

**The Patriotism of Dissent
Civic Education for a Disposition of Critical Allegiance**

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To criticize one's country is to do it a service and pay it a compliment. It is a service because it may spur the country to do better than it is doing; it is a compliment because it evidences a belief that the country can do better than it is doing.

Senator J. William Fulbright¹

¹ Senator J. William Fulbright, *The Arrogance of Power*, New York: Random House, 1966, 25.

Introduction

There are perennial debates in civic education regarding the definition, rights and responsibilities of citizenship while failing to address the issue of civic dispositions. Underpinning the discourse is a consensus that a democracy can only function when citizens are knowledgeable of and adept at exercising their rights (Weissberg, 2001). Yet the aptitudes and dispositions required of citizens in order to be active participants in civic life presents another dilemma for educators implementing a civic education regimen meant to stimulate sustained student interest in politics and society. Westheimer and Kahne (2004) deconstruct the consensus regarding civic competence and find it to be lacking clearly articulated parameters. They propose that, “At the level of rhetoric, most educators, policymakers, and citizens agree that developing students’ capabilities and commitments for effective and democratic citizenship is important. When we get specific about what democracy requires and about what kind of school curricula will best promote it, however, much of that consensus falls away” (Westheimer and Kahane, 2004, p. 241). Civic competency is vaguely defined and in need of further examination. While patriotism and dissidence may appear to be antithetical dispositions, there is no innate incompatibility. The fissure between patriotism and dissent is surmountable and, by recasting dissent as a patriotic act, civic education can circumvent the poles of uncritical indoctrination and counterproductive contrarianism associated with these temperaments. In doing so, patriotism and dissent can be recast as two dispositions of sober and critical civic identity.

In order to reconcile the apparent contradiction in presenting dissent as a patriotic act, it is necessary to remain aware of some of the pressing sociopolitical issues twenty-first century students will be inheriting upon completion of their studies. Recognizing the

magnitude of contemporary domestic and international challenges illuminates how dissident behavior can be constructive rather than detrimental to civic affairs. Contemporary domestic and international demands necessitate this ongoing analysis of citizenship roles, expectations, and legitimate forms of active civic participation. Abowitz and Harnish (2006) examine how the dynamic political landscape of the last half-century is a reminder of how citizenship is not static. They argue that the demise of the Soviet Union, establishment of the European Union, ascent of multinational corporations, and trends in globalization- among other seminal features of the contemporary political landscape- illuminate the need for a paradigm shift in how schools encounter citizenship education. The viability of notions of citizen dispositions and behaviors is predicated upon the conditions of the domestic and international political milieus in which citizens navigate.

This discourse presumes there is a need for revisiting the question of what skills, knowledge, and dispositions civic education should yield. Its detractors argue that democracy is intact and unchallenged. As such, modifying civic education to imbue curricula with an emphasis on critical allegiance in the form of patriotic dissent is alarmist and solicits undue scrutiny of America's institutions and social condition. Weissberg (2001) contends, "The United States is hardly some Third World nation overwhelmed by the prospect of conducting a free election, let alone inculcating the very idea of a loyal opposition. Citizens never resort to vigilantism to overturn unpopular court decisions (p. 281)." Weissberg articulates that evaluating civic competencies presumes America is in some way vulnerable. He dismisses this outright, stating that such political behavior should be reserved for emerging democracies and is "unwarranted" in America (p. 281). Weissberg does not entertain how curtailing the sensibility for collective sociopolitical self-

examination may result in the citizenry's indifference, passivity, and complacency. While alarmism undermines the functionality of democracy, so too does an aloof stance towards the need to equip young citizens with the ability to participate in civic life during their intellectually formative years.

Education designed to prepare students for engagement in society must introduce the tension and disparity between ideals and reality between political thought and function, especially regarding America's political framework and history. The American ethos is a composite of the principles found in disparate sources including, but not confined to, the nation's founding documents. The lofty concepts of equality and liberty, among other facets of this evolving and expanding body of convictions and principles, are exemplars of the features harbored by this overarching ethos. While this ethos is cherished for its ethical standard, it is also lamented for not being fully actualized. Banks (1990) explains how this disconnect should be conveyed to students. He posits, "Citizenship education for the twenty-first century must also help students to understand and to deal reflectively with the contradictions that result from the ideals within American society... and the racial discrimination that they will experience or observe in history, current affairs, and the wider society or in the school community" (Banks, 1990, p. 214). American society is not pristine but continues to be plagued by injustices and inequalities. Banks reminds, "Problems such as racism, sexism, poverty and inequality are widespread within U.S. society and permeate many of the nation's institutions" (p. 212). The ongoing salience of social problems in America is illustrative of why civic education can be invigorated by advancing dissent as a patriotic manifestation to redress the fault between ethos and reality. In this way, civic education fosters a collective consciousness that internalizes a vision of a just, humane,

and equitable society; recognizes the deficiencies in society; and seeks to reduce the margin between noble vision and reality.

The objectives of civic education must also take into account the transforming nature of contemporary society. America is demographically pluralistic and civic education should be receptive to the infusion of peoples and cultures into this increasingly multicultural society. Additionally, the influx of technological advancements has irreversibly altered notions of the individual's scope of existence. As such, conceptions of society are more diffuse. While plurality and diversity may produce cultural reciprocity, hybridity, and cohabitation of customs and ideas, it can also be a fragmenting condition (Sunder, 2001). Societal heterogeneity has an innate potentiality for cosmopolitanism and detachment from insularity but also presents a corresponding dilemma. A corollary to plurality and intergroup mingling is socioeconomic stratification and ensuing social problems. The accumulation of the trappings of post-industrial society is not readily available to all of society, much less immigrants and marginalized and voiceless segments (Banks, 1990). Appreciating the value and confronting the emergent problems associated with changing domestic demographic realities and trends in global interconnectedness can be addressed through a robust civic education that concentrates on student critical analysis of social and political phenomena. This critical analytical disposition can be accompanied by patriotic sentiments in order to allow civic dispositions to be exercised without there being a contradiction between dissidence and patriotism.

The emergence of a global age in the twenty-first century has altered perceptions of collective identity. In this climate, the definition of patriotism has become contested territory. Competing notions of global citizenship, national identity, and the tension

between them have produced an array of patriotic sensibilities ranging from inclusive to chauvinistic. In this respect, patriotism has been appropriated by different political camps without the emergence of a clear definition of the term and its implications for political behavior. According to the Pew Research Center, America has witnessed a resurgence of patriotic fervor in the wake of 9/11 (Pew Research Center, 2003). The perception of national crisis may usher in a tenor of conformity and indoctrination (Ohles, 1968). In 2004, 56% of Americans polled agreed with the statement, “I am very patriotic,” and 52% agreed with the statement, “We should all be willing to fight for the country, whether it is right or wrong” (Pew Research Center, 2003, p. 4). Westheimer and Kahne also report that during the Bush administration, civic education programs launched had patriotism and homeland defense as the focal points of the agenda, “emphasizing narrow visions of patriotism” (Westheimer and Kahne, 2004, p. 244). In a climate of war and terrorism, the concept of a global society may appear ominous and result in a retreat into the familiar while immunizing the nation-state from criticism for wrongdoing in turbulent times. In doing so, civic education may reinforce misconceptions regarding the peoples of the world, artificially inflate Americans’ sense of collective superiority, and breed competitive inclinations rather than examining the prospects for transnational cooperation and peaceful coexistence. While globalization provides the opportunity to reevaluate patriotism, the potential exists for patriotism to be coopted into a nationalist agenda and for dissent to be dismissed as a form of self-loathing or anti-American sentiment.

Patriotism

The definition of patriotism is not self-evident. In order to determine how best to implement a civic education program that has the explicit objective of equipping students

with the skills to be actively engaged citizens in a democracy and that introduces dissent as a patriotic act, it is necessary to first deconstruct patriotism. The concept of patriotism is contentious and the discourse of civic education is saturated with polemics on the subject. Ravitch (2006) reflects, “The extent to which we abhor or admire patriotism in the schools depends on how it is taught” (p. 579). Ravitch goes on to establish a dichotomy between “jingoistic, uncritical self-praise,” and “appreciation of the principles and practices of democratic self-government” (p. 579). In this conceptual framework, Ravitch recognizes how no singular definition exists and that the term is porous with ever changing ideological content. Yet, Ravitch presents a binary in a zero-sum configuration whereby the adoption of one conception entails the negation of another. By examining the contours of some proposals of what constitutes an affirmative patriotic identity, it becomes evident that no ready-made definition exists. Rather, constituent parts of existing definitions may be wedded to allow for a more multifaceted definition of patriotism to be promoted in schools that is compatible with political dissidence as one manifestation of patriotism.

A conservative notion of patriotism underscores national allegiance while designating school as the societal mechanism of transmitting and instilling this sentiment. A sense of allegiance is internalized by familiarizing students with symbols while confining participatory modes of democracy to involvement with political parties and activities such as voting (Abowitz and Harnish, 2006). Symbols exist as a surrogate and shorthand for the ideals of the nation. Flags, among other national symbols, synthesize complex political philosophy into readily available iconography that can be showcased and presented as evidence of one’s commitment to national ideals. Symbols are ascribed an amount of content that imbues an otherwise innocuous object with the sort of baggage that

elicits an emotional response. According to this conception of patriotism, typically aligned with civic republicanism, political discourse shuns controversy and elevates universal cultural adhesives that bind the citizenry. Abowitz and Harnish (2006) explain that by avoiding ideological and political differences, a perception of national unity emerges. In doing so, institutions are preserved, radicalism sidelined, and allegiance to the country and its values remain intact (Damon, 2006). By promoting this form of patriotism in the classroom, schools generally, and civic education more pointedly, become custodians of tradition chartered with the task of perpetuating the status quo. Students are instructed to know about government institutions and informed that an archetypal good citizen, “upholds the law, and engages in conventional forms of political participation” (Anderson, et al. 1997, p. 335). Within this framework, teachers often function as the archivists of tradition, preserving, caretaking, and disseminating normative cultural knowledge (O’Loughlin, 1995).

By generating allegiance and safeguarding venerable traditions, conservative patriotism seeks to crystallize group cohesion and preemptively prevent fragmentation and factionalism within the citizenry. Recognizing that divergences of ideology, wants, and needs exist in a complex post-industrial society, the prominence of conservative patriotism promotes uniformity to prevent differences from rupturing solidarity. Moore (1952) elaborates, stating, “Underlying the advocacy of sheer indoctrination is also the assumption that divisions of opinion among us, often arising out of consideration of alternative proposals, are inherently harmful to society” (p. 226). As one of the most outspoken proponents of this variety of patriotism and schooling that promotes it, Finn (2006) formulates a nexus between patriotism and identity. Accordingly, Finn prescribes a

curriculum replete with examinations of the “character, courage, vision and tenacity,” of the Founders in order to instill students with a sense of heritage and, by extension, identity (p. 580). Consequently, by presenting America’s Founders as harbingers of an enlightened polity who were of high moral caliber, this conception of patriotism is founded upon American Exceptionalism. Unrivaled moral rectitude and a tradition of consensus intersect to promote a polished and lustrous patriotism.

Critics have indicted the conservative account of patriotism for its attractive veneer with little substantive content. The most prominent critique regards the absence of critical thought in what is perceived to be indoctrinatory curricula and pedagogy. Indoctrination denies students access to provocative thought that nurtures the development of a critical consciousness. Critics of conservative patriotism in the classroom argue that this process subtly implies that certain currents of thought, if they are incongruent with conservative patriotic ideals, are deemed “unthinkable” (O’Loughlin, 1995, p. 112). Countervailing thought is dismissed and the marketplace of ideas in the classroom withers. Normative ideas take on a position of primacy and deliberation becomes demoted because ideas are dispensed, not constructed or evaluated. If, as Ross (2004) contends, “The primary pedagogical goal is to support students as they come to understand their world and have agency as citizens” (p. 250), conservative patriotism usurps this agency and the purpose of schooling is undermined. Schools are no longer attempting to implement an objective agenda but rather esteem certain values and disseminate certain thought to students who are not taught to question or doubt (Giroux, 1991). O’Loughlin suggests that students in such environments become dependent and emulate authority rather than rely on their own problem-solving abilities. Schools, when implementing civic education based on

conservative patriotic tenets, may stifle critical and autonomous thought rather than establishing a domain conducive to it.

Without a designated space for critical analysis in schools, students imbibe patriotic ideals but may not necessarily comprehend them. Critics attest that this is an untenable form of education since students are not granted the opportunity to defend ideas with evidence or reason because their critical faculties are not engaged. Students are intellectually vulnerable and ill equipped to counter opposing ideas (Moore, 1952). Extending from this critique is the insight that alleged allegiance is more akin to passive obedience in a civic education aligned with the strictures of conservative patriotism. Students become, “Blind patriots [who] adopt a stance of unquestioning endorsement of their country- denying the value of critique and analysis and generally emphasizing allegiance and symbolic behaviors” (Kahne and Middaugh, 2006, p. 602). Giroux (1991) asserts that this education only serves to reproduce power paradigms while Westheimer and Kahne (2004) reply that the skills of critical reflection necessary for the ongoing vitality of democracy are conspicuously absent. Reform does not permeate the political scene when students are unfamiliar with how to be critical consumers of information and astute assessors of their sociopolitical environments.

The narrative of American history constructed to instill this conservative form of patriotism is inherently selective in the portrayal of America’s sometimes troubled and troubling past. By deemphasizing unsavory trends and episodes in American history and by being hypersensitive to the redeeming characteristics of the country’s political life, conservative patriotism promotes triumphalism and, by extension, collective amnesia. Ravitch (2006) warns, “Students must learn too about the failings of our democracy, about

the denials of freedom and justice that blight our history” (p. 581), lest their formal education culminate with the fallacy of America’s infallibility. In addition to historical distortions, critics also call attention to how there is a presumption that politics and society are static. Moore (1952) reminds that the facets of America’s political legacy that are lauded by proponents of conservative patriotism were products of prolonged processes and incremental advancements; equality of rights and rule of law- among other political conditions- were not always present in American history and their appearance was the result of shifts in law and national consciousness. America’s civic identity is the product of centuries of refinement and modifications originating in antiquity and continuing through the present; it was not ready made in the Declaration of Independence nor were American political leaders responsible for all the provisions in the nation’s political tradition (Moore, 1952, p. 227). As such, the features of American history and civic life lauded by proponents of conservative patriotism were not always present and had to be earned. While conservative patriotism seeks to maintain the status quo and balks at dissent, dynamism is fundamental to staving off political ossification and ensuring civic life retains its vitality. In order to ensure there is an ongoing political evolution favorable to the preservation and enhancement of America’s political ethos, criticism must be a constant in civic life and cultivated early through civic education.

The last notable critique of conservative patriotism is that nominal reverence for America’s political legacy is not synonymous with civic action. Merely appreciating a political apparatus founded upon liberty is not necessarily acting according to the precepts of liberty. McGee (2006) rejoins, “To destroy freedom in the name of protecting it betrays- not preserves- our national traditions” (p. 41). If indoctrination suppresses countervailing

ideas from penetrating the accepted spectrum of discourse, the esteemed virtues of democracy are eroded by the measures instituted to care for it. Westheimer (2006) adds that democratic patriotism finds sustenance when uniformity is absent and that the presence of contending political ideas does not compromise collective solidarity. Liberty is a condition that allows for mobility of mind and body. Freedom of speech and expression are not preserved by showering flattery on the memory of the Founders but by engaging in critical thought. Rather than jeopardize the civic legacy held in such high regard by advocates of conservative patriotism, engagement in critical reflection and dissent may be a means to actualize this legacy. Critics of conservative notions of patriotism argue that alternative definitions of patriotism more accurately manifest the American ethos and do more to protect and rejuvenate it.

A more inclusive definition of patriotism that satisfies the criteria of conservative and more critical camps is not found in a zero-sum arrangement. Rather, a definition that furthers the cause of democracy, seeks to diminish the potency of injustice and inequality, is enhanced- rather than threatened- by multiculturalism, and embraces the mingling of cultures and peoples in a globalizing society must be two-fold.

Firstly, it must be predicated upon an informed comprehension of the American democratic ethos that can be articulated, elaborated upon, defended and deconstructed into component elements. Butts (1988) states that, “A sense of obligation and responsibility manifested by loyalty, patriotism, discipline and duty is still needed as a social and political glue if the very structure of the democratic polity is to persist, let alone thrive” (p. 184). This obligation can only be enforced if students emerge from school with a mature and robust understanding of the meaning of patriotism and the duties incumbent upon citizenry.

Secondly, it must recognize that theory and legacy are not omnipresent and that marginalization, impoverishment, and disempowerment are the product of the gulf between political conviction and political reality. Citizens adhering to this inclusive definition “applaud some actions by the state and criticize others in an effort to promote positive change and consistency with the nation’s ideals” (Kahne and Middaugh, 2006 p. 602). Patriotism within this framework is a disposition that does not deny the existence of unsavory tendencies or characteristics in society. Rather, seeking to repair society through the implementation of civic convictions, a citizen of this variety finds that it is incumbent to indict in order to remedy. Kvitka (2006) advises, “Being patriotic requires the audacity to explore equally what is right and what is wrong about our nation and the courage to accept responsibility for both” (p. 593). In this sense, patriotism may become a disposition that is unfettered by chauvinism and divisiveness. Instead, it is a propellant for change, reform, and accountability.

Dissent

Granting social studies teachers license to allow students to critically investigate social and political trends and equipping them with the skills to be agents of change, reform, and repair through acts of dissent has generated a deluge of responses. To reiterate, an almost universal consensus exists regarding the necessity of having citizens qualified at the conduct of democracy yet determining civic dispositions produces ideological divergence and polarizes the discourse on civic education. In order to appreciate how dissent is part of a democratic tradition and can be a manifestation of patriotic sensibilities, it is first necessary to examine the landscape of arguments proposed by opponents and proponents of civic education granting space to legitimate dissent.

Weissberg questions the principle of allocating resources for civic education. More pointedly, he dismisses the notion of fostering a sense of commitment to social justice within schools as superfluous when democratic institutions appear to be functioning unabated by twenty-first century social problems. Weissberg (2001) ponders, “Why then does democracy require its citizens to possess a burning passion for social justice or a knack for unraveling knotty moral quandaries” (p. 281)? Answering his own rhetorical question, Weissberg replies, “When it is all said and done, everything seems to work satisfactorily, and most essentially, it is accomplished democratically” (p. 281). The logic is that deliberations on civic education are unnecessary as there is no real urgency in the matter. This argument presumes democracy functions regardless of the extent to which citizens are discriminating consumers of media, informed decision-makers, and capable of exercising agency. Variables such as susceptibility to rhetoric and polemics are absent in Weissberg’s rationale. Weissberg’s conclusions are based on macro-level analysis and are devoid of an awareness of how the democratic process functions inequitably in certain locales prone to poverty, violence, and economic stratification.

Opponents of appropriating dissent into the canon of civic education curricula contend that this behavior exists outside the realm of permissible political channels and foments undue cynicism. By questioning the functionality of sociopolitical conditions, opponents fear that dissent translates into mistrust and collective malaise. Nock (1995) suggests, “Dissidents tend to be viewed as deviant, threatening, and wrong” (p. 154). This form of active participation in civil affairs is considered to jeopardize collective cohesion. Society atomizes and selfish vying for individual or special interest eclipses unity, solidarity, and a sense of joint responsibility (Abowitz and Harnish, 2006). In this sense,

dissent is characterized as an activity resultant from disenchantment and factional interests that unbind society.

Those who question dissent as a tenable vehicle of reform also argue that there is a misplaced assumption that social problems are systemic. If dissent aims to alleviate the ills of society by calling attention to institutional failure, critics contest that this fails to assign responsibility to the appropriate parties. “Personal deficits” rather than dysfunctional structures are the underlying cause of socioeconomic stratification and impediments to upward mobility (Westheimer and Kahne, 2004). Detractors contend that assigning blame to structures denies the existence of an American meritocracy and individualism. For dissident voices to direct attention at and indict entrenched social and political defects, according to the logic of detractors’ position, minimizes personal responsibility in the perpetuation of social problems. Such argumentation renders dissent a misguided campaign to reassign blame away from the actual source of social ills.

The most salient retort against dissent is the concern that such behavior is harmful to the nation and is an unpatriotic activity. Participation in civil society must be constructive and yield a positive contribution to society (Hansen, 1999). Dissent under the auspices of participation is disingenuous as it is detrimental to healthy forms of involvement- voting, etc.- that enhance the existing civic framework. Dissent is a disruptive force that deviates from the conventional avenues for political engagement (Theiss-Morse, 1993). Within this opposition is the underlying orthodoxy that parameters demarcating prohibited and permissible civic behavior exist and that venturing towards dissent broaches the threshold of prohibited activities.

Critics cast aside dissent as being machinations that erode and undermine the

continued stability of democracy whereas proponents of this form of political participation assert that it diagnoses society's deficiencies in a manner that equitably distributes power. Through dissent, citizens are able to hold authorities accountable and challenge them to redress instances where there is a lapse in the American ethos. If citizens in a democracy are rulers who delegate to elected officials, dissent maintains a power equilibrium (Dahl, 1992). As such, dissent is not deviant or destructive but is an extension of democratic participation and a reminder that meaningful engagement in civic affairs is multifaceted and cannot adequately be encapsulated by the occasional visit to the voting booth. The prerogative of the citizen is, "To disagree without being disagreeable" (McGee, 1966, p. 45), through dissident behavior.

By allowing dissent to occur, democratic society promotes political tolerance. The cohabitation of a diverse array of ideas engenders the tacit acknowledgement that society is strengthened by the deliberation that ensues when ideas are contrasted, weighed, and evaluated. By protecting freedom of speech, press and assembly, the founding generation issued, "a declaration that political controversy is the fresh air of free men" (Pollak, 1968, p. 693). Controversy in a marketplace of ideas allows for a cerebral democracy to flourish. By allowing the study of controversy into civic education curricula, students will be granted the opportunity to become astute judges of an idea's validity. Controversy and a free exchange of ideas is not unchecked relativism but rather the opportunity for students to construct deep knowledge and implement a course of action after careful evaluation. Students in a classroom that introduces dissent as a political activity are allowed to consider ambiguity, nuance and complexity contrary to reductive thought. By granting space to voice controversial ideas "we find the balance that promotes peaceful resolution of the

most contentious conflicts facing us” (Gomez, 2006, p. 56). As Brandeis asserted, “without free speech and assembly discussion would be futile; that with them, discussion affords ordinarily adequate protection against the dissemination of noxious doctrine; that the greatest menace to freedom is an inert people (Pollak, 1968, 694). Staving off free speech and dissident actions resulting from the exchange of ideas is counterproductive to democracy; civic ossification may arise when ideas do not circulate and citizens are not harbingers of change. When dissent is understood to be the end result of this process of political tolerance, free exchange of ideas, and sober-minded deliberation, it becomes the embodiment of America’s political virtues and conscience.

Patriotism of Dissent

As the proponents of dissent attest, broaching controversial subjects and taking action to rectify the disparity between ideals and reality is an action grounded in a commitment to the ongoing welfare of society. A patriotism steeped in affinity for the ideals preserved in the tenets of America’s political ethos is multifaceted and dissident behavior is one of many manifestations that can be nurtured by civic education. In doing so, students may be made aware of America’s political heritage, acknowledge how the persistence of social ills is evidence of an arrested implementation of ideals, and galvanized to redress the impediments to a just and equitable society from flourishing.

When framed as a mechanism not only to safeguard but to realize political ideals, dissent becomes a means of transmitting and practicing political tradition. The vision of patriotism as allegiance to a polity that is founded upon enlightened tenets should seek to ensure this vision is translated into a reality. By instilling an awareness that dissent is one option to ensure a patriotism-of-critical-allegiance becomes a feature of civic education,

teachers become “caretaker and transmitter of the traditions of a democratic society” (Ohles, 1968, p. 458).

Much of the opposition to dissent is the product of a concern that any contrarian behavior constitutes an act of dissent. Dissent as a patriotic act is not destructive or in opposition to society and political institutions. The insistence that citizens be vigilant of injustice and act accordingly to call attention to systemic forces impinging upon democracy is an attempt to resolve rather than exacerbate anti-democratic forces. By erecting parameters of dissent, a more coherent definition emerges that makes for more meaningful distinctions between behavior designed to defuse social problems and reinforce democracy and that which is indeed dangerous. Pollak reminds that the First Amendment provides the foundation for dissent. Speech and assembly are agreeable forms of questioning the status quo, diagnosing problems, and positing remedies. In contradistinction, “intimidation, obstruction, assaults” (Pollak, 1968, p. 695), endanger individuals and dismantle the edifice of democratic tradition. Dissent is not coercion or forceful imposition of one agenda over another. Rather, it is an attempt to repair a disconnect between theory and reality; such an endeavor is not arbitrary but is a tactical motion to reverse social problems.

Untempered radicalism and unlawful actions do not register as acts of dissent under a patriotic purview. Dissent as a manifestation of patriotism has origins in social justice education that is meant to transform society to become more humane. Actions beyond dissent would not be in the vein of incremental, surgical, and reparative action. As Pollak (1968) reminds, because democracy is functioning, revolutionary behavior is undue whereas dissent for reformist agendas, underscored by critical patriotic allegiance to the

tenets of American political theory, is pointed and conducive for change but not for a political overhaul. Pollak concludes, "I am sure it will be understood that in urging political action as a remedy which must take preference to disobedience of the law, I have assumed that the ordinary political process on which our democracy depends are in fact functioning" (p. 695). Under such circumstances, dissent promotes refinement, alterations, and modifications to civic life; dissent is targeted, "to reinterpret cultural norms," rather than rejecting or denouncing. Dissent propelled by patriotism is an avowal of the ideals harbored in conservative discourse but, rather than merely curating these values, seeks to reconstitute them and animate them through action and change. Radical and drastic measures veiled as dissent tend to be rejected by the vast majority of Americans and prove to be exercises in futility more so than consequential political action (Kazin, 2002).

Conclusion

By binding acts of dissent to a patriotic outlook, patriotism is defined according to more nuanced criteria and transcends national apologetics, triumphalism, and conflation between obedience and allegiance. By casting dissent as a manifestation of a patriotic framework, citizens can conduct their civic affairs unencumbered by political passivity, indiscriminate veneration for country, and a superficial sense of national infallibility. As such dissent is not abnegation, indignant nonconformity, uncouth activism or dangerous subversion. Civic education should be constructed around imbuing the classroom with an awareness of what the American ethos entails, how the country has struggled to achieve its social and political aims, and how dissent is a form of sociopolitical diagnostics to ensure the country acts in accordance to this foundational set of principles.

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