding the tensions within varied adult views of the high school experience).

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[1] Readers might be interested that, though conducted in the context of a course, participation as a researcher in the study was *not* a class requirement and did not figure in students' grades, and yet all students *did* choose to participate and all of them completed the required IRB training at Ohio University.

Indeed, of far greater interest to us was the discovery that in recent decades, few educational researchers had bothered to ask *ordinary citizens* what their high school experience meant to them, a point Paul Theobald (2009) also makes in a recent book. This insight helped us reframe the overall research question as follows: "What good do adults think high school did for them?" On such terms, then, this study might be best understood as a representation of the voice of ordinary citizens about educational purpose.

We examined the literature for empirical studies that asked adults for opinions about the contribution that high school had made to their lives. We found very little that was directly relevant. Perhaps influential entities (legislatures, State Education Agencies, and governors) believe adults' reflections on their high school experience are irrelevant to the future of schooling, but given the contemporary measures "to hold schools accountable," this oversight seems peculiar indeed. Who besides citizens, after all, should hold schools accountable…and for what? Some strands of existing literature (both empirical and prescriptive) did, however, seem relevant to the missing attempt to consider what ordinary people think, and these provide insights into the conditions circumscribing the prevalent silence.

Grading High Schools

Among the best-known polls about education are those conducted by the Kappan organization (e.g., Elam, 1995). In these polls, of course, adults are not asked retrospectively about *their own* high school experience, but about their children's schooling—a very different proposition, a form of market research or customer satisfaction study.

Nonetheless, and in general, adults seem to approve of schools attended by their children. In the most recent (2009) poll, adults rated schools on a 4-point scale (completely satisfied to completely dissatisfied), and 76% of adults gave ratings in the top 2 categories—roughly equivalent to giving their oldest child's school an A or a B (Gallup Corporation, 2010). Of course, the Gallup polls do not report much about the views and circumstances of that 25% or so of parents who take a very different view of local schools.

Adolescents, too, have been asked to grade their high schools by the Horatio Alger Association since the 2000-2001 school year, in a series of annual reports titled *The State of American Youth*. In the most recent report (Hart, 2008), 64% of adolescents rated their high schools 'A' or 'B,' and the overall grade from all respondents was a GPA of 2.7, or C+. As with the Gallup polls, these results have varied only a little over time.

Articulating Educational Purpose

Of course, summative judgments of quality offer little information about the *reasons* that adults or adolescents assign the grades they give. For this reason, we also searched for reports of projects in which ordinary citizens were asked what they wanted schools to do, a project similar to asking ordinary citizens what good their schooling did for them. Here too, though, we found very little.

One report (Nichols, 1979) did document a relevant community engagement effort. The project was concerned to help seven communities define what schools might do to help form responsible citizens; participants were both education professionals and lay community members, and the views of ordinary citizens were not distinguished from those of professional educators. In general, these mixed groups valued respect and responsibility, but one of the seven communities defined good citizenship more intellectually as (1) maintaining an open mind, (2) making

decisions independently, and (3) understanding that making decisions included taking responsibility for consequences.

A few such other reports exist as well (e.g., Lave & Root, 1978), all of them conducted 30 years ago, but these rare reports seem even rarer in the record after 1983 and to cease altogether about 1990, at least to judge from materials archived in ERIC. One might conclude that Theobald (2009) is right that state- and national-level legislators, bureaucrats, and selected professional educators have been arrogated the right to decide educational purpose unfettered by the aspirations of ordinary citizens.

Recent customer satisfaction reports tend to gauge respondents' particular satisfaction with State Education Agencies (SEAs) (e.g., Evans & Harmon, 1978; Funk & Bosher, 2002; McEwen, 1998). Often these reports do contrast educator and lay opinion: The gap between professional and lay views can pose challenges for policy makers. Where the power lies, though, is evident in these reports: with those authorized to make policy for states as a whole (legislators, bureaucrats, and allied professional educators).

Review of the related literature then, confirms a decades-long silence about what ordinary citizens have thought not only of their own schooling, but also of educational purpose generally. The silence might even be characterized as *profound*. One wonders what is going on here: it seems as if the capacity of ordinary citizens to render such judgment has been dismissed as inadequate, as too parochially situated, or perhaps simply as too difficult to engage. The silence, of course, means also that the need to account to citizens for their exclusion is regarded as unnecessary.

Methods

We approached data collection and analysis from a post-positivist vantage, that is, with the assumption that whatever social reality may be, it is to some extent knowable with the help of data systematically collected and analyzed. At the same time, however, we understand that the findings of systematic social inquiry require interpretation and critique in order to make sense of them (see, e.g., Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Geertz, 1983; Phillips, 2006). For this venue, and for that reason, we are abridging the usual post-positivist details about method in order to engage a more extended interpretation and critique. A written methodological trace, however, is available from the lead author.

Appendix A supplies to readers the interview protocol. The instrument evolved in classroom discussions and successive critique sessions, through six drafts and yielding final version in Appendix A. The instrument contains 10 demographic background variables; 12 items specifically measuring respondents' *experiences* of larger educational aims; and 6 items eliciting *opinions* about schooling (e.g., "I loved my years in high school"). We aimed to capture a range of responses sufficient to characterize the extent of "big-picture learnings" reported by interviewees. We interviewed people 18 and older—students and non-students, younger and older, those with working-class and those with professional-class backgrounds, and with varying educational attainment levels and ethnicities. Our sample was purposively selected by soliciting interviews in various parts of the town of Athens, and, as a result, our 195 subjects exhibit characteristics that strongly resemble those of the town as a whole as documented in the American Community Census (United States Bureau of Census, 2009). All members of the class collected data; and co-authors Pickett, Kay, and Brown stayed with the project for data analysis and writing during the following year.

Before describing the variables and data analysis, we acknowledge the limitations of this study. We have studied a purposive sample, perhaps characteristic (if not representative) of a single place, an unusual sort of place at that (being a university town). Second, our structured interview protocol constituted a face-to-face survey quite unlike semi-structured interviewing techniques: the data are not rich or nuanced and they do not aim to supply "thick description." Results cannot be generalized to other populations. Results can, however, be used to open further the relevant issues of the character of educational purpose and the contribution ordinary adults might make in judging schools' success in engaging significant educational purpose.

Variables

To capture "big-picture learning," we created two relevant constructs: (1) *fulfillment* of overall educational purpose and (2) *leadership-learning*. The second construct reflects our concern that schools prepare ought to prepare all citizens to act with and through authority—leadership is, in this sense, a relevant construct.

For the *fulfillment* construct, we used four items that seemed *jointly* to reflect the purposes described by Downey (1960) and Taggart (1980): 16 (thrive at work later in life—practical purpose), 17 (think independently—intellectual purpose), 21 (value common good of the community—social purpose), and 25 (find my calling in life—personal, spiritual, aesthetic purpose). Using typical tests for the purpose, the items proved appropriate for aggregating by factor analysis, and the resultant single-factor solution (explaining 59% of the shared variance) became the measure of our *fulfillment* construct. The higher the score, the greater the reported fulfillment.

For the *leadership-learning* construct we followed a similar procedure using items 13 (interact with leaders), 14, (take leadership role), and 15 (challenge leaders). These items also proved suitable for factorization and also produced a single factor, in this case explaining 73% of the shared variance. Again, the higher the score, the greater the reported learning about leadership.

As noted in the introduction, "I loved my years in high school" (item 24) was our   variable. Like the other experience and opinion items, it was based on a 7-point scale. This one exhibited a mean of 5.1, and median of 5 and was normally distributed. The three variables just described figured in analyses as dependent variables, but the fulfillment and leadership-learning were also included as predictors of the focal (loved school) variable. Table 1 provides descriptive statistics for the relevant variables.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics for Dependent and Independent Variables

variable	N[a]	Min	Max	M	SD	Skew
loved school (1-7)[b]	195	1	7	5.10	1.75	-.74
major aims (factor)	192	-3.15	1.51	.00	1.00	-.67
leadership-learning (factor)	194	-3.03	1.46	.00	1.00	-.69
social class (1-3)	195	1	3	1.96	.960	.072
inferred race (dummy)[c]	195	0	1	.90	.304	-2.64
inferred sex (dummy)	195	0	1	.47	.500	.11
rural (dummy)	195	0	0	.37	.484	.55
urban (dummy)	195	1	1	.12	.329	2.31

ed attainment (1-5)	195	1	5	2.57	1.069	1.25

Notes.
a. Listwise n = 191.
b. Frequencies for "loved": 1 (f=10), 2 (f=8), 3 (f=22), 4 (f=21), 5 (f=39), 6 (f=41), 7 (f=54).
c. Frequencies for inferred race: 0 (nonwhite) (f=20), 1 (f=175)

Data Analysis

We tested group differences and conducted OLS regressions. In the case of possible group differences, we hypothesized that values of our main dependent variables (*fulfillment* and *leadership-learning*) would vary according to groups of adults who reported loving school or not loving school. For this comparison we segmented the sample in two ways. First, we divided the sample at the median of "loved school." To compare those who arguably loved school with those who arguably hated school, we formed extreme groups of similar size: those reporting values of 7 (n=54) and those reporting values of 3 or less (n=40). Using these groups we tested mean differences with t-tests for unequal variances.

Our focal regression analysis, with "loved school" as the dependent variable, was conducted to learn which set of independent variables might best predict the degree to which interviewees loved school. We selected a theoretically salient set of independent variables (i.e., the "usual suspects"; see, e.g., deMarrais & LeCompte, 1999) as follows: social class, race, sex, locale where raised, and educational attainment (further details available from first author). For this model, as well, the *fulfillment* and *leadership-learning* constructs also figured as predictors, since findings from of our tests of group differences suggested possible utility as predictors.

The results of these two primary analyses precipitated two ancillary analyses, described in the findings section as extensions of the major conclusions. In each case, the issue was the nature of subgroups of interviewees.

Findings

We report two sets of findings in this section. First considered are the results of comparisons of means with the sample segmented into the previously described groups on values of the "loved school" variable. Second, we report the results of regressing the "loved school" variable on the previously specified set of independent variables.

Table 2
Mean Differences on Fulfillment and Leadership by "Loved High School" Groups

Panel	Construct	Group	n[a]	M	SD	p[b]	Eff Size[c]
	fulfillment (factor)	lower half	99	-.374	1.041	.000	.77
Mdn split		upper half	93	.398	.782		
	leadership (factor)	lower half	100	-.340	1.059	.000	.70
		upper half	94	.361	.7914		
		lowest	40	-.873	1.092	.000	1.42

Extreme	highest	52	.548	.837		
leadership (factor)	lowest	40	-.861	1.146	.000	1.41
	highest	54	.553	.709		

Notes.
a. Sample sizes differ slightly due to missing data.
b. Significance level for unequal variances.
c. Effect size is the mean difference, as the dependent variables are given in units based on the pooled SD.

Table 2 reports the results for the two groups of interviewees previously specified (median split, and very high versus very low). The effect sizes are large (~.75 standard deviation units) for the sample split at the median, and for the extreme groups, they are nearly twice as large (~1.4 SD units). Those who arguably hate school (those reporting values less than 4 for the "loved" variable) report far less fulfillment of major aims and far less satisfactory engagement with leadership-learning.

Table 3
Predictors of "Loving High School"

	Variables	B	β	p	ΔR^2
	Constant	5.797		.000	
Step 1					
	Race	-.789	-.138	.025	.022
Step 2					
	Fulfillment	.673	.383	.000	.264
	Leadership	.318	.182	.041	.016

Notes. Total adjusted R^2 = .291; n = 191 with listwise deletion of cases. Excluded background variables include social class, educational attainment, locale (rural, urban).

The results of the two-step regression analysis appear in Table 3. Three variables proved statistically significant, accounting for nearly 30% of the variance in the dependent variable. Most interesting, perhaps, is the lack of influence of the usually suspect background variables. Social class, gender, educational attainment, and locale exercised no influence, though white race in this sample exhibited an unusual negative influence. That is, in this analysis, and all else equal, white race (80% of interviewees) proved a weak but still statistically significant and unexpectedly *negative* predictor of "loving school." The strongest single predictor proved to be the *fulfillment* measure, accounting for most of the explained variance (i.e., 96% of 30%, i.e., .279/.291). While interviewees' self-reported fulfillment of major aims of education exerted a robust influence on the extent to which they reported loving their years in high school, the variables available for analysis leave over two-thirds of the variance unexplained. Possibly such influences as temperament, social networks, and extra-curricular involvement would explain additional proportions of variance.

Finally, the results of comparing means of groups of students (Table 2) and the regression results made us curious about the ways in which the "school haters" (the n=40 students who report not much liking their years in high school) might have differed from the "school lovers" (the n=54 students who reported strongest agreement with the item stem). We thus computed descriptive statistics for the same set of background variables used in the regression analysis (which proved such weak influences across the entire sample). In this ancillary analysis, not one of the observed differences proved statistically significant. When we repeated the analysis for groups divided at the median of the dependent variable, only race proved marginally significant (p=.045).

Race, recall from the regression results, also proved a weak but statistically significant *negative* predictor of the dependent variable (item #24). We speculated that in this rural university town the non-white students were more likely to be international students, and possibly therefore more likely to have been recruited to attend a US university from among the elites in their home countries, conditions that might be predicted to dispose them more favorably to schooling than white interviewees, whose selection was likely less stringent. Ancillary comparisons (available separately) suggested that non-white interviewees in the sample spoke with an international accent, and that those who did rated the "loved school" item significantly higher than the non-white students who spoke with an American accent.

Discussion: Clarification, Summary, Interpretation and Recommendations

This discussion undertakes four tasks. First, it clarifies the study's leadership construct, which is important to understanding the results. Next, it summarizes those results, and then it interprets the meaning of the results. Fourth, and finally, it develops recommendations for citizens, school practitioners, policy makers, and researchers.

Leadership-Learning in This Study

The view of leadership represented here requires explanation. The construct is consistent with Chester Barnard's (1968) curious conception of leaders and followers negotiating what Barnard called "a zone of indifference." This is the zone where a "leader's" actions will be accepted by "a follower"—but the negotiation of the zone notably enacts an intriguing and subtle relationship, and our leadership construct, *which represents interacting with, challenging, and assuming the "role"* of leader arguably captures something of this negotiated relationship (see also Liden, Sparrowe, & Wayne, 1997, for leader-member exchange theory, a somewhat related outlook).

Readers should observe that this is a view of leadership that remains open to all, and not principally to elites judged best suited to "lead." The *leadership-learning* construct seems to us, as well, to represent an experience of leadership that students, teachers, and community members might reasonably engage in high school, or at least in some fortunate high schools even under existing circumstances.

One recent observer (Theobald, 2009) explains that articulation of educational purpose has been arrogated to the State (federal and state governments) and to professional organizations, with ordinary citizens' views increasingly understood as unqualified. Apparently, the mantra "what every child should know and be able to do" must be articulated by a power sufficient to impose general compliance with such a universal statement. Accordingly, citizens—and communities—seldom any longer enjoy even the opportunity to articulate their aspirations for educa-

tion. Observers like Theobald regard such conclusions as undemocratic *misunderstandings* (see also, Arons, 1997).

The design of this study, then, embeds an understanding of leadership that might be characterized as markedly democratic. We do not consider this qualification as a research bias, but in fact a provision to guard against bias. In a democracy, leadership is intended to be open to all; that it is not, in our nation, now constitutes the bias, the misunderstanding of leadership. Readers with a different view of leadership may contest the findings on other grounds, but not actually this one.

Summary of Results

Groups of adults who reported hating or loving their years in high school exhibit sharp differences in their self-reports of the extent to which their high school experiences fulfilled major educational aims or provided engagement with leadership learning (see Table 2). Effect sizes were large for both comparisons undertaken by this study: (1) groups divided at the median of the focal variable ("loved school") and (2) extreme groups (essentially the lowest quintile compared to the highest quartile). For these two groups, respectively, the effect sizes for the *fulfillment* construct were .77 and 1.42, and for the *leadership-learning construct* .70 and 1.41. The two variables (i.e., *fulfillment* and *leadership-learning*) shared about 50% of their total variance. Used as predictors, these two variables accounted for about 30% of the variance in the extent to which adults reported "loving" their years in high school. White race was also shown to exert a weak but unexpected negative influence on the dependent variable (loving high school), but by far the strongest influence overall was the *fulfillment* construct, which indeed accounted for most of the explained variance (see Table 3).

Interpretation

What do such results mean? We offer four insights by way of interpretation.

First, it seems that loving or hating school is surprisingly *not* a function of influential background variables, at least as operationalized in this study and among this sample. None of the "usual suspects" (poverty, race, locale) functioned as might have been expected. The finding may suggest that the widespread alienation from school suggested by so many observers (e.g., deMarrais & Lecompte, 1999; Gatto, 2002; Goodman, 1962; Kozol, 1991; Orr, 1995) is a largely unexamined outcome of schooling itself. Others have advanced this claim (e.g., Goodman, 1962; Gatto, 2002), but seldom has empirical evidence been forthcoming.

Our findings are related to those recently reported by Lewis and Kim (2008), who found that elementary students in bad schools still confess a desire to learn. Humans are formed to learn, as we know quite well, and (a) the desire to learn persists even in rotten educational circumstances and (b) frustration of that innate desire in school is recognized and remembered by adults, at least on the terms of this study and Lewis and Kim's. These implications are, in a sense, the good news; the bad news is how very much more it seems schooling *could* do. All humans *want* to learn.[2]

Second, the ensemble of major educational aims used in this study (intellectual, productive, social-political, and personal-aesthetic-spiritual) has a great deal to do, at least in the memory of

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[2] Readers can compare the Google search-hits for the phrase "all children want to learn" and the durable mantra "all children can learn." Fifty instances of the latter phrase occur for each instance of the former. This playful exercise perhaps illustrates both the ideological blinders in place and the evident research opportunity.

adults, with disposition toward high school. Liking (or hating) school is at least partly a function (30% of variance) of the extent to which high schools are judged by adults to have helped them realize important purposes. We find cause for hope in this finding; adults apparently can judge what their schools did and didn't do for them. The odd fact remains, though, that so few have been asked to render such judgment, according to our review of the literature. Given the analyses of scholars who have described the relentless compliance routines enacted in working-class schools (e.g., Anyon, 1980; Kozol, 1991; McNeal & Dunbar, 2010) it seems curious that impoverished Appalachian or impoverished Black students, for instance, could report loving school or having found fulfillment in their experiences of school—or perhaps it is not so curious. Schooling as a whole is sufficiently complex to fulfill quite contradictory functions, as Kliebard (1995) has famously noted in a much longer historical timeframe. Whether or not particular schools can engage contradictory or incompatible aims, however, seems at best an open question. The aims of education is a realm ready for researchers to reclaim.

Third, the two previous insights—implications of the lack of influence of "the usual suspects" and implications about ordinary adults' untapped capacity to judge the results and purposes of their own schooling may imply, less optimistically, that much remains for educators to do to make schooling a more profitable experience.

Indeed, the extent to which minimum-competence ("core") standards address intellectual learning itself strikes us as deficient. Part of the problem is that, as so many have reported, the tests drive both curriculum and instruction—and such grade-level group tests cannot even perform the assessment tasks charged to them (e.g., Lee & Wong, 2004; Ho, 2008; Russell, Higgins, & Raczek, 2004; Schiller, 2003). Adults who have survived their schooling, though, seemed in little doubt about the extent to which their high schools had done well or ill by them across the major purposes of education. The strictures of current accountability regimes, we surmise, make engagement with goals that students find meaningful far more difficult simply because the prevalent state accountability provisions pay almost no attention at all to social, productive, and personal-spiritual-aesthetic goals. This change seems historically momentous (cf. Downey, 1960; Taggart, 1980) even in Kliebard's long timeframe (Kliebard, 1995).

Fourth, and finally, we see another, perhaps more important, purpose in the problematic state and federal schemes to impose "accountability" on schools. That purpose, following Habermas (1973) is legitimation, as a few education scholars have suggested (e.g., Davies & Guppy, 1997; Inglis, 2000; Morris, 2004; Lipman, 2004)—legitimation, in particular, of the motives for accountability: preparedness for global economic combat, a purpose that displaces students' own struggles for fulfillment (e.g., Apple, 2001; Giroux, 2000; Molnar, 2002) as a raison d'être for education itself.[3]

The new regimes might be said to instantiate state and, increasingly, federal authority in ways that seem increasingly incontestable to local people—to citizens themselves. If the schemes feel onerous to ordinary local citizens, though, it may be because, as some have observed, that the schemes exist to discipline a dwindling number of Americans who still regard themselves as citizens, with, for instance, the right to exert leadership of the State. Thus, the content of the altered discipline and purpose has far more to do with extending neoliberal prerogatives than with the honorable aims of education (e.g., Apple, 2001; Giroux, 200; Molnar, 2002; Theobald,

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[3] These historic changes occur as the superordinate authority of the nation-state itself—as the dominant political paradigm for the planet—has become increasingly tenuous (Bauman, 1998; Hobsbawm, 1992; Jacques, 2009; Sassen, 1996). Maintaining systems of schooling according to some of these observers, will nonetheless remain a continuing national responsibility.

2009). On this view, it is no wonder that so little attention is paid to what ordinary citizens think of how they were educated—what they learned at school. The State is not interested, nor are the researchers it funds.

Another sort of accountability, however, is clearly arguable on the basis of this exploratory study: namely, that of the ordinary adult's accounting of the benefits received from schooling. Again: the findings suggest that the capacity to render this judgment exists and can be accessed. Ignoring this capacity would seem an odd oversight in a democracy.

Indeed, the striking notion suggests itself that schools are perhaps no longer a democratic undertaking; this assertion has been made for a long time. Spring (1988) asserted that at least since 1945 they have functioned as social sorting machine, qualifying the noisy elite for leadership positions and keeping the timid silent—or at least inarticulate.

It's not difficult to see how this happens in classrooms. Many teachers ask questions with a clear answer in mind, and students who possess intuition sufficient to pinpoint the answer (functionally, the endpoint of the discussion) are lauded as leaders. Such students are pulled aside for supplementary training to be the leaders of the future (e.g. Boys and Girls State, Emerging Leaders Institute, Senior Learners Academy, and many others), while others' capacity to offer direction, counsel, and insight remains unacknowledged and uncultivated. It is no wonder that adults who experienced these slights and with whom we spoke did not love school, found that school did not help them discover their way in the world, and likely today feel dispossessed of the right and responsibility to exercise leadership.

What about today's students? Even schools that encourage leadership from a variety of students, however, cannot help but succumb to the superordinate agenda embodied in accountability regimes, national standards, and the neoliberal agenda. In the midst of all, teachers are pressured to focus their best work on a narrow swath students, those not quite "passing" accountability tests, and on whose slightly improved performance the reputation of the state, district, school, and even teacher depends. Predictably, such a peculiar pedagogical focus would position far more students as unfulfilled adults. It's a chilling thought.

Recommendations

Although the implications of this study seem to us surprisingly momentous, they remain a matter of interpretation, and we again caution both readers and ourselves that this was a small-scale, exploratory study with a non-representative sample. Would the findings prove robust to investigation with a random sample representing a locality, a state, or the nation? One can only guess, but the magnitude of the reported effect sizes suggests that such an extension might well be worth the effort, and the issues themselves merit further attention.

Our first recommendation, then, is continued development of the instrument and its more extended use in a random sample. We certainly invite other researchers to take up this and related work. For instance, a far more ambitious, and very promising realm of inquiry, would encompass qualitative and multi-method investigations that describe the trajectory and dynamics of students' desire to learn over the course of 13 years of compulsory education.

Our second recommendation is, however, less modest and more practical. On the basis of logic far more than data, we advise local communities and educators (i.e., ourselves) to begin a counter-reformation that cultivates forms of schooling (pedagogies, curricula, frameworks—even standards) that *do* honor the aims so sorely neglected by contemporary "accountability" schemes. It disturbs us that researchers and evaluators so typically ask residents to assess the quality of schooling given a state or a region's children (customer satisfaction), but have so seldom (possi-

bly never) asked adults what good high school did for them or what aims ordinary adults might cherish for schooling overall. Even more disturbing is the authorized neglect of obviously important aims of education—finding a calling in life, challenging leaders, thinking independently. These aims are not actually any more difficult to measure than, for instance, the long-contested constructs of academic achievement and intellectual ability.

How might educators proceed? The pre-service student co-authors of this study advise colleagues to strive to fill the gap in schools by cultivating meaningful group work where every student is integral to a project planned by all. If a project can go on without a student, what use would it be to the group, the student, the teacher, or the school? We're not sure we have an answer, but the question is worth thinking about in light of educators' fond wish that student love what they do in school—for good reason.

Appendix: Interview Items

1. Location: [ ] campus or uptown [ ] non-student residential [ ] East State Stores
2. Interviewer gender assignment: [ ] males [ ] females

Note to interviewer: *Don't ask these questions* [i.e., 3-6] *of participant, just estimate answers by observing the participant*

3. Age   [ ] 18-30 [ ] 30-60 [ ] over 60
4. Race: [ ] white [ ] other
5. Gender: [ ] male [ ] female
6. Accent: [ ] American English [ ] International English
7. Are you a current college or technical school student? [ ] no [ ] yes
8. What's the last grade you completed? [ ] not yet a HS grad [ ] HS grad [ ] 2-year degree [ ] 4-year degree [ ] graduate degree
9. When you were growing up, do you think your parents belonged to the working class (or blue-collar), the professional (or white-collar) class, or are you uncertain? [ ] working   [ ] professional [ ] uncertain
10. About how large was your graduating high school class? [number given by participant]
11. Would you describe your high school community as more rural, urban, or suburban? [ ] rural [ ] urban [ ] suburban
12. Would you describe your upbringing as more conservative, more liberal, or more like a mix of both? [ ] more conservative [ ] more liberal [ ] more a mix of both

Interviewer (to participant): Next, there are 11 questions about what you learned in high school. All are based on a 1-7 scale, with 1 the lowest and 7 the highest. On a Scale of 1-7, 1 being least, 7 being highest, how well did your overall high school experience prepare you to:

13. *interact* productively with leaders?
14. *act with confidence* as a leader of project or team?
15. *challenge* the ideas or plans of leaders effectively?
16. *thrive* at work later in life?
17. think *independently*?
18. follow *orders*?
19. *succeed* at a technical program in community college or trade school?
20. *succeed* at a 4-year college or university?
21. value the common good of the community?
22. value *freedom* (liberty)?
23. value an *active life* (with sports and physical recreation)?

Interviewer (to participant): The last series of question concerns your opinions about schooling. How strongly do you agree with the following statements (1=strong disagreement; 7=strong agreement)?

24. I loved my years in high school.
25. My high school experience really helped me to find my calling in life.
26. We have schools mostly to provide babysitting for working parents.
27. Schools should be run by professionals with occasional assistance from non-professionals.
28. Accountability testing (standardized tests like the *Ohio Graduation Test* and the *Ohio Achievement Tests*) really helps prepare children for the future.
29. Accountability testing really helps prepare the state of Ohio for the future.

30. Location: [ ] campus or uptown [ ] non-student residential [ ] East State Stores

31. Interviewer gender assignment: [ ] males [ ] females

Note to interviewer: *Don't ask these questions* [i.e., 3-6] *of participant, just estimate answers by observing the participant*

32. Age   [ ] 18-30 [ ] 30-60 [ ] over 60
33. Race: [ ] white [ ] other
34. Gender: [ ] male [ ] female
35. Accent: [ ] American English [ ] International English
36. Are you a current college or technical school student? [ ] no [ ] yes
37. What's the last grade you completed? [ ] not yet a HS grad [ ] HS grad [ ] 2-year degree [ ] 4-year degree [ ] graduate degree
38. When you were growing up, do you think your parents belonged to the working class (or blue-collar), the professional (or white-collar) class, or are you uncertain? [ ] working   [ ] professional [ ] uncertain
39. About how large was your graduating high school class? [number given by participant]
40. Would you describe your high school community as more rural, urban, or suburban? [ ] rural [ ] urban [ ] suburban
41. Would you describe your upbringing as more conservative, more liberal, or more like a mix of both? [ ] more conservative [ ] more liberal [ ] more a mix of both

Interviewer (to participant): Next, there are 11 questions about what you learned in high school. All are based on a 1-7 scale, with 1 the lowest and 7 the highest. On a Scale of 1-7, 1 being least, 7 being highest, how well did your overall high school experience prepare you to:

42. *interact* productively with leaders?
43. *act with confidence* as a leader of project or team?
44. *challenge* the ideas or plans of leaders effectively?
45.   *thrive* at work later in life?
46.   think *independently*?
47. follow *orders*?
48. *succeed* at a technical program in community college or trade school?
49. *succeed* at a 4-year college or university?
50. value the common good of the community?
51. value *freedom* (liberty)?
52. value an *active life* (with sports and physical recreation)?

Interviewer (to participant): The last series of question concerns your opinions about schooling. How strongly do you agree with the following statements (1=strong disagreement; 7=strong agreement)?

53. I loved my years in high school.
54. My high school experience really helped me to find my calling in life.
55. We have schools mostly to provide babysitting for working parents.
56. Schools should be run by professionals with occasional assistance from non-professionals.
57. Accountability testing (standardized tests like the *Ohio Graduation Test* and the *Ohio Achievement Tests*) really helps prepare children for the future.
58. Accountability testing really helps prepare the state of Ohio for the future.

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