Cold War Educational Propaganda and Instructional Films, 1945-1965

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Cold War Educational Propaganda and Instructional Films, 1945-1965

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts at Virginia Commonwealth University

By

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Abstract

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This thesis will examine the response of educators to the use of the American public school system for ideological management during the early Cold War period. Through an assessment of instructional films, this work will show that the objectives of educational propaganda fell into three main categories: to promote Americanism as the national ideology, to deter students from communism or communist sympathy, and to link the potential for nuclear warfare to ideological lassitude. It will be argued that although the majority of educators accepted these goals, as films became increasingly extreme in their presentations, a critical minority revealed discontent with the use of the school for the purposes of indoctrination. By the mid-1960s, a number of factors would
result in the dismantling of the Cold War consensus and a reinvigoration of the critical perspective in education.
Introduction

As an important institution for the spread of ideas, the designated function of the school has long been a matter of controversy. Debate emerges regarding contradictory proposals for the role of the school in ideological management versus critical thinking. Ideology represents the body of ideas providing foundation for political and cultural systems. Critical thinking subjects beliefs to analytical examination to determine the reasoning behind them. These interpretations come into conflict when the ideology espoused does not meet the standards of critical evaluation. Although the origin of this dispute may be traced to the formation of the modern public school system in the nineteenth century, the historical context of the Cold War period fostered a temporary lapse in argumentation wherein the primary role of the school as a conveyor of ideology proved dominant.

The Second World War had resulted in an international power vacuum that both the United States and the Soviet Union sought to fill. Allied victory convinced the United States of the universal appeal of both democracy and American values. The Soviet Union believed the postwar period provided an opportunity for the expansion of communism. It was the ideological incompatibility of the American systems of democracy and capitalism with the Soviet system of communism that ushered in the Cold War. These tensions became manifested in proxy wars and a security dilemma.
wherein efforts to enhance the security of one nation appeared an act of provocation to the other.

As the Cold War represented an ideological battle in which the United States and the Soviet Union sought to impose their respective worldviews domestically and internationally, indoctrination through education became a legitimized practice adopted by both nations. In the United States, the formation of a bipartisan Cold War consensus provided the ideological framework on which to base curriculum. Of primary import within this context was the participation of educators in the use of the school for ideological management. An assessment of the interaction between educators and educational propaganda reveals a complex relationship. The majority of educators were initially supportive of the use of the school for ideological management. While it is impossible to know their exact motivation, the involvement of educators in this regard may be attributed to a number of factors: genuine concern for the intellectual framework of students, fear of reprimand for not adhering to the established consensus, or a desire to increase their societal status through acceptance of ideological responsibility. As the educational demands of consensus fostered increasingly radical interpretations of Cold War issues, however, a critical subset of educators emerged. Their criticisms reflected uneasiness with the role of the school in indoctrination. Despite their concerns, the restraints imposed by the political climate of the period prevented oppositional educators from attaining sway over the direction of Cold War curricula as their criticisms were eclipsed by the dominant ideology. A wholesale reassessment of the role of the school in ideological management would not be made until the consensus began to dismantle in light of the student activist movements of the 1960s.
The infiltration of Cold War propaganda in American education was largely assisted by the adoption of instructional film as a primary conduit of ideological management. Its ability to present a uniform message to a mass audience made this relatively new form of communication technology an ideal tool for indoctrination. Moreover, the combination of visuals and sound made instructional films especially effective in transmitting messages to students. Used in tandem with standard educational materials, films additionally made difficult the differentiation between fact and supposition. Adhering to the mandates of the Cold War consensus, instructional films may be viewed as a direct extension of the directives of ideological management within the educational system. As a standardized component of curricula, instructional films provide tangible evidence of the use of Cold War propaganda in American schools.

**Project**

This thesis will examine the response of educators to the role of the school in ideological management as demonstrated by instructional film propaganda. Aptly reflecting the explicit commingling of propaganda and education, instructional films serve as the perfect medium with which to assess the Cold War educational consensus. An examination of film content reveals that several themes relating to the ideological battle prove recurrent. The aims of the Cold War educational propaganda campaign may be divided into three broad categories: allegiance to the ideology of Americanism, rejection of the ideology of communism, and devotion to these sentiments based on the fear that ideological passivity could result in nuclear annihilation. By establishing a
dialogue between educators and instructional films, Cold War educational objectives and educators’ responses to those objectives will be made clear.

**Propaganda and Intent**

Although occasionally sponsored by governmental civil defense organizations, instructional films were predominantly independently produced. Their scripting was the task of a mix of sociologists, psychologists, and educators and their producers were not unified by a particular political framework. Rather, films were crafted based on the perceived desires of educators and the public at large. Producers willingly complied with the tenets of the Cold War consensus as adherence provided the safest means of ensuring the popular distribution of films. Educators were likewise subject to a cultural climate of surveillance and suspicion and selected for their own use films considered appropriate under the demands of the consensus. It is difficult to ascertain whether or not the consensus was extended by film producers and educators based on genuine concerns or as a result of the fear of being labeled subversive. Regardless of motive, the messages espoused by the films of the early Cold War period serve as an adequate reflection of the expected social mores of the time.

As their popularity increased during the Second World War, instructional films became in the postwar period the most commonly employed audio-visual educational aid. Because the operation of public schools was the domain of the local government, film selection depended on the school district in question. Some counties had audio-visual departments in charge of running film programs, others maintained a small committee of teachers who selected films, and still more allocated a budget for audio-
visual materials, providing educators with the opportunity to choose their own films for individual classes. Regardless of the selection process, schools typically maintained a film library for educators’ use. Many hired specialized instructional film librarians to serve as liaisons for teachers, assisting them in picking out films. Their involvement in film programs indicates that educators exerted a marked degree of control over this type of educational propaganda and explains the attention producers paid to educators’ demands concerning film content and style.

**Significance**

The influence of the Cold War consensus on education had tremendous repercussions for student understanding of the global conflict. As we cannot know exactly what educators taught in the privacy of their classrooms, instructional films provide a rare insight into the messages disseminated through the public schools during the period. This is especially important considering that these films were adopted as part of the standard school curriculum. Instructional films were often misleading as they took on the appearance of objective information rather than propaganda. Considering the atmosphere in which instructional films were presented, the school, it is reasonable to imagine that many students received messages positively and without question. The presentation of propaganda as fact fostered a false impression of the quality of the country’s policies and marginalized the critical perspective. That the educational system encouraged a skewed interpretation of international realities brings to light troubling questions concerning the function of American public schools in terms of student ideology. While similar assessments have been made through textbook analysis, the
subject matter of instructional films was more direct and more explicit in its aims and thus serves as an important relic of educational Cold War ideological management.

Instructional films have not been selected as the medium for assessment haphazardly. Rather, their origin makes them a unique and potent source for the study of Cold War propaganda. Indeed, it was only during the Cold War period that instructional films rose to prominence, providing a distinct example of the synthesis of propaganda with new forms of mass media. Today, such films are appreciated primarily for their production quality, and as kitschy reflections of a naïve era of American history. As a result, they have been largely neglected as a source by the academic community. To date, the only work to focus solely on instructional films is Ken Smith’s 1999 *Mental Hygiene: Classroom Films, 1945-1970*. While Smith’s assessment has provided a critical contribution to the topic, identifying instructional films as “tools of social engineering, created to shape the behavior of their audiences,” his scope was limited to an assessment of “mental hygiene” films. As a subset of instructional films produced between 1945 and 1970, mental hygiene films may be differentiated from others due to their emphasis on adjusting the social behavior of the viewers. The issue of ideology in instructional film, however, has been largely neglected. Thus, a scholarly void appears in assessments of Cold War education. It is the intent of this thesis to contribute to the discussion the significance of instructional films.

**Sources**

Films to be analyzed, save where noted, are made available by The Internet Archive, which provides permanent access to researches on a multitude of digital format

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collections. For the purposes of this study, a subsection of the Internet Archive, The Prelinger Archive, which maintains films relating to U.S. cultural history, will be used. All films must be attributed to the preservation efforts of Rick Prelinger, an archivist and social historian who maintains the largest collections of instructional films in the world to date.

Film assessments are necessarily subjective. Many Cold War era instructional films, their production notes, and circulation figures have been lost. In fact, the number of films produced is unknown, however, it has estimated to be in the tens of thousands. As a result, instructional films prove a difficult subject to tackle. As stated by Smith, “Many mental hygiene films received only limited circulation, and fifty years of neglect have obliterated their provenance. It’s often hard to track down even the most basic information about them.”² When production companies went out of business, many films were thrown away. Moreover, once considered outmoded by the development of video, the 16 mm films were also dumped by schools and libraries. Those remaining were rescued by the efforts of archivists such as Prelinger. As a result, this thesis is necessarily limited in scope. It does not serve to assess all instructional films, as that would be impossible, nor is the focus on explaining production history and technique (as such an endeavor would prove speculative rather than scholarly). Instead, through a combined approach of traditional research and material culture techniques, films will be subjected to in depth analytical assessment in order to provide a larger picture of Cold War era concerns and social mores.

The involvement of educators in the production of instructional films and their responses to the messages espoused will be assessed through an analysis of their

² Ken Smith, Mental Hygiene, 30.
contributions to educational journals and to periodicals concerned primarily with instructional films. The two periodicals directly related to the educational use of instructional films during the Cold War period were *The Educational Screen* and *See and Hear: The Journal on Audio-Visual Learning*.

These publications are important as they provide a direct barometer of what themes educators encouraged and discouraged. Supplementing these sources are articles contributed by educators in academic journals and the popular press that serve to demonstrate the general aims of education.

**Methodology**

The methodology employed for this thesis will consist of a two-pronged approach. Firstly, the participation of educators in the function of schools as institutes of ideological management will be demonstrated through an analysis of their contributions to the subject in popular periodicals and popular journals. This practice will show that a majority of educators, whether unconsciously or consciously, as a result of pressure or genuine desire, contributed to the infiltration of Cold War propaganda in American education by supporting or instigating the propagation of particular messages. The critical minority of this group will show the dominance of the consensus over the analytical perspective and be studied as an indicator of resistance to, or unease with, the designation of the school as a mechanism for ideological control. Secondly, selected films will be made subject to analysis in order to show the messages espoused by the Cold War consensus. This examination will show how instructional films used
propagandistic qualities to elicit a particular reaction from students and assess the veracity of the messages as compared to historical reality.

**Chapter Outline**

“Chapter I: A Brief History of Educational Propaganda,” will provide a basic history of the use of propaganda in the American educational system and the role of ideological management in schools leading up to the Cold War. “Chapter II: Ideological Persuasion, Part 1: Establishing Americanism,” will show that the promotion of Americanism as the national ideology during the Cold War resulted in a skewed interpretation of national goals and realities. “Chapter III: Ideological Persuasion, Part 2: Identifying the Enemy,” demonstrates that the fears of film producers and educators in being labeled subversives under McCarthyism yielded a misguided interpretation of communist ideology based not on political philosophy but on historical circumstance. “Chapter IV: Education Made Imperative: The Role of the Atomic Threat,” considers the appeal to fear in inculcating adherence to national policies based on the repeated threat of nuclear warfare. “Conclusion: The Dismantling of Consensus,” explains how the dismantling of the Cold War consensus in light of the nationwide activist movements of the 1960s yielded a counter-movement in education that made critical education, rather than ideological management, the primary concern of the school.
CHAPTER I:  
A Brief History of Educational Propaganda

While the school has always been a popular target for propaganda campaigns, it was only during the First World War that the institution was used for a nationwide program of indoctrination. The exploitation of the educational system in this period fostered postwar debate concerning the morality of educational propaganda. Disagreement emerged regarding the contradictory role of the school in fostering critical thinking among students versus serving as a platform for ideological management. While these arguments abated in light of the Second World War, they did not resume following the cessation of warfare. Rather, it was during the Cold War period that an educational consensus was formed, making ideological training the primary objective of the school. This consensus was based on several factors. The use of the educational system for indoctrination by the Nazis during World War II encouraged the adoption of a propaganda movement aimed at preventing similar consequences. America’s position of international hegemony following the war made Americanism appear the perfect counter-ideology to assert this program. Moreover, the conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union made communism the key enemy to which Americanism could be directed. Finally, the role of the school in ideological management was solidified by the potential for nuclear warfare stemming from the Cold War arms race.
The Etymological Transformation of *Propaganda*

In its original form, the term *propaganda* was relatively innocuous, referring to any form of communication that sought to promote a particular cause or position. Prior to the twentieth century, a limited pool of vehicles for information dispersal forced propagandists to operate on a localized level. Because they were subject to close supervision on behalf of the targeted community, propagandists were prevented from achieving sway through excessively manipulative techniques. It was not until the post-World War I period that the term *propaganda* acquired the pejorative connotation of persuasion through intentional deception. This etymological transformation was tied to the extensive use of propaganda in the First World War.

**World War I**

The unprecedented demands of modern warfare resulted in the employment of propaganda on a widespread scale for the first time during World War I. Within the United States, Great War propaganda was adopted with particular urgency. Because America had initially adhered to a position of neutrality, the declaration of war caused policymakers to view propaganda as a necessary tool in generating support from a reluctant populous. On April 3, 1917, the Woodrow Wilson Administration formed the Committee on Public Information, the nation’s first governmental propaganda agency. The wartime activities of the CPI were significant as they represented the first use of the school as a channel of persuasion for federal objectives. In *Origins of Mass Communications Research During the American Cold War: Educational Effects and*
Contemporary Implications, educational historian Timothy Glander explains the choice of the school as a target for the propaganda campaign. He states:

The schools were conceived to be important socializing institutions and important links in the communication chain. With the increasing number of students attending educational institutions at all levels, schools represented important contact points by which government information could be spread to people who might not otherwise be exposed to such information. Through the careful construction and dissemination of curricular and other materials directed at both teachers and students, the CPI utilized the system of public education as a vehicle by which consensus could be engineered on particular governmental policy objectives relating to the war.3

The preparation and allocation of the CPI’s curricular materials was made the responsibility of the Division of Civic and Educational Cooperation (hereafter referred to as the Educational Division), headed by University of Minnesota historian Guy Stanton Ford. Officially existing for only two years, the Education Division worked to publish propaganda literature aimed primarily at grammar and secondary students. In a speech given at the annual meeting of the Minnesota Historical Society on January 20, 1919, Ford provided an ideological reasoning for the CPI’s activities. He argued:

Behind the men and the guns, behind the great armies and navies, behind the great munitions storehouses and munitions factories, there has been waging another and equally important battle. It has been the battle for men’s opinions and for the conquest of their convictions…the conviction that their cause was a just and a righteous one. The thing that had to be built up was the morale of the fighting nations.4

In an effort to promote such morale, the Education Division published approximately thirty-five pamphlets with a total distribution of over thirty-five million copies.5 Moreover, the organization founded a bi-weekly magazine called National School Service, “which

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was sent free of charge to every one of the six hundred thousand public school teachers in the United States.”⁶ Identifying the Education Division’s interpretation of the role of the school, Glander argues that “To Ford, it was the very character of U.S. schooling—a type of schooling that did not engender a critical perspective—that made possible the ease with which the CPI was able to mold U.S. opinions about the war.”⁷ Indeed, at the end of his speech, Ford noted with pleasure that with the formation of the CPI, “For the first time in the history of America the voice of the national government was carried directly and regularly into the schools of the whole country.”⁸ Ford’s endeavor proved successful in acquiring support for the war, and set a precedent for the accepted use of educational propaganda in wartime.

The Inter-War Period and the Propaganda Debate

A postwar reevaluation of the use of propaganda, however, was instigated by the tremendous human toll of warfare. With 119,956 dead and 182,674 wounded, the American public came to feel that they had been deceived into contributing to an ultimately unjustified war.⁹ Apprehensions were exacerbated by the emergence of new or expanded forms of communication techniques that extended the reach of propaganda, including radio, film, advertising, and the field of public relations. In addition, the emergence of fascism as a legitimate political ideology generated fears concerning the possible future use of propaganda, as fascism appeared to openly endorse the molding of popular opinion through insidious means. Considered in

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⁷ Glander, Origins of Mass Communications Research During the American Cold War, 10.
⁹ Glander, Origins of Mass Communications Research During the American Cold War, 10.
tandem, the disillusionment with the use of propaganda during the war, concern regarding the new forms of mass communication, and the fear of the precedent the war had set for the use of manipulative persuasion tactics by emerging fascist nations, assisted in the pejorative transformation of the term *propaganda*.

It was within this context that propaganda was first subject to scrutiny on behalf of the international intellectual community. Concern took the form of mass debate within the popular press and academic journals of the 1920s and 1930s regarding the role, legitimacy, and likely impact of propaganda on society. Of primary concern was the fear that propaganda’s potential to control public opinion would result in the formation of a mass society—a population so susceptible to political influence that they were rendered the uncritical, atomistic pawns of the state. On the other hand, however, there grew a contingency which remained in favor of the use of propaganda, believing that it would result in the positive transformation of society.

In the United States, this debate was predicated on the legitimacy of propaganda in a democratic society. If democracy was based on the wish of the popular opinion, was the practice of trying to direct or sway that opinion justifiable? Perceived as both powerful agents of propaganda and teachers of propaganda resistance, educators were often featured at the center of this controversy. As stated by Glander, one of the most important questions facing contributors to the debate was, “Should propaganda replace education as the function of the school, or should the school aim to develop the critical capacities by which this propaganda might be exposed?”

Opponents of educational propaganda perceived conflict with the fundamental values of democracy, while proponents felt that educational propaganda would serve to strengthen democratic

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10 Glander, *Origins of Mass Communications Research During the American Cold War*, 3.
devotion. The heavy involvement of educators in the propaganda debate is significant when considered in contrast to the overwhelming acceptance of educational propaganda during World War II and the postwar period.

Writing in 1920, Professor of Psychology at Wesleyan University, Raymond Dodge, provided an apt description of the postwar concern with the relationship between propaganda and democracy in referring to “the curse of propaganda, the greatest of indoor military sports.” Emerging as an early critic of propaganda, Dodge referenced the troublesome implications of propaganda within a democratic society, where those seeking power required the acceptance of the populous. As a result of this social structure he argued that “As long as public opinion rules the destinies of human affairs, there will be no end to an instrument that controls it.” Dodge’s concerns stemmed from the fear that propaganda would lead to the intellectual control of the population, and therefore result in the development of a mass society. The sentiment was reinforced by his discussion of the consequences of propaganda’s infiltration in education. According to Dodge, the difference between education and propaganda rested on propaganda’s “emphasis on the feelings and their appeal to emotional logic.” In describing the consequence of emotional appeals in the guise of education, he argued, “To become blasé is the inevitable penalty of emotional exploitation.” According to Dodge, becoming “blasé” would have tremendous consequences for the nation as citizens would no longer serve as thoughtful contributors and critics to the functions of the state.

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Likewise tackling the issue of propaganda’s perceived conflict with democracy, but reaching a very different conclusion was Edward L. Bernays, a pioneer in the field of public relations and propaganda. In offering a counter to Dodge, Bernays argued in 1938 that pressing social problems required social control, even if such control was anathema to the ideals of democracy. He stated, “Today, democracy is challenged on all sides. It is the obligation of all those who are interested in democracy to do all in their power to strengthen it in order to preserve it. This demands the building up of an inner bulwark of dynamic belief and confidence in our democracy by all the people.”\textsuperscript{15}

Resorting to an argument common during the period, Bernays reasoned that the indoctrination of democratic faith in the current period would serve as a protective measure against the possible demise of democracy in the future. He maintained that “What we must strive for is the achievement of that inner faith and devotion to democracy within our people which will make them active against encroachments on the essential liberties which are the basis of democracy.”\textsuperscript{16}

The fear of a mass society was made evident by the emergence of several anti-propaganda agencies in the period, including the Institute for Propaganda Analysis and the National Council for Social Study, which sought to serve as preventative measures through the distribution of curricular materials designed to teach students to identify and resist propaganda. In exemplifying the new position of propaganda, Hadley Cantril, President of the Institute for Propaganda Analysis, noted in 1938 that “propaganda on a wholesale basis was first used during the World War. We remember the famous ‘paper bullets’ which some claim were as important during the last few months of the war as

\textsuperscript{16} Bernays, “Public Education for Democracy,” 127.
were lead bullets.”\textsuperscript{17} In describing the social concern with propaganda that had emerged as a result of the war, he continued, “So far, in the twentieth century, propagandists have sold us everything from toothpaste to war. Never before has the world seen so many propagandas competing for the attention of the bewildered laymen.”\textsuperscript{18} In response, Cantril noted, the Institute was formed as a means of helping the “layman” to identify and dismiss propaganda.\textsuperscript{19}

As propaganda appeared anathema to education, a central feature of the debate concerned attempts to distinguish propaganda from education. In attempting to provide such differentiation, educator Wayne Soper argued in 1929 that the purpose of education was “to acquaint the individual with a variety of opinions, doctrines, or courses of action so as to equip him intelligently to do his own thinking and to select his own courses of action.”\textsuperscript{20} Propaganda, conversely, served to “gain acceptance of a particular opinion, doctrine, or course of action under circumstances designed to curb the individual’s freedom of action.”\textsuperscript{21} Likewise seeking to distinguish propaganda and education was the unknown author of “Scientist Gives Principles for Practical Propaganda,” who in 1932 classified the two entities based on their relationship to rationality. He argued, “Education has as one of its major interests the development of rational or conscious control over conduct.”\textsuperscript{22} Propaganda, in contrast, was irrational

\textsuperscript{17} Hadley Cantril, “Propaganda Analysis,” \textit{The English Journal} 27, no. 3 (Mar., 1938): 217.
\textsuperscript{18} Cantril, “Propaganda Analysis,” 217.
\textsuperscript{19} Cantril, “Propaganda Analysis,” 221.
\textsuperscript{21} Soper, “What Species Propaganda?,” 224.
because it aimed, “to prevent thinking and promote emotion.” Combining the two assessments provides an adequate interpretation of the contemporary postwar perception of the two terms. *Education* was to teach students to approach issues rationally and to encourage them to come to their own conclusions based on consideration of the evidence. *Propaganda*, however, made the individual’s choice appear limited and sought adherence based on emotion.

Having differentiated the two terms, defining the function of the school and outlining its methods in achieving that objective became another key issue of debate. In addressing the function of the school, educator Thomas Warrington Gosling emerged in favor of educational propaganda as a means of producing good citizens, which he claimed was the ultimate purpose of the system. Writing in 1920, he argued that “There is already a disproportionate emphasis upon the intellectual in our schools. We need now to restore the balance by stressing the emotional and the volitional elements in the lives of pupils.” Within this perspective, the role of the public school was to, “send out into active life young men and women who are trained to love America and who have learned how to show that love by means of self-sacrificing service. There can be no doubt that the high schools will respond to this call.”

Carroll H. Woody, former member of the Department of Political Science at the University of Chicago and forum leader of the Des Moines Public Forums, questioned Gosling’s stance for its failure to provide a specific directive for ideological management or to consider the implications of educational sponsorship of nationalism on international

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23 “Scientist Gives Principles for Practical Propaganda,” 266.
relations. Articulating these concerns, he asked, “Is the motive of education to serve the whole of society? Is ‘society’ the nation, or the world? If the latter, confusion characterizes much of the effort to inculcate patriotism or to ‘train for citizenship.’”

Foreshadowing the limitations on academic freedom that would be imposed on educators during the Cold War, Wooddy additionally identified the potential consequences of ideological training for the school itself. He argued, “If education assumes the role of umpire, it cannot escape the hostility which descends upon the official who decides against the home team.” Considering the prospective repercussions of Gosling’s plan, Wooddy ultimately concluded that “The function of education is to reduce or to eliminate the effectiveness of propaganda.” Reiterating this sentiment was John J. DeBoer, educator and editor of The English Journal, who argued:

> Not suppression but exposition should be the guiding principle of American education. If the American school cannot keep its doors open to all current opinions it will soon cease to be a school. Propaganda must be labeled as to sources and as to the economic interests of the groups disseminating it. Our great peril lies not in propaganda but in the surreptitious introduction of propaganda under the guise of undisputed truth, and the suppression of contrary opinions.

In a particularly harsh indictment of educational propaganda, Francis J. Brown of New York University argued that “To some, nationalism is a sacred ideal which weaves a halo about the time-honored instruments of government and should be the conscious objective of all agencies of education; to others it is considered as narrow patriotism,

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even chauvinism, and must invariably lead to the altar of Mars. In describing the dangers of nationalist sentiments, Brown continued, noting, “As an artifact of the mind they become emotionalized and are directed by irrational motives rather than the intellect... A flag becomes holier than a human life and a symbol greater than that for which it stands, while the youth of a nation are but marionettes, dancing to their deaths.”

**World War II and the Termination of the Debate**

Although the debate appeared to lean toward the expulsion of propaganda from the public school and was more inclined to hold that the purpose of the school was to foster critical thinking, World War II prevented the discussion from continuing along those lines. Rather than being resolved based on the cogency of the arguments, the perceived exigencies of warfare interrupted the tenor of the examination. The shift in opinion among educators and social observers was demonstrated by the public backlash against the practice of propaganda analysis as a means of producing a public knowledgeable of, and resistant to, the effects of propaganda. The common criticism was that propaganda analysis resulted in cynicism, and was therefore detrimental to patriotism.

In providing a concise description of the distrust of propaganda analysis emerging in the period immediately prior to U.S. entrance in the war, teacher Bruce Lannes Smith argued in 1941 that including the practice in education produced a destructive skepticism in students. He mused, “What are the actual effects of these

31 Brown, “Media of Propaganda,” 324.
lessons on the student? Do the methods of teaching propaganda analysis promote, for example, a vigorous faith in the values and ultimate triumph of democratic practice? Or do they, as critics often complain, simply promote an attitude of generalized cynicism, a feeling that you can’t trust any newspaper, any radio commentator, any political speaker? Indicating his own position on the issue and explaining the possible consequences of such instruction Smith asked, “does it not increase the probability that students who have been exposed to propaganda analysis will accept the distrust of democracy, the counsels of despair, that have already led the youth of Europe to flock into anti-democratic, anti-rational and hyper-nationalistic mass movements?” As an educator who had attempted to include propaganda analysis as part of his curriculum, Smith contended that he and other educators had noticed that “an extremely high, if not menacing, degree of cynicism develops, especially among adolescents, as a result of the methods in use at present.”

In fact, when the United States did enter the war, it was partly because of this criticism that institutions devoted to propaganda analysis shut down, believing their work would be detrimental to the war effort. Writing immediately after the Institute for Propaganda Analysis announced its suspension of operations during the war, sociologist William Garber questioned the meaning behind the Institute’s reasoning for wartime deferment, noting that “the approach utilized by the Institute might serve to disturb the unity needed for the war effort.” Taking this statement as a sign that

propaganda analysis produced a sinister influence on society, Garber contended, “Was there not something defective about the type of analysis employed by the Institute that its directors were forced to the conclusion that they might be hindering national defense?”

Although conceding that the Institute had made “the public thoroughly propaganda conscious, identifying the term with a form of deception, the control of the many by the few,” Garber criticized the agency for promoting, “a cheap skepticism and a pseudo-sophistication which rejected everything prior to analysis”

With the rejection of propaganda analysis as a necessary addition to school curriculum, the objective of the school in wartime became an important concern. Writing before America’s entrance into war, George S. Counts, a prominent educational theorist, reiterated in 1940 the case made by Ford for the primary obligation of education during the First World War. He stated:

The struggle now shaking the earth is not primarily a struggle of armed forces. Fundamentally, it is a struggle of social faiths, a struggle to determine what moral ideas and values are to shape the new world order and thus establish, perhaps for centuries, the life patterns that men will follow. It is also a struggle between educational programs and purposes.

This ideological interpretation of the war, according to Counts, necessitated educational intervention. In issuing an emotional appeal for this endeavor, he concluded by noting that “Clearly the American public school cannot stand idly by as this struggle moves toward its denouncement. Guardian of the things of the spirit and symbol of the future, it must rise to meet the challenge of the dictators.”

36 Garber, “Propaganda Analysis- To What Ends?,” 240.
37 Garber, “Propaganda Analysis- To What Ends?,” 241.
39 Counts, “Education in the Crisis,” 166.
Reiterating Counts’ judgment, an unnamed author contributing to *The High School Journal* maintained that the school “has an obligation to provide an understanding of the requirements of national security in all its forms, and adequate preparation for participation in national defense. Citizenship in the broadest sense should be cultivated in the schools.”

Adding to the assertion that the same emphasis must be held in the postwar period, the author argued that “The time is ripe for securing the benefits of this fruitful period of adjustment. We have now, as never before, a conception of the national strengths, shortcomings, and strains to which public education is intimately related.” It is significant that educators in this period stressed the necessity of establishing future educational objectives for the postwar period. The experience of two World Wars encouraged an anticipatory program of indoctrination.

As the former debate on the function of the school became increasingly homogenized, the attempt to outline these future educational endeavors for the peacetime period increased. Writing in 1941, E. George Payne, editor of *The Journal of Educational Sociology* and Dean of the School of Education of New York University predicted in “Education, the War and After,” the dominant educational paradigm which would emerge in the postwar period. He argued that “Every one is aware that we are in a world crisis that is unlike anything that the world has faced, and also that it will have a more far-reaching influence than any that has faced civilization in America or in the

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world in all past history." Understanding that the war would have tremendous implications for the future role of the school, Payne contended that:

The educator will take his place along with other citizens in the immediate solution of these critical problems. However, education, itself, is facing the necessity of a similar revolution in order to serve the emergent order, and the educational leaders are faced with the problem not only with reference to education during the period of the war, but even more in the period immediately following it, which will tax our ultimate leadership and energy. The serious problem is not that of the war, but the reconstruction essentially following the war period.

A component of this preemptive postwar curriculum concerned the desire among educators to maintain the local autonomy of the schools by voluntarily adhering to state doctrine. According to Payne, “There is a great deal of distrust among our political leaders in the ability of educators to perform this task.” In seeking to prevent federal intervention into the operation of the schools, he recommended:

There must be definite educational planning. In this we may take a lesson from the totalitarian governments. They have not only planned their military program and strategy, but, more important still, their educational program to fit into their social philosophy and military efforts... We must face and seek to construct an educational program that will meet the needs of a new world and a new order that is emerging.

Efforts to bolster the authority of the school in determining educational goals foreshadowed the Cold War objective of educators to improve the societal significance of their roles through adherence to national goals.

In 1943, the superintendent of schools in Passaic, New Jersey, Willard B. Spalding supported this interpretation by arguing that the school had to adjust to the

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43 Payne, “Education, the War and After,” 86.
44 Payne, “Education, the War and After,” 88.
45 Payne, “Education, the War and After,” 90-91.
demands of the state. Extrapolating on this contention, he stated, “The high school cannot escape this. Any attempt to do so will result in its being discarded and in the creation of more flexible and more serviceable institutions.”46 Like Payne, he maintained that the school had to adopt ideology as a central aspect of instruction, arguing, “The crisis is at hand. Secondary education [the high school] can close its eyes and dream of the good old days or, by seeking inspiration in the dynamism of the present, it can become a potent force in the society of the post-war United States.”47 The statements made by Payne and Spalding were significant in indicating the shift in educational goals that would become standardized in the postwar period.

The Foundation of Cold War Education

Curriculum development for the Cold War context became a key issue in the period immediately preceding the end of World War II. Rather than addressing the problematic relationship between propaganda and the school, educators came to the conclusion that propaganda to produce democratic citizens was a necessary component of the scholastic experience. Writing in 1945, educator Matthew P. Gaffney, in “Curriculum Planning for the Postwar Education,” contributed to this transition by arguing that the postwar period, in contrast to WWII, would supply no motivation for the adherence to democracy. As a result, he suggested that the schools maintain the principles espoused during the war. In extrapolating on this necessity, he stated:

When the war is over, we shall have come through an experience that has shaken the civilized world—an experience that has reached every human being

to some extent, that has changed values. We are fighting for certain values. It will be unthinkable if, after the war, the teaching of these values does not play a major part in our curriculum. Must we not think more clearly than we ever have before about what these values are?

In providing a summary of the issues that would face educators in the postwar period, Gaffney noted, "We say 'democracy,' but what is it? How does it come about? What place does it have in school? Does it affect our choice of subject matter? Does it affect the teacher’s place in the school system and his relations with the administration? Does it affect the teacher in relation to the community?" According to him, these issues would affect all aspects of the school. Gaffney’s recommended solution: “In a cynical period we tend to undermine loyalties by pointing out only the mistakes. In a time of reaction that follows war, there is a real danger. We must create loyalties!”

In reinforcing Gaffney’s position but expanding on the methods of accomplishing the task, educator W.E. Moore’s “Clues to Post-War Problems,” found the answer in mimicking the educational system employed by the Nazis during the war. In describing this process, he stated:

The first clue lies in the Nazi educational system. Its diabolical success in indoctrinating German youth suggests not only the danger of state control of education but also the tremendous potential power of education for good or evil. Furthermore, the fact that the Nazis were able to instill in German youth attitudes and qualities of character diametrically opposed to those which have formed the basis of western civilization for nearly three thousand years suggests that culture is a force in human behavior which we have not adequately understood.

As indicated by Gaffney and Moore, following the experiences of World War II, educators believed that the postwar period would require the adoption of an educational framework founded on ideology. Indoctrination appeared a safeguard against the eruption of a Third World War. Although the sentiment appeared to contradict America’s engagement in the Cold War, the central point of avoiding intensified conflicts remained.

**Cold War Historical Overview**

Wartime plans for ideological education in the postwar period found validation in the tensions developing between the United States and the Soviet Union shortly after Allied victory. Emerging from the war as the world’s leading economic and military power encouraged a new stance of internationalism for the United States. Despite forging an alliance during the war, America’s self-perception as “world’s policeman” clashed with Stalin’s insistence on maintaining a Soviet “sphere of influence” in Eastern Europe. Soviet attempts to protect the country’s immediate periphery appeared an initial act of global conquest while American calls for democratic reform were interpreted as a capitalist conspiracy to surround the Soviet Union.

In spite of promises to hold free elections, the Soviet Union in 1945 began to impose its authority over surrounding nations: Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania were reoccupied by the Soviets, a communist government was imposed on Rumania, and a pro-Soviet puppet government was installed in Poland. The American perception that these actions indicated a Soviet program for the international expansion of communism was supported by the assessment provided by George Frost Kennan, an American ambassador to Moscow. In 1946, Kennan sent a cable from Moscow to the State
Department in which he warned of Soviet aggression. Known as the “Long Telegram,” Kennan argued that the Soviet Union was intent on world domination and recommended that the United States counter this threat with strong resistance. An expanded version of this telegram was published in the July 1947 issue of *Foreign Affairs*. Here, Kennan, under the pseudonym “Mr. X,” described the Soviet interpretation of a world divided between capitalist and communist camps. According to Kennan, the Soviets believed there could be no peace between these factions. His recommendation was adoption of a foreign policy of containment—a strategy to prevent expansion by enclosing communism within the boundaries of the Soviet Union.

In 1947, the containment policy was initiated with the Truman Doctrine. Containment thrust upon the nation unprecedented international political and military responsibilities. Initially, the strategy was met with resistance on two issues. Firstly, following World War II, many were hesitant to engage in international confrontations and had instead hoped for a return to prewar isolationism. Secondly, containment appeared anathema to the American principles of freedom and self-determination. Responding to the former complaint, the administration argued that in an era of total war, the United States could not refrain from international intervention, but had to take extraordinary actions as preventative measures. In responding to the latter, the use of traditional rhetoric became of great import in garnering public support for the containment policy, as public officials framed the conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union in terms of a battle between a definitive good versus a definitive evil.

The United States had a history of anticommunist tendencies prior to the Cold War; however, the ideological battle reinvigorated and intensified anticommunist
ideology. The fear of domestic communist infiltration that had begun before World War II was made part of the federal stance in the early postwar years. In March 1947 President Truman officially responded to fears of communist subversion by issuing Executive Order 9835 which established the Federal Employee Loyalty Program, designed to weed out communists within government agencies. Moreover, numerous high-profile court cases allowed for the prosecution of communist leaders through the assertion that they sought the violent overthrow of the government. Under J. Edgar Hoover, the FBI pursued a program of widespread political surveillance that included taps on both governmental employees and private citizens. The Senate Internal Security Subcommittee carried out similar tasks. The House Un-American Committee (HUAC), made a permanent committee in 1945, investigated any suspected communists deemed to be in positions of influence in American society. Greatly exacerbating the hysteria were the unsubstantiated accusations of communism, often expressed in terms of treason, launched by Senator Joseph McCarthy. Local government and community groups adhered to the anticommunist stance of the federal government, producing a cultural climate of fear.

Within the international context, attempts to consolidate American power abroad and to prevent Soviet influence became a prime concern for foreign policymakers. In 1947, the Soviet Union established the Communist Information Bureau (Cominform) to coordinate communist activity around the globe and accelerate the spread of communism in underdeveloped nations. The United States matched this program in 1949 with the formation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), a mutual defense pact that bound signatories to protect one another against aggression.
 Intervention into the political choices of other nations was an ongoing pattern of American foreign policy during the Cold War. Tensions escalated between 1945 and 1960 as newly independent nations in Asia, the Middle East, Latin America, and Africa became Cold War battlegrounds, wherein local struggles were viewed as part of the superpower competition between the Soviet Union and the United States. American interference in these conflicts was justified with the assertion that American forces sought to extend freedom to other nations. However, intervention was often unwarranted as the United States frequently removed democratically elected leaders and replaced them with oppressive officials who were nonetheless more desirable for American interests. The expansion of communism led to increasingly aggressive strategies of containment, including the threat of nuclear warfare to contain the Soviet sphere of influence. The United States maintained a monopoly of nuclear weapons until 1949, when the Soviets successfully detonated their own atomic bomb. Escalation of the arms race fostered extremism in the interpretation of the conflict, and served to justify the use of educational propaganda to promote Americanism and foster anticommunism. Within this perspective, nuclear annihilation would be the consequence of ideological lassitude.

Limited warfare and the moral ambiguity of Cold War battles, however, failed to mimic the experience of total war against understood evil during World War II. As a result, the reliance on propaganda—including that adopted by the educational system—to achieve cultural support for Cold War endeavors proved pervasive and touched all segments of American society. This propaganda campaign was based on a bipartisan Cold War consensus that had emerged early in the postwar period.
The Cold War Consensus

The emergence of a bipartisan Cold War consensus yielded a national ideology of Americanism, establishing domestic unity in terms of political, economic, and social values. In addition, the consensus provided an identifiable enemy in communism. It was this ideology that guided the objectives of postwar educational propaganda.

Each element of the consensus—political, economic, and social—had previously sparked mass controversy within the country. The establishing of political unity had its roots in World War I. Since that time, it was feared that the influence of emergent fascist and communist nations on dissatisfied or disenfranchised class, racial, ethnic, and religious groups could result in social unrest within the United States. The rise of Nazi Germany helped to exacerbate these fears while its dissolution encouraged the idea that a unified America could successfully resist domestic turmoil. The presence of the Soviet Union in the post-World War II period, however, represented a new threat, provoking a strong retaliation. Democracy came to be celebrated for its extension of governmental control to the people, thus providing an inclusive system resistant to excessive external control of the individual. This principle was fortified by the key concept of Americanism, “freedom,” which extended the political form of democracy to include meritocratic principles such as equal access to education and information.

Political unity was accompanied by an effort to instill economic cohesion. The Cold War consensus fostered the acceptance of capitalism as the superior economic system. Debate concerning America’s economic practices may be traced back to the progressive era, wherein the American economy was subject to two oppositional
characterizations: free market and free enterprise versus governmental regulation of business. The issue was further complicated by the Great Depression, which placed capitalism on the defensive and caused significant social turmoil. The post-World War II economic boom and the state-controlled economies of communist countries, however, encouraged the endorsement of a particularly privatized version of capitalism. Under the consensus, capitalism, like democracy, was described in terms of freedom and was characterized by a focus on self-interest. These economic concepts were marketed to schoolchildren using a particularly skewed rhetoric that eliminated any potential criticisms of the system. Frequently, “The American Way of Life” reinforced economic freedoms through a depiction of the United States as a meritocracy. This method mitigated possible critiques of greed or unequal opportunity by describing America as a nation wherein anyone could succeed and be rewarded for their hard work.

Assertions made regarding the economic and political spheres had consequences for the ways in which social values were ascribed to Americanism. The democratic and capitalistic systems already in place in America in the postwar period had left a significant portion of the population disenfranchised and/or economically disadvantaged. It was feared that these power imbalances could result in social unrest, upsetting the status quo and perhaps provoking a revolution as had occurred in Russia decades before. This possibility was minimized by homogenizing the nation through the dual assertions of equality and individualism. Equality diminished the strength of existing power imbalances while individualism removed the individual from the interests of a particular racial or ethnic grouping. The consensus therefore promoted a harmony of interests among class, racial, ethnic, and religious groups.
In terms of class differences, Americans were described as of overwhelmingly middle class status. The establishment of a large middle-income group was considered an important deterrent against the domination of the elite and the antagonism of the poor. Moreover, the middle class, difficult to define, mitigated perceived differences in class that could cause unrest by providing a middle ground. Racial and ethnic animosity was reduced through the assertion of national tolerance, even if it existed in name only. Finally, the tensions produced by religious differences were minimized through the argument that Americans, while multi-faithful, were predominantly God-fearing. For those attempting to contrast America with Fascist and/or Communist enemies that asserted state religion or devout secularism, the interfaith idea proved useful. The resulting characterization of Americans was as follows: they were upwardly mobile, but middle class; racially and ethnically diverse, but tolerant; and tri-faith, but generally God-fearing.

The consensus additionally unified the nation by identifying a national enemy. Following World War I, it was commonly feared that an external enemy sought to divide Americans. The identity of this enemy wavered between fascism and totalitarianism. As argued by Wendy L. Wall in *Inventing the “American Way”: The Political Consensus from the New Deal to the Civil Rights Movement*:

Liberals and leftists generally saw that enemy as fascism and tried to unite Americans in an anti-fascist consensus. Many defined fascism expansively, using it to condemn evils ranging from racial inequality and economic exploitation to red-baiting. Other Americans, including ardent defenders of free enterprise, cast the nation’s chief enemy as ‘totalitarianism,’ a term that encompassed communism as well. Many in this camp warned against any division that might sunder Americans. In their view, disgruntled workers or protesting blacks were as
or more likely to provide an opening for the tactics of ‘divide and conquer’ as were oppressive employers or purveyors of racial intolerance.\textsuperscript{52}

During the Cold War, the status of the Soviet Union as the dominant American rival made totalitarianism the ultimate enemy.

It is important to note that dissent to the consensus always existed. However, according to Wall, “More often than not, those with money and influence ‘won’ the cultural battles of the 1940s and 1950s by shaping the terms of public debate…they helped to forge a shared public vocabulary and to establish the framework in which many social and economic issues were ultimately addressed... In constructing and reinforcing this linguistic framework, they helped create a cultural reality.”\textsuperscript{53} The constructed consensus imposed upon the schools a new role in ideological management. Instructional films were selected as the primary conduit for dispersal of these ideas.

**Cold War Instructional Films**

The formation of a unified national ideology provided the framework on which to base curriculum. In the immediate aftermath of the war, instructional films emerged as a potent tool for waging an ideological battle within the educational system. Conceived during World War II in response to the demand for large-scale and quick training for wartime duties, films provided the most efficient conduit of information dispersal. Training films were developed in tandem with another type of film, “attitude-building” films, designed to motivate for the wartime cause rather than to instruct. It is significant


\textsuperscript{53} Wall, *Inventing the ‘American Way’,* 11.
that these two ideas, training and motivation, merged in the period. Because they developed roughly synonymously, it was more difficult to discern expectations of duty with expectations of behavior during the war. As argued by Ken Smith in *Mental Hygiene*, “Carefully chosen visuals were combined with dramatic story lines, music, editing, and sharply drawn characters to create powerful instruments of mass manipulation…Women on the assembly line and soldiers in boot camp learned not only *how* to perform their tasks, they learned to *want* to.”54 Inspired by this form of social influence, educators in the postwar period demanded the adaption of such films for use in the schools. In extrapolating on the emerging sentiment, Smith argues that “The persuasive power of the motion picture, so disdained by educators before the war, was now recast as ‘emotionally derived learning’ and praised as an enlightened tool of social engineering.”55 In light of the demand, after the war the government made surplus sound 16 mm projectors available to schools.

The adaptation of wartime instructional films for use in the educational system was influenced by the success of these media in effectively transmitting ideology. Writing in 1945, University of Chicago educator Ralph W. Tyler, addressed this potential correction of limitations. He stated, “Primarily, what the Army and Navy have learned about education has not been that civilian educational institutions are inadequate but rather that certain factors have worked in promoting effective and rapid training.”56 As instructional films were able to disperse information rapidly, Tyler recommended that “Civilian schools can benefit from military experience in exploring a wide variety of the

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55 Smith, *Mental Hygiene*, 21.
visual and auditory aids to learning."\textsuperscript{57} This contention was reinforced by Clarence E. Spencer, the District Supervisor for Kern County Schools in Bakersfield California and former Naval Reserve. In discussing the situation faced by military educators during WWII, he argued in 1947 that “The molding of eleven million men into a fighting team was a task of magnitude,” requiring the Army and the Navy to effectively train their personnel in the shortest amount of time.\textsuperscript{58} In noting that training films proved the most successful solution to this issue and would make a powerful addition to traditional educational aids, he stated, “The success of the audio-visual program with the armed forces has attracted public attention, and will make possible extensive adoption of visual education in the public schools.”\textsuperscript{59}

Reiterating these suggestions was Thomas J. Abernethy, principal and member of the Army Ground Forces, who noted in the same year as Tyler that “Much is being said and written at the present time about the possibility of applying to secondary-school instruction the training methods so successfully used by our armed forces. The general public has been greatly impressed by the speed and the efficiency with which we have transformed civilians into soldiers.”\textsuperscript{60} In warning, however, that instructional films would not be successful unless they were directed toward a specific purpose, Abernethy contended “The first step in adapting the military-training system in its essentials would be the making of a decision concerning the exact mission of the American secondary school…the school could come closer to doing what it set out to do if its mission were

\textsuperscript{57} Tyler, “What the Schools Can Learn from the Training Programs of the Armed Forces,” 501.


\textsuperscript{59} Spencer, “Postwar Use of Audio-Visual Aids,” 220.

more clearly defined." This statement is significant as it would be the Cold War consensus that provided instructional films with an intellectual paradigm with which to devote their efforts.

The Cold War provided the impetus for the inclusion of instructional films in education. Their popularity was made evident by the emergence of several publications devoted to the use of audio-visual educational materials in American schools, primarily instructional films. Chief among these periodicals was *See and Hear: The Journal of Audio-Visual Learning*. In providing an introduction to the inaugural issue of *See and Hear* immediately following cessation of the war, publisher E.M. Hale noted in September, 1945:

In presenting the first issue of *See and Hear* your publisher looks forward to developing a publication on audio-visual learning that will be of outstanding practical value and interest to all school administration and teachers. The tremendous future possibilities of this comparatively new art of teaching are a challenge to our entire school methods, and the release of facilities by the cessation of war demands now makes it possible for great forward strides to be made by all schools from the ‘little red school house’ to our largest universities. It will be the endeavor of *See and Hear* to be a leader in such progress.62

In the that same issue, an article from the editors appears under the heading, “What IS Audio-Visual Learning?” asserted that “It is our aim to investigate the extent to which the presently accepted materials of visual instruction can help to make more graphic, more easily retained, and more interesting those socially desirable learning experiences we as teachers wish to bring to the children of America.”63 Although including other audio visual formats, *See and Hear* was concerned primarily with instructional films. It is

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62 E.M. Hale, “This is Number One of See and Hear: An Introduction by the Publisher,” *See and Hear: The Journal of Audio-Visual Learning* 1, no. 1 (Sept., 1945): 3.
significant as the editors mentioned the importance of “socially desirable” education as the periodical in many ways reflects the development of a Cold War consensus among educators. Moreover, the voluntary aspect of this instruction is represented by the 50 member Advisory Editorial Board of the journal, which included university faculty, film production company members, public school spokespeople, a coordinator of an organization called Citizenship Education Study, educational consultants, superintendents, etc. In “Viewing the New in Audio-Visual Education,” See and Hear columnist, Paul Wendt, the Director of Bureau of Visual Education, University of Minnesota, summarized the postwar interest in the effectiveness of instructional films succinctly, stating:

The makers of armed forces orientational and motivational films (such as could be used in social studies) have translated into action the principle that human beings can often learn more through their emotions than through their intellects. We are learning how to teach the whole human being and not just his brain.⁶⁴

Appealing for their ability to elicit emotional engagement to the subject matter, instructional films were selected as a primary mechanism of the Cold War educational propaganda endeavor. As such, they represent a consolidated expression of the postwar American ideology. This emphasis was demonstrated by popular discussion and by the emergence of periodicals devoted to films and other forms of audio-visual education.

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The promotion of Americanism as the national ideology was perceived to be the most urgent task for proponents of the Cold War educational consensus. The presentation of Americanism in instructional films underscored two recurrent problems with the use of the school in ideological management. Firstly, the ideology sought to unite unrelated concepts under a single framework. While included elements could have been described as components of Americanism, in practice instructional films fostered a convoluted understanding that negated individual meaning in favor of amalgamation. For example, the political theory of democracy became a synonym for Americanism. The consequent ascription of economic and moral elements—components of Americanism unrelated to political theory—to democracy resulted in an obfuscation of the system. Secondly, the principles of Americanism, alternatively referred to as “The American Way of Life,” were presented as an inherent component of the American identity rather than the ideal. The blatant disparity between rhetoric and reality had tremendous consequences for the way students understood both their own society and international conflicts. Within the domestic context, the contention that America was characterized by unity failed to acknowledge existing internal turmoil. Within the international context, the assertion that “The American Way of Life” was under attack
and that the United States was only helping to extend Americanism to other nations was incongruent with the country’s aggressive foreign policy measures.

The majority of educators complied with the cultural consensus and proved supportive of the exaggerated claims of Americanism. As films became increasingly radical in their assessment of the ideology, however, a cohort of educators recognized the negative implications and called for a more critical analysis. Although their concern indicates a troubled response to the role of the educational system in ideological management, these educators were largely eclipsed by the dominant assembly of consensus proponents.

**Preventing Indoctrination through Indoctrination**

In the early postwar period, the adaptation of the American school for ideological management was intended as a counter-measure to the employment of a similar program in Nazi Germany. During World War II, the Nazis relied heavily on the school as a medium for ideological persuasion. Recognizing the ability of propaganda to indoctrinate the youth population, Allied educators felt it necessary to develop a parallel campaign. Although this plan contradicted the principle of objectivity to which the school was supposedly devoted, educators claimed that the use of educational propaganda was justified as the aims to which it was directed were morally “good.” There was genuine concern among educators regarding the potential consequences of indoctrination when used for insidious means and a belief in the potential for counter-indoctrination to prevent such repercussions. Film, a medium used extensively by Nazi educators, was likewise adopted by the Allies for this purpose.
In an address given before the Philadelphia Alliance and the Educational Film Library Association, Thomas Baird, the Director of the Film Division of British Information Services, articulated the thinking behind this method. In “Films for Tomorrow,” transcribed in the September 1946 issue of *The Educational Screen*, Baird noted that during the war instructional films had been directed toward the practical purpose of training soldiers for combat and preparing the home front population for the war effort. While this objective had been necessary, according to Baird, peacetime films did not require, and should not be limited to, the same focus. He stated, “I foresee that the success of the teaching film in wartime will burden our teachers with proposals to make films which teach ‘how to do it’ and not enough films asking the questions ‘why we do it.’”  

Outdated considering the cessation of warfare, he recommended that films adapt to current needs by transitioning to a concentration on ideological training. In qualifying this assertion Baird noted that “Some say that there is little hope for the world unless there is new evidence of a profound belief among all the Allies, which we can share with the liberated countries, to prove that we can save the world for the right things and for the right way of life.”  

In explaining the ultimate goal of ideological persuasion, Baird made a direct reference to the success of Nazi propaganda campaigns. Through ideological training, he argued, “we may yet bring the democratic idea into all men’s minds and purge from their thinking for all time the diabolical idea which Hitler has for a brief period dangled before men’s eyes.”  

Dismissing the perceived incongruity of the utilization of propaganda in a democratic society, he further argued, “let us get rid once and for all of this bogey of propaganda. Call it what you will,

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an information service which creates in men’s minds and hearts a feeling of responsibility and citizenship is a necessity in any state which would be democratic and in any world which seeks to be one.”^{68} Here is made evident the indoctrination for indoctrination theory.

In direct agreement with Baird was H.M. Barr, the Director of Research for Portland (Oregon) Public Schools. In “Means—Not Ends,” published in the March 1946 issue of *The Educational Screen*, Barr urged curricula reform for what he referred to as “the disturbing problems of a world in transition.” Echoing Baird’s concerns regarding the standard implementation of instructional films, he implored, “Are we really educating or merely introducing new kinds of textbooks?” Perhaps we are simply changing tools of education without influencing the result.”^{69} Invoking the ability of Nazi Germany to indoctrinate their youth, and adding to this category communist nations, he endorsed the use of film for the purpose of ideological persuasion within the school system. As argued by Barr, “The Nazis and the communists have made many mistakes, and their type of civilization may be anathema to our people, but they have shown the world what education can be made to do if, given a goal which enlists the enthusiastic cooperation of youth…The fact that the vision was diabolic, doesn’t invalidate the method.”^{70} Expanding on his justification for this practice, Barr argued that the pejorative connotation of propaganda would be negated if the values espoused proved honorable. Referencing every element of the ideology, he insisted that Americanism provided such a virtuous framework:

^{68} Baird, “Films for Tomorrow,” 368.
^{70} Barr, “Means—Not Ends,” 142.
The American ideal is certainly as noble a goal as mankind has ever been offered by a nation. It is a dream of legal and social equality among men, respect for the freedom and dignity of the individual, a superb productive machine that will spread the blessings of a high standard of living throughout the population, a social order without prejudice because of race, creed, or color, and an opportunity for the advancement of every individual according to his powers and his character. That is the American dream, and to the achievement of that dream, education might well set its creative hand.\textsuperscript{71}

Like Baird, Barr recognized that the role of educators in extending these values to students could be found in opposition to their status as objective sources of knowledge. Dismissing this contention, Barr argued that “All education is indoctrination…The real question is whether indoctrination shall be confined merely to the mores and taboos of the past or whether it shall be directed towards solving the problems of the future.”\textsuperscript{72} In arguing that the circumstances of the postwar period required the adoption of ideological persuasion as a standard element of education, Barr conformed to the position that the indoctrination of democratic ideals took precedence over the potential dangers of free thought.

The distinction between “good” and “bad” allowed educators to adhere to the mandates of the consensus without feeling torn by the objectivity to which they had been traditionally devoted. In implementing this plan, however, instructional films demonstrated the troubling consequences of educational propaganda. Although the tenets espoused by Americanism, as outlined above by Barr, were commendable, they were presented as an inherent component of the American identity rather than the ideal.

\textsuperscript{71} Barr, “Means—Not Ends,” 142.
\textsuperscript{72} Barr, “Means—Not Ends,” 142.
The first postwar instructional film company to tackle ideological education was Encyclopaedia Britannica Films with the 1945 release of *Democracy*.\(^7\) Distributed in tandem with the companion piece, *Despotism*, both films featured Yale University’s Harold D. Lasswell, PhD., as collaborator. Lasswell, who had during World War II analyzed Nazi propaganda films to determine the success of various methods of persuasion, was a prominent figure in the field of mass communications. Reflecting the standard method of instruction for early educational films, *Democracy* presented a relatively dispassionate interpretation of the system. Most of the information was given by a narrator, with occasional use of characters to illustrate democratic practices in action. What was significant about the film was that it explained democracy under the framework of Americanism, assigning unrelated elements of “The American Way of Life” to the political theory. In addition to the convoluted interpretation of democracy presented, *Democracy* was problematic as it offered Americanism as the reality rather than the ideal.

At the opening of the film a narrator asserted that democracy could be distinguished from other political forms by its adherence to the principles of shared respect and shared power. Shared respect meant respect for man’s opinion, “not because of his wealth, or his religion, or his color, but because each is a human being, and makes his own contribution to the community.” Added to this was the assertion that in a democracy, “everybody is given a fair chance to develop useful skills, and the chance to put these skills to effective use.” The second identifier of democracy, shared power, extended control of the government to the people, who, through public

participation could find their needs met by a dutiful governing body. While majority opinion determined policy, dissent was encouraged through free speech.

If the concepts of shared respect and shared power were intended to portray democracy as a political system wherein governance was controlled either by the people directly or by elected representatives, then little fault can be found with the film’s interpretation. In its language, however, the film fostered a skewed understanding of the system that applied exaggerated elements of democracy to society. For example, shared respect was supposedly a reference to the unrestricted political participation afforded by democracy. Yet through word choice the film implied that democracies were intrinsically free of prejudice. As the film obviously sought to present the United States as the embodiment of the democratic form, this principle must be rejected. At the time of the film’s release, the country imposed a system of racial hierarchy that made black Americans second-class citizens. Throughout the South racial segregation was legally enforced in schools and public accommodations while *de facto* segregation ruled in the North. This contradiction could additionally be applied to the film’s assertions of meritocracy and voting rights. Obstructions to black voting rights additionally negated the contention of shared power. A number of tactics had been used to suppress black voting rights, ranging from methods such as literary test questions to abject refusal to register. By 1952, only 20% of black adults were registered to vote in the South.

In addition to employing a twisted rhetoric, the film assigned completely unrelated concepts to its definition of democracy by arguing that democracies relied on the conditions of economic balance and enlightenment in order to be a true democracy. Reflecting the economic component of the consensus, the narrator argued that
“Economic balance means that the community contains a large middle-income group.” United by a middle class status, the majority would within this view prevent domination of the impoverished by the wealthy and therefore avoid a violent revolution of the poor. Although the point was not readily expanded upon by the film, the suggestion was made that other political systems—most notably communism—would suffer the consequences of polarized class divisions. On the second condition it was stated that enlightenment required, “Making information available to citizens and giving them the fuel with which to judge it.” As an example of how enlightenment emerged, the narrator engaged in a discussion of the press, arguing that, within a real democracy, newspapers met the tests of, “balanced presentation of news, disclosure of source, competence of the staff.” In essence, information was to be distributed free from censorship.

The democratic system at its base level means rule by the people; economic balance and enlightenment do not pertain to the political workings of democracy. Here the infiltration of Americanism on the understanding of democracy is most palpable through the inclusion of unrelated economic and moral elements. Moreover, although the given principles were certainly idyllic, they were not realized in contemporary America. Despite the existence of a strong middle class, economic polarity existed, and was directly related to the degree of power one held. With regard to enlightenment, the sharp increase in censorship during the period, most notably under McCarthyism, negated the assurances of freely distributed information and expression of opinion. Moreover, it was with these conditions that the intent of the film must be made subject to examination.
While the potential inaccuracy of such a presentation may be dismissed if the film’s intent was to demonstrate a utopian form of democracy to which schoolchildren could aspire, the absence of any criticisms or calls for reform discourages such an interpretation. Rather, without specifically stating so, the given values were offered as a force already cemented in America—the epitome of a true democracy. Neglecting existing social tensions in favor of a positive depiction of unity within the country adhered to the concept of Americanism, but proved a misrepresentation. The absence of domestic strife indicates that the film was intended to encourage appreciation for the American form of democracy. Indeed, in its presentation and word selection, the film sought to create positive connotations to the system, thereby reinforcing the appeal of democracy while preventing attempts at critical examination.

Sharpening the Appeal

_Democracy_ had successfully tackled every component of Americanism. As the film associated democracy with an extended version of equality that encompassed race and ethnicity, opportunity, power, economics, and information, _Democracy_ set a precedent for the way in which Americanism would be described in later films. It had not done so, however, through the adoption of a particularly impassioned rhetoric or the use of intense visualizations. Although it received positive reviews for addressing the subject, educators called for more impelling interpretations. The desire to increase the propagandistic quality of films so as to make them better suited for student approval became a popular topic in instructional film journals, and resulted in increasingly ardent appeals to Americanism in subsequent films.
Providing one such response was Paul C. Reed, editor of *The Educational Screen* and director of the Visual and Radio Education of Rochester Public Schools, New York, in October 1946’s “Visualizing Democracy.” Reed opened by stating, “That question, ‘What is Democracy?’ is a question that is being asked and answered verbally a thousand times daily in the classrooms of America, yet so far as the behavior is concerned of large numbers of those who verbalize their belief in democracy, the word remains an abstraction devoid of real meaning.” To Reed, this issue provided educational filmmakers with a great challenge and a great opportunity to “make more real and more meaningful the abstraction ‘democracy.’”

Referring to *Democracy* as a step in the right direction, he hesitated in supplying complete approval. Reed noted that the standard method of films in providing verbal commentary followed by a few visuals did not provide a depiction powerful enough to enrapture students. He stated, “Words have great power and efficiency in the compressing of ideas. But that isn’t what is needed in defining democracy. We need vivid, real, and convincing incidents to dramatize the meaning of democracy.” In addition to the suggestion that the democratic process be made more interesting through the use of visuals, Reed further asserted that the primary need was to effectively impart the desired messages. Explaining his critique, he noted that:

> How we behave depends upon how we *feel*, as well as upon what we *know*. Not only must we know how to act democratically, we must want to act that way. Our attitudes must favor democratic ways. There is no question of the value of the motion picture to stir people emotionally and to affect their attitudes. Some of this power should be put to work in classroom films for teaching democracy.

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75 Reed, “Visualizing Democracy,” 443.
76 Reed, “Visualizing Democracy,” 444.
77 Reed, “Visualizing Democracy,” 444.
Explicitly encouraging the manipulation of viewer emotions, Reed went so far as to suggest that filmmakers use elements from a particularly evocative series of World War II films, *Why We Fight*. A series of seven propaganda films commissioned by the United States government and produced from 1942 to 1945, *Why We Fight* was notable for its inclusion of nationalist rhetoric and demonization of Axis enemies. Reed’s suggestion, though troublesome, reflected the desire among many educators to increase the propagandistic quality of films as a means of making the concepts of Americanism appealing to students.

Reiterating Reed’s contentions was Charles F. Hoban, Jr., of the Division of Visual Education for the School District of Philadelphia. In the December 1946 issue of *The Educational Screen*, he argued that educational films and textbooks could only be successfully used in tandem if films were prevented from serving as supplementary aids to the prearranged standard text. To achieve such a state he recommended that films be intentionally emotionally charged to adequately compensate for the inability of textbooks to successfully engage, and therefore persuade, students. Hoban expanded on this issue by identifying what he referred to as the “four psychological characteristics of the textbook” in America. In identifying the first of these as being “impersonal,” he argued that “Seldom can the reader identify himself as an individual with the subject matter presented in the textbook…There is no warmth to a textbook, no feeling, no emotion—just cold, objective, intellectual facts.” Other criticisms included the strict event/solution narrative of textbooks rather than attention paid to exposition; obscure

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79 Hoban, “Films and Textbooks,” 445.
rhetoric over easily retained messages; and writing styles lacking in clarity.\textsuperscript{80} As a result, Hoban recommended that educational films could provide a solution by personifying, “exactly the opposite characteristics.”\textsuperscript{81} Summarizing these characteristics, he stated that "motion pictures which influence the development of values, appreciations, attitudes, and habits of conduct, are motion pictures characterized by personal meaning and appeal, by wealth of detail and a breadth of context, by full and unhurried treatment, spiced with interest and tinged with feeling and emotion."\textsuperscript{82} Thus, according to Hoban, films should follow a formula wherein students are made emotionally connected to the subject, fully informed of the issue, and provided with a clear and easily retained lesson.

In arguing that instructional films should mimic Hollywood productions, Hoban recommended that producers provide a quality of craftsmanship, “which captures and holds the undivided interest of the audience, gives life to the subject, and increases the motivation, the impact on attitudes and habits, and the enduring nature of the learning for which motion pictures are famous as a medium of both entertainment and education.”\textsuperscript{83} Although Hoban additionally called for academic oversight to be included through the contributions of educators on films, his assertions regarding the need to increase the entertainment factor of films highlighted a growing lack of concern regarding the educational veracity of films in favor of ideologically persuasive elements.

Producers responded to these requests by increasing the appeal of Americanism in films through the use of stronger imagery and dramatically charged rhetoric. Wilding Picture Productions, Inc. 1950 series release \textit{In Our Hands}, featured in four parts,

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represents an excellent example of this form of instruction.\textsuperscript{84} Sponsored by the American Economic Foundation and the Inland Steel Company and the Borg-Warner Corporation, \textit{In Our Hands} suffered the infiltration of advertising that had become common in instructional films by this time. In the first part, “How We Got What We Have,” for instance, over ten minutes of the twenty-one minute film were devoted to a dramatized scene bearing no logical connection to the actual topic of the film wherein a deserted family discovered the value of tools. Representing the amplified intrusion of Americanism in film, the central purpose of \textit{In Our Hands}, however, was to show that America’s economic progress resulted from a capitalistic system of private property. Whereas \textit{Democracy} presented democracy under the framework of Americanism, the \textit{In Our Hands} series did the same for capitalism. Serving to bolster the economic component of the consensus, capitalism was made appealing in the film through the repeated linking of the system to the traditional American value of freedom.

“How We Got What We Have” presented capitalism as the only true system of economic freedom. This assertion was made palatable by tying economic freedom to political and religious freedom. At the opening of the film a narrator established this relationship by contrasting life under American democracy with that under foreign dictatorships. Over clips of Adolph Hitler, Benito Mussolini, peasants toiling in a field, soldiers marching in uniform, and dead bodies stacked atop one another, he asserted that “Millions have worshipped the strong man, the leader. Millions let somebody else decide what they want. They worked, fought, died, for government by strong men, by fear, by force.” Divorcing these practices from the American system, the film engaged in

\textsuperscript{84} “How We Got What We Have,” \textit{In Our Hands}. Film. Produced by Wilding Picture Productions, Inc., 1950. Prelinger Archives. \url{http://www.archive.org/details/prelinger}.
repeated references to political and religious freedoms. This dialogue culminated in a
heavily impassioned speech delivered by the narrator:

    The founders of the country didn’t have tractors or television sets, or
automobiles, but they did have a mighty faith in God and a big, revolutionary idea
about people. They thought governments oughta be the servant, not the master
of ordinary people like you and me. Have you ever read the Declaration of
Independence? Men risk their lives for the principle that in this country at least,
we take our rights from God and set up a government to preserve and
protect our individual rights. Think that over. The signers of the Declaration of
Independence declared their belief that we are endowed by our creator with
rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, which nobody, no person, no
group, no political party not even our government can take away from us.

Following this diatribe, broad concepts of freedom were related to capitalism through
emphasis on America’s economic supremacy in the global market. According to the
narrator, “we have half the productive power on earth. That didn’t just happen. There’s a
good reason why we have the best workers, the best tools on earth, why we’re about
eight to one better off than the rest of the whole world.” Although the “why” in this
statement was to be elaborated on in the ensuing segment, the central idea was that
capitalism represented the economic form of democracy, emphasizing the ability of the
individual to assert control over his or her financial destiny just as democracy provided
citizens with a measure of control over their governance.

    In comparison to Democracy, “How We Got What We Have,” demonstrated
immense consideration for propagandistic elements. Imagery was used to both elicit
disdain through reference to undesirable world leaders, and to encourage praise
through artful depictions of national monuments and the American flag. Sound was
additionally important as the narrator changed tone depending on topic: brusque when
discussing dictatorships and gentle when discussing democracy. Lost in rhetoric,
however, the primary fault of “How We Got What We Have” was its actual lack of
instruction. The appeal to the principle of freedom in emphasizing the merits of capitalism was questionable as it did not in any way serve to explain the economic system. In seeking to make capitalism as desirable as possible, invocation of political and religious freedoms must have appeared to the film’s producers as an excellent means of reaching students on an emotional and patriotic level. Historical context, in addition to theory was ignored, as the film explicitly attributed America’s economic supremacy solely to capitalism.

The second part of Wilding Picture Productions, Inc.’s In Our Hands titled, “What We Have,” sought to describe the economic freedoms made possible by capitalism. The film opened with a dramatized character scene showing Midge, an attractive housewife, preparing breakfast for her husband Tom. The narrator then returned to provide an assessment of how economic freedom made that breakfast possible. He engaged in a journey delineating every step from the manufacturing of the frying pan and the production of the eggs to consumer selection of those goods. Such forms of everyday economic freedoms were then linked to broader, but vaguely explained, concepts of freedom including that of the individual to choose where he or she works and to save and invest according to his or her own interests. Reiterating the themes presented in the first segment, economic freedom was again tied to all other freedoms supposedly comprising the American system. The narrator closed with a sweeping description of Americanism:

What we have in this country is so good and so successful that too many of us just take it for granted. What we have started with the official purpose of our limited government and it grew because of our hard won gift of freedom, real, individual freedom protected by law and the secret ballot, the best workmen and

the best tools on earth and the most democratic way of getting more and better tools, not through forced savings and forced labor. We’re free to save and to invest in productive property, in the tools that multiply our production of goods and services, ten million work places where we’re free to work, to make things, to produce. Free to buy or sell; to profit or loss; free to try out new ideas, new products, new methods. Free to get more and still better tools which multiply our total production, shorten our work hours, and keep lifting our standard of living. We have plenty of problems, but with all the things we don’t do, with all our mistakes, we do have political and economic freedom, and we’re far better off than the rest of the world. That’s what we have! And it’s worth talking about.

It is important to consider, given this final monologue, that the central objective of the film was to be an assessment of the merits and workings of capitalism. As exemplified by this final statement, however, the infiltration of Americanism incorrectly tied capitalism to broad standards of freedom. Moreover, the repeated assertions of American supremacy served as an attempt to promote patriotism among students through vague contentions rather than detailed assessment. Thus both “How We Got What We Have” and “What We Have” provided an appeal to viewer emotion and sense of national belonging without subjecting students to critical assessment.

“The Deeper Chords”

Educators widely approved of the intensified propaganda tactics employed by the In Our Hands series. They expressed lingering dissatisfaction, however, regarding the success of films to adequately encourage student devotion to Americanism. While films had successfully demonstrated the political, economic, and social elements of the consensus, still desired was a deeper, more intrinsic identification with the ideology.

Reflecting this position, John C. Whinnery expressed displeasure with the current method for teaching democracy in the December 1952 issue of The Phi Delta Kappan. In “Critical Issues in Education,” taking democracy as a synonym for Americanism, he
referenced the need to conform curricula to the national goals of a unique conflict by stating that “Merely to teach the structure of American government, or as is done less frequently, its interpretation, does not in any sense answer the problem.” In arguing for the need to emphasize the importance of “values” in the American democratic system, Whinnery adhered closely to the Cold War consensus and fostered an expansion of Americanism. He contended:

When democracy as a form of government is challenged throughout the world and American citizens are challenged to define their political and social ideals, the schools can do no less than teach the basic values. We must redesign most of the social studies program, leaving out the grace notes and emphasizing the deeper chords. We must strengthen our democracy by deepening the feeling of the individual, and we can only deepen feeling by exploring the values holding society together.

Demonstrating his own allegiance to the consensus, Whinnery asserted, “We forget, at times, that we are the last stronghold and champion of all who believe in a free society.” Reinforcing the dire need to enforce this perception, he stated, “Even if we fight Russia and win, the idea of Communism will persist. You can kill men and cripple nations, but you cannot destroy an idea. The American concept of democracy and society will be in conflict with communistic doctrine for many years to come.” In asserting that the threat was not truly understood or appreciated by the American people, he closed by arguing, “We are waddling in the mire of a new illiteracy, an illiteracy of those who read and write, but who are unable to appraise the times they live in and seemingly unable to identify the forces with which they must contend.”

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Invocation of the American value-system in discussions of democracy found great approval among many educators and demonstrated their support for the infiltration of propaganda into the educational system. In the February 1951 issue of *Educational Screen*, for instance, Mayer Singerman, the director of the Audio-Visual Department for the Chicago Office of the Anti-Defamation League of B’nai B’rith, referenced the perceived necessity of teaching Americanism as a response to the international context. Identifying communism as the greatest threat to America, he argued in “Are We Practicing Democracy?” that:

> If the sole motive of resisting the aggression of Communism is the preservation of the lives of most of the people within the boundaries of a nation, it can easily be achieved. We have only to stop resisting. But if it is to preserve the religious, moral, and ethical values inherent in our democracy, then we must strengthen and extend the beliefs and practices of our democracy.\(^91\)

Singerman’s reference to a more emotion-based adherence to Americanism would find illumination in Centron Corporation’s 1951 *A Day of Thanksgiving for Young America Films*.\(^92\) While reiterating all components of Americanism, the films additionally sought to assert a more intrinsic devotion to The American Way of Life.

The film opened by introducing viewers to the Johnson family, mother, father, Dick, Susan, Tommy, and baby Janet as they prepared for Thanksgiving. When mother revealed that the family would be unable to afford a turkey for that year’s holiday, the children launched a series of complaints. Their grievances were met with a gentle reprimand from father, who urged them to consider the true meaning of Thanksgiving by thinking about what they were thankful for. The film then transitioned to the Johnson

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\(^91\) Mayer Singerman, “Are We Practicing Democracy?,” *The Educational Screen* XXX, No. 2 (February 1951): 59.

family Thanksgiving table. Heads bowed, with a choir gently singing in the background, each family member revealed in monologue what they were thankful for.

The subsequent dialogue presented a jumbled interpretation of Americanism, encompassing political, economic, and social ideals in addition to nonsensical assertions regarding American life. In reference to America’s economic superiority and democratic practices, youngest son Tom expressed gratitude for always having enough food to eat and for public libraries. Reiterating the economic component while adding religious freedom and the role of the family, daughter Susan was thankful for enough clothing, for being “able to go to Sunday school or go to any church I want any Sunday,” and for her parents as “families are still important in America.” The democratic practice of free education was treated by eldest child Dick and related to American meritocracy as he stated, “I am thankful for being able to get an education, for living where schools—all schools—open their doors to a guy who wants to learn, where school books are studied instead of burned, where a guy’s rated by how much he knows, and the community is rated by how well it teachers him.” He finished this speech with a direct appeal to un-assessed patriotism, noting that he was also thankful for baseball and that “It’s fun growing up in America!” Continuing this theme, father supposed that baby Janet was thankful for bath time, playtime, and her mother’s affection. Repeating the same notion that Americans were a family-oriented people, mother was thankful for the safety and opportunity she was able to offer her children and that “I have the privilege of guiding them as they become useful men and women.” In again asserting economic superiority and freedom of speech, she was also grateful for her washing machine, hot water from the tap, telephones, cars, her husband’s job, and that “when
my neighbor drops in to borrow a cup of flour, we’ve got the right to talk about anything we want to.” Father repeated many of the same sentiments, expressing thanks for his house and the privacy and happiness it provided. Political freedom was asserted when he stated that he was happy, “For knowing the knock on our door means nothing to fear, a friend calling or maybe a bill collector or a kid selling magazines. You never know what to expect, but you can count on one thing: it’s not going to be some political gangster coming to drag one of us off to jail because we believe in freedom.” Economic and political freedoms were again emphasized as he also expressed thanks for the ability to choose his own job, newspapers where he was free to agree or disagree with the editor, and for the ability to vote for whom he wanted. His closing statements reflected the supposed objectives of Cold War endeavors as he contended, “And finally, I’m thankful for being able to believe—in spite of everything—that somehow, some way the unity we’ve got here in the Johnson family will someday spread to men and nations throughout the world.” The monologue closed with an “Amen” from father, which was reiterated by the background choir as the family unfolded their napkins in preparation for the meal.

In its attempt to provide a concrete interpretation of “The American Way of Life,” A Day of Thanksgiving acquired a positive reception in the October, 1951 issue of Educational Screen when the “Teacher’s Committee Appraisal of New Films” gave the film a high rating and, despite its simple dialogue and concept framework, recommended the film for junior high, high school, and even adult classes. In their evaluation, they remarked, “An all-too-rare sincerity of presentation helps this film to put across its message of the true Thanksgiving spirit. The setting is unpretentious, the
characters are convincing, and the generally abstract ideas of human rights are presented concretely and naturally through a typical family." Although this assessment followed the educational trends of the period, the film’s attribution to Americanism sweeping freedoms ranging from issues of human rights to baseball were highly misleading. This vague discussion of the abstract characteristics of “The American Way of Life” specifically jumped between various topics as a means of reinforcing a broad interpretation. More misleading, however, was the lack of critical analysis in favor of patriotic sentiment. Limitations on rights were not discussed. Of especial note were the repeated assertions regarding a right to privacy and freedom of opinion, again sorely restricted under the conservative cultural climate of the Cold War period.

The Departure from Reason

Requests for instructional films to appeal to the senses witnessed a growing extremism that would come to have disastrous implications for the use of instructional films as educational aids through their nonsensical assertions. A subset of educators, as a result of the emergence of this type of film, expressed concern regarding the ultimate repercussions of such a presentation. Because Americanism rejected any notion of ongoing conflict within the American system, many feared that students would be rendered disillusioned by the inevitable recognition of disparity between messages espoused and reality. It was feared that such disillusionment could result in a complete rejection of Americanism, and that the only method of ameliorating this possibility was to supply students with a more objective, and therefore accurate, depiction of domestic and international conditions.
The critique was shared by many, but rare was the expression of this view in blatant terms of propaganda. In providing an unusually candid assessment of the situation, William N. McGowan’s “Time’s Up! School People Must Battle Thought Control,” appearing in the April 1951 issue of The Clearing House directly engaged the contradiction between the freedoms espoused by Americanism and the constraints placed on educators in promoting that system. In contrast to the depiction of America as an ideologically free society, McGowan charged that “Never before in the history of the United States have its people been so close to the slavery of thought control. And it’s up to educators to avert the developing catastrophe.”\(^{93}\) After directly implicating McCarthy and other prominent figures in the Red Scare crusade, he argued that educators needed to act against the burdens of guilt by association, condemnation by suspicion, and the denial of constitutional rights. Recognizing the exact tactics of educational propaganda, he challenged, “It is time to act—or perhaps it is already too late. On every hand can be seen the debilitating effects of the poison of thought control. Emotion seems to be taking the place of reason, and temper seems to be displacing study and thought.”\(^{94}\) In asserting that Cold War rhetoric did not mimic reality, he called for the genuine adoption of American principles and their expression within the school. Outlining the responsibilities of the school in this regard, he argued that “It must teach the rights of personal freedom—free inquiry, free discussion, free decision. It must recognize and place real value on the dignity of the individual. It must recognize the existence of controversy and teach objective methods of resolving controversy. It must


instill in its charges an abhorrence of slavishness, and a love of free thought.” He asserted that if educators did nothing to fight against thought control, “the present emergency will be a prelude to the death of personal liberty, and Communism will have come to dictate by remote control the policies that govern our way of life in this country.”

While McGowan’s contentions were shared by many, the intensity of his appeal was unique considering the cultural confines under which educators operated during the Second Red Scare. More common was the kind of critique offered by Constance Warren’s “Academic Freedom,” published in the October 1949 issue of The Journal of Higher Education. In the first half of the essay, Warren asserted that the fear of communist infiltration of the schools had resulted in a limitation on the ability of non-communist educators to accurately do their job. Issuing a protective clause for herself in making such a contention, she stated, “I would never knowingly engage a Communist to teach, any more than I would engage a Fascist or any other person who would probably allow the economic, political, or religious beliefs of an organization to which he belonged to dictate his thinking.” However, according to Warren, the attempted weeding out of communists through such tactics as loyalty oaths were ineffective in their goal and caused great harm to non-communist educators. She stated, “a non-Communist often resents being singled out to take such an oath because he is a teacher. He reacts strongly against the implication that he must, because of his profession, live in a

According to Warren, the placing of educators under constant suspicion had detrimental implications that went beyond their own feeling of insecurity. In appraising the consequences of the teaching of Americanism, she argued that overly-positive interpretations were potentially dangerous as student discovery of the discrepancy between rhetoric and reality could result in complete denunciation of the philosophy. Explaining this position, she argued that “Idealism is a marked characteristic of our young people, and they are easily discouraged and bewildered by evidences of failure and inconsistencies in our democracy.” In preventing this result, Warren recommended that “We need to give our young people a far better understanding than they have at present of the philosophy behind our democratic way of life, of the conditions under which our institutions have developed, together with a frank examination of the existing discrepancies between our ideals and their fulfillment, and a constructive consideration of the ways by which we must go to work to perfect our democracy.” Warren’s observation that the presentation did not fit the reality was astute, and her concerns regarding the implications of this issue were reasonable.

The critique offered by these educators was a response to a genre of film that neglected entirely the notion of objectivity in favor of blatant propaganda. Frith Films’ 1952 What It Means to Be an American provides the perfect example of this kind of film. In attempting to define “The American Way of Life,” the film delivered a confusing, disjointed, and repetitive list of the elements associated with Americanism and thus provides an excellent illustration of the disassociation between education and

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ideological management. Opening with the waving of American flags, a narrator asked, “In what way does an American enjoy a way of life that other countries do not have?” In response it was contended that “The fact that we have so many types of land and climate tends to make us a tolerant people with many different interests and ideas.” Although this assertion was intended to stress the element of unity fostered under Americanism, the illogical method of expression foreshadowed the subsequent narrative of the film. A dizzying inventory of American characteristics followed, including declarations of opportunities for good jobs with carefree atmospheres; a high standard of education; self-reliance in terms of emotional (e.g. the freedom to form one’s own opinion) and economic (e.g. the emphasis that the nation was less dependent on other countries than the rest of the world) development; political freedom via freedom of speech; freedom to move throughout the country; a considerate disposition; an excellent work ethic; access to luxury goods including cars, electric stoves, irons, radios, and television sets; the freedom of religion; and a respect for authority without fear of unfair treatment.

It would be useless to describe the film scene by scene, but a few examples will provide a good overview of the film’s depiction of the American character. The American work ethic was demonstrated by a small boy attempting to balance a toy truck on a board. Over this clip the narrator asserted, “He is a small boy to be trying so hard—a typical American boy.” Access to luxury goods, a reference to America’s economic might, was revealed by a shot of a Ford factory parking lot as the narrator made the odd contention that “Workmen in foreign countries do not go to their jobs in cars.” Freedom of religion was referenced through images of a Presbyterian church and a Catholic
cathedral. Trust in honest and reliable authority figures was encouraged when a young boy appeared on screen and approached a police officer for help in finding his father a parking space. In explaining this scene, the narrator contended that the boy, “always knows that he can go to the police for help. How different from the countries in which the people fear their police.” Toward the end of the film, the narrator established the importance of appreciating and respecting the American Way of Life through the argument “Our way of life is being attacked,” and citizens had to prevent its dismantling by maintaining allegiance to the American Way. Framing the United States as the hero in a battle against evil he further asserted that “the determination to work and fight for this ideal will keep America a bulwark of freedom for the peoples in all parts of the world.”

What It Means to Be an American argued so vehemently that every good behavior was a typically American behavior that its use as an educational tool was absurd. While the appeal to patriotism had become commonplace by the time of its production, the film did not even make an attempt to portray concepts under a framework of history or tradition. While its interpretation certainly raises concerns regarding the messages to which American schoolchildren were exposed in the period, What It Means to Be an American was significant primarily for its inclusion of an outright assertion regarding the need for citizens to patriotically salute the country in light of international events. Invocation of the notion that the American Way of Life was under attack had become a repeated theme in instructional films as the Cold War witnessed international failures, such as the fall of several countries to communism and the intensification of the arms race with the Soviet Union. It is important that instructional
films, like *What It Means to Be an American* placed the United States in a defensive position with regard to these circumstances, thereby contributing to the perception of the battle as a fight between an aggressive evil and a peaceful good.

**Troublesome Implications**

Extremism in film became increasingly alarming following the exacerbation of Cold War tensions. The Eisenhower Administration added to President Truman’s policy of containing foreign communism by calling for the “liberation” of countries under communist control. Under this policy the United States signed agreements to defend forty-three nations against “communist aggression,” and expanded the role of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to include a range of political activities, including the overthrow of foreign governments. The change in policy ushered in a new type of film that added to Americanism the idea that “The American Way of Life” was under attack from communist forces. This was often accomplished by comparing Americanism and communism side-by-side. In attempting this contrast, however, films demonstrated a glaringly uneven appraisal of the systems.

Responding to this kind of film, Erling M. Hunt argued in “Democracy and Communism: Teaching the Contrasts,” published in the February 1954 issue of *The Clearing House*, that a more complex interpretation of both the systems in education would inevitably prove superior in winning student allegiance to democracy and rejection of communism. Identifying the limitations of the current method of instruction he argued, “many groups in the population are jittery. On the one hand there is fear that

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any critical evaluation of American democracy will undermine loyalty and patriotism. On the other hand there is fear that any explicit teaching about communism will leave children and youth favorably disposed toward communism—may perhaps turn them into communists.” In arguing that the existing emphasis on imposing Americanism could reverse the intended result, Hunt contended:

Neither of these attitudes seems to me to be sound, but both are influencing and restricting the policies of many American schools and teachers. Unless the teaching of democracy is realistic—unless, that is, issues in the long struggle for democracy are made clear, unless criticisms of democracy are faced and analyzed—we cannot protect our citizens adequately against the subversive or irresponsible communist propaganda that may be encountered after they leave school. Similarly, unless we analyze the appeals of communism and make clear why it has won the adherence of millions of people in the world today to its ideas and institutions, we again leave citizens unprotected against the misrepresentation and emotional appeals of propaganda.

Establishing self-defense, Hunt conceded that the school should serve to bolster democracy. He stated, “I do not mean that our school should be neutral. They are the schools of democracy and are responsible for maintaining and strengthening democracy. So far as communism is concerned, the schools are, I believe, basically responsible for inoculating young citizens against it.” However, Hunt asserted that revisions needed to be made to the standard method of inoculation. He argued, “In meeting the challenge of communism, or of any other totalitarian system, our weakest responses are fear, suspicion, ignorance, misrepresentation, avoidance of discussion, repression. Our strongest responses are positive—full of study of facts, open and explicit discussion, honest comparison and contrast.” Hunt supported this position by arguing that democracy was an inherently appealing system, especially when compared

with communism, and did not require its own set of propaganda to be adopted by the public. He contended, "Democracy is strong enough to stand comparison with communism in any respect. And Americans are strong enough and smart enough to compare the theory and the realities of American democracy and communism and come out with the right answers. Any other approach seems to me to reflect lack of confidence both in democracy and in the American people, and to lend itself all too easily to subversion of our democracy." In his assertions, Hunt waged his critique in the confines of the consensus by encouraging the role of the school in bolstering democracy while depreciating communism. However, indicating that many had taken this practice too far, he urged for a return to a more academic approach to the subject. This format was typical for educators recommending revision of the current routine, and serves to demonstrate that a subgroup of educators grappled with the charge of ideological management through the adoption of propaganda.

The interpretation of an American system under attack was reiterated by the National Education Program’s 1955 release, *The Responsibilities of American Citizenship*. In contrast to *What It Means to Be an American*, the film presented itself in an objective fashion and provided perhaps the most sophisticated interpretation of Americanism yet presented. However, it was because of this style that *The Responsibilities of American Citizenship* was particularly dangerous. A complex assessment of American systems of politics and economics were juxtaposed with an exceedingly simplified interpretation of communism. Displayed side-by-side, the film

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thereby fostered an exceptionally skewed understanding of these systems among students and fostered a disturbing interpretation of the communist threat.

The film opened with the Star Spangled Banner and a close-up of Dr. George S. Benson. Benson, the President of Harding College from 1936 to 1965 began his career as a missionary serving in China. Removed from the country in 1936 by the Communist Party of China, Benson took opposition to communism and socialism as his life’s mission. As President, he established the National Education Program to pursue those ends. *The Responsibilities of American Citizenship* was one of the fruits of that endeavor. As Benson appeared on screen he informed viewers of the topic of the film, stating, “When our founding fathers established this republic they created a political and economic system unique among nations; a system which has lead the United States to the very pinnacle in wealth and in world leadership. This series of programs is being presented to help all of us understand better our advantages under our American way of life.”

The screen faded to reveal Dr. Clifton L. Ganus, Jr., “noted young historian,” speaking to a group of students attending a National Education Program workshop in Arkansas. In establishing the “America Under Attack” theme, Ganus opened by arguing, “To a substantial degree, in one form or another, socialism has spread the shadow of human regimentation over most of the nations of the earth, and the shadow is encroaching upon our own liberty.” At this the screen again faded to reveal a man serving as a communist columnist. He was shown standing behind a desk and holding a copy of *Das Kapital* as in the foreground were featured large portraits of Marx, Lenin, and Stalin. Ganus remarked on the image, arguing that such figures were working to
craft a global dictatorship by dismantling the American value of private property for the communist objective of government ownership.

Using this imagery as an introduction to the topic, “Is the American way of life worth bothering about?,” Ganus appealed to the tenets of Americanism by providing a series of statements charged with nationalistic rhetoric. He contended, “We know under the stars and stripes that we have more freedom than do other civilized people on earth.” According to Ganus, these freedoms stemmed from American devotion to the worth of the individual. In seeking to tie to this focus on the individual the merits of American materialism, he made the incongruous statement that “The people rule. But some philosophers tell us that the way to a man’s heart is through his stomach. In other words food. The material things in life are dear to the heart.” These material blessings were explored via images of factories, farms, and manufacturing plants. Ganus provided commentary for these visuals, noting that “Our nation, although containing only six percent of the land area and seven percent of the population of the world produces forty-two percent of the world’s wealth.” Images of parking lots crammed with shiny cars, and stores filled with appliances such as washing machines, televisions, and refrigerators appeared on screen. Further enforcing this perception of America, he continued, “We know that the average American, in all walks of life, has a living standard twice as high as the best in Europe, where socialism is widespread, and from five to ten times better than in the communist countries, such as Russia and China.”

Providing an segway to a more sophisticated discussion of the workings of American capitalism, Ganus closed this segment with the assertion, “And if we remember our previous lessons, we know that this economic abundance is possible in America
because incentives for progress and the other factors built into our dynamic private enterprise system have enabled us to utilize our resources to the fullest extent."

Returning to the lectern, Ganus engaged his audience in a discussion of citizenship. Compared to the preceding assertions of simplistically expressed patriotism, the dialogue offered was surprisingly sophisticated. Beginning with an assessment of the political system, for instance, Ganus distinguished the American government as a republic, rather than the commonly assumed democracy, which he noted prevented the crushing of minority opinion with majority rule. Additionally reinforcing this system of protection was "an ingenious system of checks and balances that prevents autocratic or dictatorial rule." Transitioning to an assessment of America’s economic structure, Ganus reiterated the common contention uniting capitalism to individual freedoms. This segment proved interesting in comparison to similar arguments made by other films by presenting a more complete investigation, using the principles of private ownership of property, the profit motive, and the competitive open market. He contended that private ownership diffused “the wealth and economic power over the very widest area, over our whole population, and makes our people independent masters over their own lives.” The profit motive provided, “the incentive for new development and constantly expanding production.” And finally, the open competitive market benefitted the consumer because “one company after another tries to outdo its competitors and get the consumer’s business.” The complexity involved in the analysis here proved inconsistent with the previously asserted simplistic interpretation of the inherent benefits of American life. The simultaneous enforcement of these perspectives was detrimental in allowing students to view both segments as objective.
Turning his attention to the duty of American citizens to resist communism, Ganus returned to the rhetoric used in his opening segment, presenting an overly simplistic denunciation of communism without engaging the philosophy in any analysis. Without explanation, he asserted that students must understand, "Its [communism’s] basic, godless philosophy, its goal of world conquest, its insidious tactics, and its cunning strategy." In providing a visualization for the supposed veracity of this intent, the camera panned to a Soviet classroom, made evident by Soviet flags and portraits Lenin and Stalin. As a teacher was shown lecturing to his students with exaggerated vigor, Ganus asserted that “Thousands of good, loyal Americans have been duped into actually aiding the communists simply because they did not look carefully before they joined some high-sounding venture or before they more or less blindly advocated some course of action.” Again, no solid examples of this possibility were shown. Instead, the Soviet classroom served as an appeal to fear. In arguing that a central component of citizenship required the extension of the American ideal to others, Ganus contended that “The socialists, the communists, and their followers would like to see the American spirit extinguished. If each of us will rise to the occasion, if every citizen, young and old, accept the challenge of his citizenship, then the socialists and communists and their followers will not prevail. And America will go on toward the fulfillment of her great world destiny.”

Several issues emerge within this film. Perhaps the most academically structured film discussed thus far, the use of multiple propaganda techniques fostered a convoluted perception of the meaning behind the Cold War. The most notable intrusion of propaganda concerned the disparity between Ganus’ explanations of democracy
versus that of communism. Note also that the sophistication with which Ganus presented democracy made his overall argument appear more viable. Within this method, an unfavorable opinion was inculcated without attention to the actual theory being argued against. In contrast to his involved discussion of democracy, Ganus did not engage in an ideological conversation, but instead used few, and loaded terms to discuss the issue.

When military interventions into the political systems of foreign countries were justified by policymakers through appeals to Americanism, the disparity between claimed objectives and actions underscored for educators the troubling consequences of ideological management. The rhetoric sponsored by films such as *The Responsibilities of American Citizenship* did not match the actions of the United States in foreign nations. For example, in 1954 the Administration used the CIA to topple the new leftist government of Guatemala. In 1944, a popular revolution overthrew the existing dictatorship and set up a democratic government that initiated massive reforms in the country. When land reforms threatened the trade monopoly of the American-owned United Fruit Company, the CIA intervened to dispose the government and imposed a repressive regime in its place. The American government justified this move by stating that they feared Guatemala was leaning toward communism.\(^{109}\) Even if the excuse of communism was accepted, interventions such as the one into Guatemala in 1954 underscore another issue with the consensus: military intervention into the systems of other countries was incompatible with democracy and America’s frequent celebrations of self-determinism and freedom.

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Moreover, the idea that America served as world’s policeman was incongruent with reality. For instance, in 1956 a popular uprising for democratic reforms in Hungary was squelched by a massive Soviet invasion. 40,000 Hungarian freedom fighters were killed and 150,000 refugees were forced to leave the country. While the world expected U.S. retaliation, American policymakers considered Hungary as part of the Soviet Union’s immediate sphere of influence and considered intervention to be too great a military risk.\textsuperscript{110} The decision of non-action reinforced a view of the world divided by spheres of ideological influence, but also indicated a hypocrisy in the stated goals of the United States.

\textbf{Conclusion}

In considering the relationship between instructional films and educators, an interesting dichotomy emerges. The mixed response of educators to instructional films reveals that many educators were aware of the inaccurate depictions being provided and struggled with their responsibility as disseminators of ideological propaganda. Despite the urgings among this segment to contribute to the complexity of Americanism as an ideal not yet achieved, the role of instructional films in fostering ideological management under the strict guidelines of the Cold War consensus would continue and maintain support from the majority of educators. Americanism offered a presentation of the United States as a utopia and the harbinger of a new world order that would bring peace to all. The inaccuracy of these assertions highlights the consequences of the use of the school in questions regarding the role of the school in fostering the Cold War ideology.

\textsuperscript{110} Gillon, \textit{The American Paradox}, 110.
CHAPTER III:
Ideological Persuasion, Part 2: Identifying the Enemy

The pressure to conform curricula to the Cold War ideology had serious implications for the way in which the subject of communism was presented to students. In the Age of McCarthyism, allegations of communist infiltration in the American school system prevented educators from comfortably addressing the subject as an academic topic. Frequently, the fear of public reprimand prevented educators and educational film producers from providing an assessment of communism at all. Instead, the system was ambiguously linked to unrelated political systems including socialism, fascism, Nazism, and more generally dictatorship or totalitarianism. Often, films limited the topic to the practices of the Soviet Union, mistaking communism for Stalinism. As films became more extreme in their use of anticommunist rhetoric, communism was presented as an inherently anti-American ideology. The recurrent theme for all of these categories was a general neglect of ideology in favor of propaganda.

As with the interpretation of Americanism assessed in the previous chapter, the response of educators to the depiction of communism in instructional films yielded mixed results. The majority proved highly supportive of the narratives provided, however, the influence McCarthyism on the expression of opinion must be considered a factor in this view. At the same time, a subset of educators recognized the limitations of simplistic interpretations of communism and articulated disapproval for the
understanding those interpretations provoked. Calling for a more complex explanation, these educators sought to restructure ideological studies so that political theories were accurately defined and distinguished from systems which espoused false allegiance to a particular doctrine while engaging in totalitarian practices. Again, the recognition of the disparity between rhetoric and reality and calls for reform indicated that some educators struggled with the task of ideological persuasion when the products of that endeavor proved inaccurate.

The Culture of Fear

Since the founding of the communist ideology in the middle of the nineteenth century, periods of anticommunism had marred American culture and politics. The educational system was never immune to the ideological attacks stemming from anticommunism, but the combination of Cold War ideology and an increase in the school population made educators of the post-World War II period particularly susceptible to suspicion during the Second Red Scare. As noted by Stuart J. Foster in *Red Alert! Educators Confront the Red Scare in American Public Schools, 1947-1954*:

Historically, public schools and public school teachers have been obvious targets for red scare attacks. However, with the emergence of anti-communist sentiment and superpatriotic zeal in the years following World War II, their vulnerability dramatically increased. In 1890, high school enrollment in the United States was estimated at 200,000; by the early 1940s, the figure approached seven million. Schools became one of the few public institutions that affected the lives of nearly every citizen. They existed in every community and were public institutions that were conveniently ‘get-at-able.’ Moreover, because schools were perceived as a vital force in the control of the minds of America’s children, the battle for their domination became intense.  

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Schools were subject to ideological purges, invasive loyalty checks, book burnings for allegedly subversive materials, and the removal of any literature published by the Soviet Union.

The only institution subject to greater scrutiny than the school was the federal government. In part a reflection of the perceived importance of the educational system in controlling ideology, the constraints applied to schools often mirrored those imposed on governmental agencies. In March 1947, for example, President Truman established the Federal Employee Loyalty Program. The program launched investigations on federal employees and dismissed those deemed disloyal to the United States by review boards. It is interesting to note that the narrow definition of loyal citizenship imposed by the review boards made civil-rights activism an immediate red-flag, and dismissed automatically homosexuals as security threats. Following Truman’s example, loyalty oaths were perhaps the most common method of weeding out subversives in the school system. The state Supreme Courts in New Jersey and Ohio upheld a ruling requiring public school teachers to take a loyalty oath. In 1953, twenty-six teachers were suspended from Philadelphia public schools for refusing to answer questions about communist affiliations.

New York State in 1949 adopted the Feinberg Law, providing for the dismissal of teachers suspected of teaching communism or being communists. Indeed, New York witnessed the most extreme purging of educators. In May 1950, eight teachers in New York City were suspended without pay, pending a board subcommittee, under suspicion of being communists. Following a seven month investigation, in which no specific

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evidence could be found that any of them were communists or communist sympathizers, the eight were recommended for dismissal. In February 1951 the eight suspected teachers were fired, and three more quit over the controversy. Under the Feinberg Law, a year later eight more teachers and administrators were suspended for alleged Communist connections. The decision was upheld by the Supreme Court in *Adler vs. Board of Education* (1952).\textsuperscript{114}

Although it is impossible to determine how many teachers were dismissed or intimidated because of McCarthyism, according to Charles Howard McCormick’s *This Nest of Vipers: McCarthyism and Higher Education in the Mundel Affair, 1951-52*, “One authority calculates that from 1947 to 1955, 600 supposedly disloyal teachers at all levels of education lost their jobs in the United States, about half of them in New York City.”\textsuperscript{115} Although there were some practicing communists in the schools during the 1950s, McCormick contends that “With the advantage of hindsight, even accepting the most inflated estimate of the number of party members and fellow travelers in American classrooms…they now seem to have been a very slight threat to the educational system.”\textsuperscript{116} Regardless, the fear of being labeled subversive made the topic of communism a difficult subject to address. As argued by Foster, “In many schools, teachers worked within a climate of fear and suspicion. In the classroom, teachers’ academic freedoms visibly were repressed. Educators avoided controversial subjects, and schools only cautiously initiated innovative teaching practices.”\textsuperscript{117}

\textsuperscript{114} Foster, *Red Alert!*, 60.
\textsuperscript{116} McCormick, *This Nest of Vipers*, 4.
\textsuperscript{117} Foster, *Red Alert!*, 2.
Coping through Ambiguity

The fear of being charged as a communist or communist sympathizer was so pervasive that educators and instructional film producers often refused to engage the subject. Rather, they adopted an intentionally ambiguous presentation that focused on broadly described nondemocratic political systems. The first postwar film to engage the subject of an oppositional political system was *Despotism*, Encyclopaedia Britannica’s companion piece to 1945’s *Democracy*.\(^{118}\) In providing an excellent example of the treatment of alternative systems, *Despotism* neglected assessment of a particular ideology or nation in favor of the broad topic of despotism as a counterpart to democracy.

Establishing the desirable from the undesirable, a narrator introduced the film by asserting that any community in the world could be located somewhere along a scale running from democracy to despotism. Onscreen appeared a commentator to warn viewers to, “avoid the comfortable idea that the mere form of government can itself safeguard a nation against despotism.” Using Germany as an example, he noted that while a republic under President Hindenburg, “an aggressive despotism took root and flourished under Adolf Hitler.” The placing of despotism in opposition to democracy was elaborated on when an image of a group reciting the Pledge of Allegiance appeared on screen. Clearly referencing this image, the commentator continued, “When a competent observer looks for signs of despotism in a community, he looks beyond fine words and noble phrases.” A new image emerged picturing a hanged man surrounded by an angry

mob as in the background the anthem was completed, “One nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.”

Using the same principles introduced in Democracy, the respect and power scales, economic balance, and enlightenment, the majority of the film was spent discussing the ways in which despotism functioned in opposition to democracy. For example, according to the narrator, “As a community moves toward despotism, respect is restricted to fewer people.” An example of the lack of respect inherent to despotism was demonstrated as the screen flashed to an image of an elderly woman walking with a young child. The woman was shown being forcefully pushed off of her path by two men in uniform, who then continued to walk past her. Elaborating on the point, the narrator noted, “A community is low on a respect scale if common courtesy is withheld from large groups of people on account of their political attitudes.”

In a particularly fascinating segment of the film the educational system of a despotic nation is compared to that of a democratic nation as a means of addressing free information. The narrator introduced this topic, noting, “See how a community trains its teachers.” As a despotic speaker addressed a group of educators regarding their teaching practices, the camera narrowed in on an elderly woman. Her facial expressions indicated approval for the speaker’s assertions that, “Bare this in mind, young people cannot be trusted to form their own opinion! This business about open-mindedness is nonsense! It’s a waste of time trying to teach students to think for themselves. It’s our job to tell ‘em!” The film then transitioned to a portrayal of the same woman in her classroom. The narrator noted, “And when teachers put such training into practice, despotism stands a good chance. These children are being taught to accept
uncritically whatever they’re told.” As an adolescent boy raised his hand to ask a question, the narrator continued, stating, “Questions are not encouraged.” The teacher berated the child for the unspecified question, demanding, “How can you ask such a question? Have you got a textbook?” Upon being handed a book by the boy, she responded, “Does it say here that our courts are always just?” Following a sheepish reply of “Yes, Ma’am,” she continued, “Then how dare you question a fact. Sit down.” Over an image of that same student now at home talking with his parents, the narrator stated, “And so, we aren’t surprised when…,” as the student took control of the dialogue, asserting, “But it must be true! I saw it in this book, right here!” As signs flashed across the screen for ministries of propaganda and censorship boards, the narrator argued, “And if books, and newspapers and the radio are efficiently controlled, the people will read and accept exactly what the few in control want them to.”

Although Despotism attempted to contrast the philosophy of democracy with a single political format, another kind of film offered an even broader interpretation of enemy ideologies. These films combined any ideology considered anti-democratic into a single group without attention paid to philosophical or practical difference. A particularly telling example was Sutherland Productions 1948 release, Make Mine Freedom, presented by Harding College.119 A cartoon, Make Mine Freedom often used humor to garner audience attention. The film opened with a sweeping depiction of the merits of America, equating Americanism to aspects ranging from malt shops to democratic voting practices. Four men appeared to challenge these assertions, each representing a particular segment of American society: management, labor, farmers, and politicians.

When their discussion inevitably devolved into heated argument, the men were approached by a mysterious traveling salesman. Enthusiastically waving a bottle, he offered, “Here’s the answer to your problems: Dr. Utopia’s sensational new discovery, ‘Ism.’ Ism will cure any ailment of the body politic. It’s terrific! It’s Tremendous!” The salesman attempted to convince his marks by addressing each individually. To Labor he noted, “Once you swallow the contents of this bottle you’ll have the bountiful benefits of higher wages, shorter hours, and security.” To management: “Enormous profits! No strikes!” To the politician: “Government control! No worry about votes! Name your own salary!” And finally to the farmer: “Bigger crops! Lower cost! Why, ‘Ism,’ even makes the weather perfect everyday!”

Continuing his pitch, the salesman stated, “And now then because we are introducing this amazing item for the first time in this country it isn’t going to cost you one cent! All you have to do is sign this little scrap of paper and you’ll get your bottle absolutely free!” As the contract appeared onscreen, the narrator read it out loud: “I hear by turn over to ‘Ism Incorporated’ everything I have, including my freedom and the freedom of my children and my children’s children, in return for which said Ism promises to take care of me forever.” Here, the notion of freedom was implemented to serve as a representative for the American way, juxtaposed to the lack of freedom apparent in alternate systems. The crowd, now convinced, swarmed the salesman. They were interrupted, however, by the appearance of John Q. Public, who suggested, “Before signing up, you boys oughta try a little taste of Dr. Ism’s formula to see what you’d get in exchange for your freedom.” In compliance, all of the parties sipped from their bottles.
The film used this opportunity to engage in a what-if scenario wherein Labor, Management, Politico, and Farmer were transported to an alternate universe dominated by “Ism.” For example, the screen turned blurry to reveal Labor, chained to a factory machine. He cried out, “You can’t do this to me! I’ll strike!” In response, a giant fist reached out and attached to Labor a ball and chain reading “No Strike Law” as a disembodied and dispassionate voice asserted, “The state forbids strikes.” When Labor protested, “Wait ‘til the union hears about this!,” the disembodied voice responded, “Ah yes, the union.” With that, the hand reached out, stamping “State Union Member 1313” on Labor’s forehead as the voice mocked, “Welcome to our ranks number thirteen-thirteen.” This pattern was continued for each representative individual as a variety of sweeping generalizations were made concerning life under a non-democratic system. These were revealed in the disembodied voice’s response to the figures’ protestations. He stated, for instance, “The state is the Supreme Court,” “No more private property,” and “Farmers don’t vote anymore.” The film additionally relied on imagery to make these points. For example, when Management was depicted standing in his former office, the embossed title of “John Doe Manufacturing” on his door was crossed out and replaced with scrawl reading, “State Factory #29.” Likewise, a sign appeared around Farmer’s neck reading “State Farm Slave 21930.” In a particularly elaborate scene, Politico, in trying to assert authority, had his head smashed in by a device labeled, “State Propaganda Speaker 3120,” that incessantly repeated the phrase, “Everything is fine. Everything is fine.”

When finally released from their nightmarish experience with “Ism,” the men were addressed by John Q. Public for a final time. Using components of Americanism to
contrast “Isms” he argued, “When anybody preaches disunity, tries to pit one of us
against the other through class warfare, race hatred, or religious intolerance, you know
that person seeks to rob us of our freedom and destroy our very lives.” As the salesman
attempted to sneak off sheepishly, the newly disgruntled crowd chased after him,
chucking bottles as they ran. Just as the credits rolled, the characters were shown
marching in front of the Lincoln Memorial waving an American flag.

    Although the film used generalizations and imagery to depict non-democratic
nations as undesirable, the most significant issue was its lack of discussion of ideology.
It is important to note that no description of these systems was provided, indeed, they
were not even identified. It was clear, however, that the film was seeking to provide an
interpretation of life under communism. The strategy of using “Ism” as an umbrella term
for non-democratic systems served two functions. Firstly, it gave the impression that
these systems were not viable ideologies, but rather ploys designed to trick citizens into
becoming pawns of the state. Secondly, it fostered a misunderstanding that made
communism interchangeable with a host of other ideologies such as socialism, fascism,
Nazism, and so on.

    Many educators were willing to express concern for over-simplification in film. In
the October 1950 issue of the Phi Delta Kappan, Antonio Garcia, an instructor in the
Department of Government for North Texas State College made a plea to educators
teaching at the primary level to provide their students with a better understanding of
political systems in “Teach the Concepts of Democracy.” In arguing that students should
be able to adequately define such terms as democracy, socialism, and communism,
Garcia challenged the terminology employed by the State. He stated:
The vocabulary of politics and economics is used too loosely, in many cases with reckless abandon, by the press and radio. They are joined by many of our political officials who are displaying a conspicuous (one might say dangerous) tendency to use terms to describe absolute concepts of good or evil. Our citizens should be able to separate the careless or demagogic use of these terms from the careful and sincere use which is too often drowned out by oratorical appeals to passion and ignorance.\footnote{Antonio Garcia, “Teach the Concepts of Democracy,” \textit{The Phi Delta Kappan} 32, No. 2 (October, 1950): 37.}

Identifying the standard results of a patriotically-derived learning, Garcia contended that “There are altogether too many students leaving our public schools with no better understanding of democracy than ‘something to fight for’…And the various ‘isms,’ Americanism and capitalism excepted, are used largely as political ‘cusswords.’”\footnote{Garcia, “Teach the Concepts of Democracy,” 37.} The results of the standard teaching methods were assessed by Garcia when he surveyed the three hundred and twenty-five students in his sophomore class on the fundamentals of American government regarding the definition of certain terms. In discussing the results for the term democracy he noted that the term was satisfactorily defined by only two hundred and twenty-seven, or 65.79\% of the subjects questioned. The criteria for a satisfactory answer was here deemed, “A social or political situation where the citizens, through some mechanism, legal or political (or both), actually control their government.”\footnote{Garcia, “Teach the Concepts of Democracy,” 38.} In describing the most common unsatisfactory answers provided Garcia included, “such glittering generalizations as ‘the American way of government,’ ‘a government of separated powers,’ ‘the Four Freedoms,’ and ‘a government which serves the people’” The results of this survey highlight the fact that many students had received a skewed interpretation of a democratic system of government—a consequence of the infiltration of propaganda in the public education system.
The definitions for communism additionally reflected a failure in the primary method of instruction on the topic. According to Garcia’s survey, communism was satisfactorily defined by only one hundred and eight, or 31.3%, of the participants, while forty-seven, or 13.62% gave no answer. The remaining 55.08% commonly provided answers of “dictatorship, rule by minority, or complete state control.” In assessing those answers, Garcia contended that “These descriptions could not be accepted; they are only partially correct and may be used equally well to describe several non-communistic, but authoritarian, societies.”

Again reflective of the interpretations provided in instructional films when discussing domestic communists, Garcia noted that a subset of incorrect answers, comprised of twenty-two students, or 6.66%, “found the term to be synonymous with *dissension*, that is, dissatisfaction with the status quo.”

While some framed this terminology in relation to support for foreign governments, others identified communism as a subversive rejection of one’s own government. He provided two examples to illuminate this point: “Communism is used by those who try to influence other individuals to their beliefs or who disagree different from the government laws,” and, “Communism is failure to support the laws and doctrines of one’s particular government.”

In providing an assessment of these answers, Garcia contended that the reader, “cannot fail to see what the students were trying to say. By such definitions anyone who does not support the present program of the national or state government could be

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labeled a communist.”¹²⁷ In arguing for the significance of this point, Garcia noted that while domestic communists could be labeled dissenters, not all dissenters may be labeled communists. On this issue he argued, “And here lies the danger in the political illiteracy which exists among us. A democratic society cannot progress or maintain itself as a democracy when the dissenter, per se, is squelched as an obnoxious or traitorous individual.”¹²⁸ In calling for a change in the current program of political instruction, Garcia argued, “The challenge presented by the political illiteracy of our school and communist demands every effort of those who are interested in propagating the democratic way of life. The school is so conspicuous among these institutions which direct the thinking and action of our citizens. It behooves the members of the teaching profession to reevaluate their practices and ideas in terms of their capacity to meet the obvious shortcomings in this field.”¹²⁹ Garcia’s pleas went unanswered as international circumstances appeared to necessitate an even stronger condemnation of communism.

In the October 1955 issue of *The Clearing House*, Robert E. Price contributed the article “How to Teach the Meanings of Communism.” Significantly, the article was published with an “Editor’s Note” reading: “The teaching of controversial issues is controversial. The writer, who is principal of the Siuslaw Junior High School at Florence, Ore., has had his article reviewed by educational leaders in his own state, as he did not wish to publish any material out of harmony with the educational policy of the state’ in which he has a principal’s certificate.”¹³⁰ The inclusion of this qualifier highlights the

pressure teachers were under to follow the ideological constraints of the public school, but may also be read as an indicator of the cultural pressures applied to educators as the note appears a preventative measure against negative response from readers outside of the academic community. In opening with the recognition that many educators find the subject of communism difficult to teach to students of the junior high school age, Price identified the fear in which teachers operated in relation to the topic. He stated, “The difficulty, from the teacher’s viewpoint, has been the fear of criticism—a fear that has made some teachers avoid the teaching of this material or has made them gloss over it with oral explanations that were not understandable to the student.”

According to Price, however, educators could solve this problem and remain free of criticism if caution was used. In arguing that this is an important issue, Price noted that a discussion of communism would be met with eagerness on behalf of the students. He noted that “The teacher’s permission for a discussion on communism usually loosens a flood of pent-up words and emotions. Questions, stories of what was seen in a show, retelling of TV programs, items from radio programs or newspapers—all come tumbling out from the overflowing dam that has been breached. The children seem to be thirsting for the opportunity to bring the forbidden subject into the open. There is little need for motivation or introduction.” This appears a very forward thinking article as Price argues that many students, when the subject is approached, will express “a preconceived idea that a Communist is a villain or unsavory character.”

Attributing this character construct to past neglect of the subject or a skewed interpretation

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131 Price, “How to Teach the Meanings of Communism,” 73.
132 Price, “How to Teach the Meanings of Communism,” 73.
133 Price, “How to Teach the Meanings of Communism,” 73.
fostered by popular culture and the media, Price asserted, “And yet, this same student has little or no opportunity to talk about the subject. He is curious. Adults as a general rule have avoided conversations on the subject—particularly with children.”\(^{134}\)

In calling for a revision of these prejudices, Price first maintained allegiance to a rather skewed interpretation. He argued that teachers should assist students in understanding that “Communists are not representative of all the people in communistic countries, that great numbers of people in such countries are constantly working against those who have gained power over them.”\(^{135}\) This is a valid point and Price should be praised for contributing to a better understanding of international understanding. However, here he falls prey to the notion that communism as political theory cannot be separated from the “communism” imposed by the U.S.S.R. A similarly contradictory argument was made in terms of the objectives to which the educator should teach. He noted that “The teacher need not condemn or teach hatred…he should permit them to form their own personal viewpoints as to the nature of those governments which oppose our way of life.”\(^{136}\) Here again we are confronted with a contradictory supposition regarding the role of the school. Although Price called for the freedom of students to form their own opinion, he framed this argument in terms of promoting or opposing the American way of life. Following these somewhat questionable assertions, however, Price provided an excellent recommendation for presenting an accurate understanding of communism, Price contended that “A technique that has proved valuable in enabling children to discriminate between the meanings of the word ‘communism’ is to use a

\(^{134}\) Price, “How to Teach the Meanings of Communism,” 73.
\(^{135}\) Price, “How to Teach the Meanings of Communism,” 73.
\(^{136}\) Price, “How to Teach the Meanings of Communism,” 73-74.
capital C when the reference is to the activities of the Soviet or Red countries, and to use a small c when the reference is to a form of government or community enterprise. During oral discussions, one may form the habit of speaking of Communism ‘with a big C,’ or communism ‘with a small c.’”

Again addressing the stifling political climate, Price noted that the amount of time devoted to teaching about communism should be followed exactly. Extrapolating on that note, he warned that too much attention to the subject “might place you in an adverse light—even a ‘Red’ light.” Here we see that teachers had a narrow window in which to work. Price additionally noted that communism should only be taught as part of a larger unit (such as in a discussion of other forms of government, geography, or current events) so that “it can be controlled, introduced, and dropped without undue attention.” Pressure is again seen through the suggestion that teachers prepare an outline for the unit that “can be used for evaluation purposes by your supervisor or principal and retained for examination if any criticism of your teaching should develop.”

The complexity of the subject is addressed when Price noted that educators should anticipate students’ reactions. He states, “Invariably, one or more of the seemingly intellectual students will seem to look upon communism as a desirable form of government. This experience is rather frightening, but remember, students have been taught to look at both sides of a picture; they have been taught tolerance. All through their lives they have been taught to try to find desirable aspects of undesirable situations.”

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137 Price, “How to Teach the Meanings of Communism,” 74.
138 Price, “How to Teach the Meanings of Communism,” 74.
139 Price, “How to Teach the Meanings of Communism,” 74.
140 Price, “How to Teach the Meanings of Communism,” 74.
141 Price, “How to Teach the Meanings of Communism,” 74.
In continuing the theme common to Cold War examinations of communism, Price recommended that positive student interpretations of the system can be challenged through a comparison to the American system. He stated, "If the teacher will examine the snap judgments of these students, he will generally find that they have lost track of the meaning of individual freedom and are noting the seemingly tremendous advantages of group activity. Here is an excellent opportunity to teach the true meaning of the individual freedoms. Freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom to govern one's self are part of our golden heritage."¹⁴² Expanding on the issue of fear, Price noted that "The teacher who is going to teach the meanings of communism may feel the need for sanction for his actions; he will need to guard against the feeling of insecurity within his own mind."¹⁴³ As a result, he recommended receiving sanction by discussing the issue with other teachers or the principal. He further asserted, "It is the teacher’s duty to understand the problems facing our country. It is also the teacher’s duty to assist the student in understanding these problems so that the student may help in solving them during his adult life."¹⁴⁴ Price's article is of tremendous significance in exploring the opinions of educators in response to the Cold War consensus. It is important to note that Price, like Garcia, recognized that communism was not being adequately taught to students, thus resulting in a skewed interpretation and lack of knowledge regarding political theory. Moreover, most of his recommendations are still sound. However, elements of contradiction arise as Price reinforces the idea that while students should be encouraged to form their own opinions, educators should dissuade them from

¹⁴² Price, "How to Teach the Meanings of Communism," 74.
¹⁴³ Price, "How to Teach the Meanings of Communism," 75.
¹⁴⁴ Price, "How to Teach the Meanings of Communism," 75.
accepting communism. Following the approach typical in instructional film, this method called for a comparison to Americanism, which was to be depicted as a superior system.

**Direct Engagement**

The concerns waged by Garcia and Price were reasonable, however, the majority of educators justified the adoption of simplified interpretations of communism by arguing that the central need was not to provide an understanding of political theory, but rather to foster an understanding of “good” (i.e. Americanism) versus “bad” (i.e. communism) ideology. In “Truth and Freedom,” published in the October 1949 issue of *The Journal of Higher Education*, John K. Ryan adopted this position by arguing that an objective truth could be found in the distinction between good and bad ideologies. Responding to the argument that teachers were obligated to maintain objectivity over propaganda, Ryan argued that “In no small measure the tragedy of our time is due to a way of thought that repudiates an objective distinction between good and evil and between truth and error.” Arguing that concepts of good and evil and truth and error could be categorized, Ryan relied on a rather skewed example to prove his point. He asserted that “This doctrinaire relativism is translated into rougher terms by the Lenins and Hitlers with their exaltation of the lie and by their followers with the strategy of the lie.” Engaging the Cold War context directly, Ryan argued that the responsibility to extend this understanding of the distinction between “truth” and “error” were particularly important in the contemporary period as the liberty for which America stood was being

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threatened internally and externally. According to Ryan, Cold War educators, regardless of their individual opinions, had a responsibility for promoting Americanism among students and discouraging any ideological sympathy for communism. Although many educators disagreed with his assessment and expressed their views quite openly, it is significant that Ryan’s assertions were generally accepted by many people, educators and non-educators, during the period.

Reiterating Ryan’s contentions regarding the necessity of placing aside individual opinion in favor of the greater good was Harold W. Stoke’s “Freedom is Not Academic,” also appearing in the October 1949 issue *The Journal of Higher Education*. Outlining his views on the subject Stoke argued that the freedom to teach was a particular component of academic freedom subject to particular restrictions. Within this context he argued that “The degree of academic freedom permitted is determined by the purposes for which the community or the nation wants the teaching done. Academic freedom must be compatible with such purposes.” In supporting his argument, Stoke contended that limitations on academic freedom were no different from other forms of limited freedom imposed on a society as a means of protection during any time of war. Automatically framing these contentions in terms of communist infiltration of the school system, Stoke asserted, “This is why, in the issue under current discussion, it is difficult for me to find any basis for protecting Communists under the conventions of academic freedom. Communists are not interested in freedom, except as it may serve their purposes as a political convenience. Their doctrines, as well as their record of performance, show how completely freedom must be displaced by considerations of

power and political expediency." In admitting that “Suppression will start witch hunts; it will intimidate; it will be an excuse for arbitrary action,” Stoke argued that the dangers of suppression still outweighed the risks of tolerance. According to Stoke, the reverse would be true if communism was simply a matter of intellectual debate. However, in his interpretation, which followed directly that espoused by instructional films, “Communism, wherever found, is not only a body of doctrine but a political program. Its advocates are not content to rely on devices of persuasion but employ with equal readiness dishonesty, propaganda, conspiracy, and, when propitious, violence.” He supported these arguments with the contention that, “It may be a ‘cold’ war to us but it is hot enough to Berlin, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, the Balkans, India, Korea, or China.” The designation of the conflict as a “cold” war was often used as a justification for the significance of ideological management in the schools over more traditional forms of wartime instruction, such as physical preparedness for battle.

The assessments provided by educators like Ryan and Stoke reflected a growing movement among educators to intensify their approach to the subject of communism. This desire was expressed in W. Ray Rucker’s “Social Change and Education” in the May 1955 issue of The Phi Delta Kappan. Rucker provided an intensified interpretation that made the emphasis on ideological suasion a matter of grave concern. He opened with the contention, “Americans are awakening to the fact that uncontrolled social change can get us into serious trouble. Are our present efforts to control communism adequate? Have we taken the steps that will really matter in the long run? What is the

148 Stoke, “Freedom is Not Academic,” 347.
149 Stoke, “Freedom is Not Academic,” 348.
150 Stoke, “Freedom is Not Academic,” 348.
151 Stoke, “Freedom is Not Academic,” 348.
educator’s responsibility?"152 In responding to the contention that a peaceful coexistence between the United States and the Soviet Union could be established, Rucker simply stated “There is no evidence to support an affirmative answer” [emphasis in original].153 Having immediately dismissed that possibility without further examination, Rucker engaged in a discussion of the role of the educator in the new world order. Stating that the “co-existence of the authoritarian-communist world and the democratic-capitalist world is an idle dream,” Rucker then addressed the responsibilities of the American educator.154 He suggested, “Perhaps he can join with responsible political and military leaders to educate the American people to the realities, the dangers, and the possibilities of the situation facing us.”155 The significance of this task, according to Rucker, concerned the contention that the Cold War represented an ideological battle more than a military conflict. He asserted, “Even if armed truce between the two great systems can be maintained for many years, the conflict will go on, irresistibly.”156 Thus, education was a significant element in the achievement of victory, and educators needed to inform students of communist ideology in order to ensure their resistance to the philosophy.

In maintaining the stance that communism was not to be discussed in terms of theory, Rucker framed this form of education in terms of a communist world takeover and the potential destruction of Western society through the use of atomic weapons. He asserted, “We have been, apparently, so afraid that students will embrace communism

if they have a chance to study it, that American youths face their future in relative ignorance of the forces which seek to shape their destiny.”\(^{157}\) Defending against this contention, he asserted that “Advocating communism and teaching the objective facts of the world’s experience with communism are certainly two different things. Students need to see the close organization of the communist forces with respect to the three major components of social action. Ideology, behavior, and materials are all bent to achieving the world communist state. There is ample evidence of how social life and the social system change once another country comes under communist domination. Study this inevitable pattern, look at the disorganization of the non-communist world, and despair!”\(^{158}\) Exacerbating the framing of America in contrast to other nations, he contended that educators needed to reject the position of neutrality in favor of acquiring student allegiance to democracy and notions of Americanism. He argued that, “The potentially great ideology of America has never been consolidated nor effectively taught in its schools. It is no wonder that our soldiers sometimes declare they ‘don’t know what we are fighting for.’ In direful battlefield circumstances, the traditional national slogans sound hollow to them. They have not achieved real faith in these remote ideals. Education has made no real effort to help them achieve this faith.”\(^{159}\) As was demonstrated in the previous chapter, the equating of American democracy with a moral worldview was a central desire. According to Rucker, “When it comes to democratic process, most Americans think only of parliamentary procedure or of representative government. Democratic attitudes and behavior in daily living come in for

little attention.”¹⁶⁰ This emphasis highlights the practice of imposing an immoral worldview on all communist nations.

Instructional films that adhered to Rucker’s argument often adopted scare tactics as a means of explaining the threat of communism. Relying heavily on the appeal to fear was the third installment of Wilding Picture Productions, Inc. 1950 series *In Our Hands*. This segment, titled “How to Lose What We Have,” presented a dramatization of an authoritarian coup in the United States implied to represent a communist takeover.¹⁶¹ Evoking science fiction plotlines, the film used an elaborate “what if” scenario, made evident by the narrator’s opening statement, “Let’s see what we’d have to change to be SURE TO LOSE what we have.” Viewers were introduced to a typical American couple, Tom and Midge, in the middle of watching a presidential debate on television with some friends. Two candidates, representing communism and democracy, were engaged in a debate intended by the filmmakers to differentiate the ideologies using exceptionally charged rhetoric. The communist opened with the assertion, “We've already amended the Constitution dozens of times! Let's throw it away for a Master Plan run by a Master State!” He further argued that such a system would be beneficial as it would provide employment and security for all citizens. Appalled by this insistence, the democratic candidate responded by framing his argument in terms of freedom, again reinforcing the primary characteristic of American democracy as espoused by instructional films. He cried, “But what price freedom? You talk about full security, full employment; why you can have that—in a penitentiary!” Automatically equating communism with a form of government that dictates the lives of all citizens, this hero candidate asserted his own

platform in contrast to such a system. He contended, "I'm here tonight because I believe in the right of an individual to be able to choose the kind of job he wants, the company he wants to work for and the part of the country he wants to live in. Yes sir, freedom of choice right down to the brand of cigarettes he smokes or doesn't smoke." Despite the democratic candidate’s pleas, Tom and Midge reluctantly expressed support for the Master Plan on the recommendation of their friends.

The outcome of the election was clear as newspaper headlines flashed across the screen: MASTER PLAN WINS, BANK ACCOUNTS FROZEN, MARKETS SUSPENDED, LABOR FORCE TO BE REDISTRIBUTED. The repercussions of this outcome were revealed when the film returned to Tom and Midge, who were being informed by a government worker that they were to be forcibly relocated. The agent brashly asserted, "Two families are going to live here. You're being transferred." Tom protested to no avail as the family was ushered onto a truck. Through monologue, Tom revised his original conception of life under communist rule. He mused, “Government can't control everything without controlling me—what I can say and what I can't say. And I mean police control that tells me where I'll work, where I'll live, and all the rest of it.” Breaking his train of thought, Midge lamented out loud, “We worked so hard. Now we've lost our house, our car. I didn't even get a chance to finish new curtains for the kitchen. Tom, what's happening to us?” Questioning their driver on the implications of the Master Plan, Midge cried in cracked voice, “Our baby, she's never been baptized, does that mean that…” before trailing off, choking back tears. The driver responded, “Look. I'm not a full party member. I'm just driving this truck. I don't know what they’re
gonna do about churches and stuff like that. But you better button your lip. Just remember it's all part of the plan. What are you yapping about? You voted for it."

In slight admittance of the ridiculousness of this scenario, the narrator interjected, “Of course it would never happen this way. Real freedoms are eaten up a little at a time while government controls are slipped on, while the real power is collected into a few hands.” He extrapolated on this theme, arguing, “Change limited government to unlimited government and our rights would be only what the master planners say they are. No longer the servant of the people, government would be the master of the people.” This inevitable downfall was demonstrated visually, as images of Washington, D.C.’s Capitol building transitioned to Moscow’s Red Square and clips of Joseph Stalin. Using repetitive phrasing to bolster the contention, the narrator continued, “That's the way to change what we have. Take all power and all freedoms away from the people and collect everything into the hands of one small group with absolute power.”

Contrasting America with this form of government, “America the Beautiful” played over images of national monuments and citizens engaging in pie-eating contests. The film concluded with the narrator’s assertion that, “We're better clothed, we're more comfortable, we're further from starvation...We're FAR better off than the rest of the world!”

Contributing to the notion that Americanism was under assault was In Our Hands’ final part, “How to Keep What We Have.” Ignoring the existence of international allies or neutral nations, the narrator asserted that “For every square-mile we have, there are fifteen more in the rest of the world. For every worker we have, there

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are fifteen more in the rest of the world. The odds against us are about fifteen to one in
land and in workforce.” In stressing the argument that America has been put in a
defensive position, the narrator asked, “Do you think we should change the democracy
of our republic for the dictatorship of a regimented state?” Flashing from an image of
the Capitol Building to the Red Square, the camera panned over footage of Russians
huddled in the street as a parade of soldiers marched by. The narrator asked, “Do you
think you’d be better off with unlimited government by fear and force? In other words,
should government be the servant or the master of the people?” Imploring students to
adopt an anticommunist worldview, he asserted, “So far, you have a free choice. But do
you care? Does it make a difference to you? Of course it does! The difference is so big,
but you have to live it to really appreciate it.” In urging the responsibility of American
citizens in preventing the destruction of “The American Way of Life,” the narrator
continued, “We have the problem of keeping what we have and improving it. Or giving
some small group an unlimited power and letting them tell us where and how we can
live, work, speak, or worship!” Flashing to a clip of Ellis Island, the narrator asks, “Why
do you think so many millions and millions of people are trying so desperately to get
over here? They’d trade places with us right now. We’re free to leave,” here the screen
flashed to an image of Moscow as he continued, “but some countries have bars and iron
curtains, just to keep their citizens where they are. That tells us something about this
country and other countries.” In a closing statement he reiterated the question, “Do you
want some other kind of government, even unlimited or total government, where no man
is free.”
Again, the film provided no engagement of ideology. Instead, the only perspective provided was that America embodied freedom while the Soviet Union represented slavery. Emphasizing the need for American intervention into the affairs of other countries, communism was no longer presented as a danger to the individual, but as a threat to the entire country through the depiction of the Soviet Union as a power seeking to destroy “The American way of Life” through global conquest. This simplistic form of interpretation was detrimental as it fostered no understanding whatsoever of political philosophy and instead appealed to nationalism to promote democracy.

In contrast to this type of film, producers often sought to make films appear dispassionately intellectual while maintaining a neglect of detached examination. Framed within a context of apparent objectivity, Coronet Instructional Films’ 1952 *Communism* provides a perfect example of this practice.\(^{163}\) Although engaging the subject of communism in both philosophical and historical analysis, the familiar rhetoric asserting an inherent anti-Americanism in communism remained.

Setting the tone for the coming narrative, the film opened with sober violin music playing over shots of the Kremlin. A narrator described the scene: “This is the Kremlin, citadel of Russian Communism. Looking at Russia, we might see it as a country to be studied as we study other nations of the world. Yet we know that Russia today is regarded as a grave threat to our nation, to our freedom, to the peace of the world.” Here, the threat of communism to the United States was extended to concern all nations, thereby fostering a simplified interpretation of the global conflict. The language employed in this assertion implied that no country would willingly adopt communism.

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This theme was extrapolated on as displays of communist leaders appeared onscreen and the narrator asserted, “These leaders, by their actions, have caused the world to stand guard.”

The film additionally attributed blame for the arms race to the Soviet Union’s buildup of weaponry, claiming that the nation was preparing for an offensive expansion of communism. No examination of the American contribution to the balance of terror was provided except to justify the American buildup as a defensive measure. Over shots of Soviet soldiers marching, the narrator contended, “Here, in Russia, you see the reason why so many nations are building up their defenses;” over shots of Russian women working in munitions factories, “Here, in Russia, you see the reason why we are spending billions of dollars in defense production;” over shots of Soviet tanks and planes, “Why your family is paying the highest taxes in our history.” In directly stating the United States’ reasoning for military buildup, the narrator stated, “The leaders of Russia tell us their only concern is the defense of their own nation. Is this so? Or are they ambitious for world conquest?”

Following these charged assertions, the film engaged in a brief evaluation of communist ideology, nearly unheard of in instructional films. By introducing the subject with the above assertions, however, the obvious intent was to enforce a fearful interpretation. Beginning with Karl Marx, the film explained Marxist division of the world into two classes: workers and capitalists. Following a brief discussion of the Communist Manifesto the narrator noted that Marx, “called upon the workers, the proletarians, to rise up and overthrow their capitalistic masters.” Although a highly simplified analysis, the interpretation was not entirely inaccurate. Yet, as the film moved to discuss the
modern manifestation of communism under Stalin, no distinction between the systems was offered. Thus, the film fostered the idea that Stalinism could be equated with communism. This theme was made evident when the narrator, over an image of Stalin, stated, “Here was a new face, but in the background was an old one, Karl Marx. He established the ultimate aim of communism as world revolution.” As a means of introducing a discussion of the detrimental consequences of communism, the narrator asked, “But, what of the people? The proletarians who had fought to win a new world?” Communism was characterized by fixed elections, speedy trials without benefit of jury in cases of disagreement with the State, harsh punishments for those convicted, the control of the government over property and the lack of occupational freedoms. These concepts allowed for an interjection of Americanism as the narrator contrasted communism with American values, stating, “Whereas we believe, and our religions teach, that the individual is all-important, communism denies religion and debases the individual to a part of the vast machine that powers the state. Children are taken early and molded to fit the machine. Here is no search for truth. The government writes the textbooks and the children are told to accept communism and their fate without question.”

Reiterating the assertion that U.S.-Soviet hostilities must be blamed on the Soviets, the film emphasized the post-WWII efforts of the United States to form a positive relationship with the nation. According to the narrator, “United with Russia in war, we strove to preserve that unity and peace. We helped organize the United Nations, in which the nations of the world have mutually pledged to cooperate in fostering world peace and progress.” Shortly after the war, however, “Russia had
occupied many new territories, bringing additional millions of people under communist control, and serving notice that Soviet Russia was now a world power to be reckoned with.” These assertions were intensified through reference to the role of atomic weaponry in the superpower conflict. Over shots of a mushroom cloud exploding, the narrator argued, “And with the most deadly of all weapons available to the Russians, no peoples in the world can feel secure against this aggression.” In contending that the United States was working to check communist expansion through humanitarian efforts, the narrator noted:

One way is by helping the world fight starvation and poverty and suffering—conditions that pave the way for communist infiltration. We are also supplying equipment for the free nations to develop their own resources and raise their living standard. Another way we are meeting the challenge is by military alliance with some of the other free nations for mutual aid in opposing direct communist aggression. And we are building up our own military defense. But do these preparations mean that we have abandoned hope for peace? No. In the United Nations we are continually seeking a workable plan for living in peace with communist Russia.

The film closed with further statements regarding America’s devotion to the principle of freedom as the camera pans over shots of Soviet prisoner trains and prisoners.

A number of tactics were employed in Communism to assert an anticommunist position among students. Although the film provided a more detailed discussion of the origin of communism than had been applied by any other film, this discussion was abruptly dropped in favor of emphasizing the aggressive nature of communism in contrast to America’s devotion to freedom. In this assessment the insistence that America was building up its military as a means for providing peace made an unpleasant reality appear more palatable. In attempting to emphasize the legitimacy of this seemingly contradictory initiative [i.e. war for peace], appeals to fear were adopted
in referencing Soviet expansion and the attainment of atomic weaponry. No
consideration was given for the emergence of national communist movements; rather,
the language employed by the film implied that the Soviets themselves were infiltrating
other countries and violently imposing communism on the populous.

**Educators Respond**

The National Education Association came to the defense of educators during the
hysteria of the period. In 1941, the NEA formed the National Commission for the
Defense of Democracy Through Education (or Defense Commission) to defend
specifically against ideological attacks on the schools. According to Foster, “As the
representative of hundreds of thousands of American educators and the world’s largest
teaching organization, the National Education Association understood and accepted its
responsibility to support the teaching profession during this time of unprecedented
assault.”¹⁶⁴ In 1951, as argued by Foster, “a committee of the National Education
Association (NEA) lamented the ‘erosion of freedom’ in schools and was equally
troubled that teachers engaged in ‘self-censorship’ that was regarded by the committee
as ‘a far more insidious force than the overt acts of boards and legislatures.’”¹⁶⁵

In a particularly astute article, “Public Education at the Crossroads,” appearing in
a 1953 issue of *The Antioch Review*, educator and NEA member, Robert A. Skaife,
launched a powerful critique of the strict ideological confines in which teachers were
permitted to operate. His argument began with the assertion that the Defense
Commission of the NEA had come under assault based on the idea that its

establishment indicated that educators participated in the dissemination of subversive information throughout the public school system. Identifying the climate of fear in which educators worked as a result of such attacks, he argued, “Evidence of this climate of fear is all around us—removal of controversial textbooks, banning of speakers, labeling of books, dismissals of loyal educators, and legislating of negative-type loyalty oaths. The term ‘academic freedom,’ once regarded as a safeguard for scholars, has become to many people an opprobrious one identified with Communists who, of course, have abused its meaning.” Extrapolating on the pervasiveness of this fear, Skaife additionally identified the tendency of educators to reinforce this position. He noted, “But if there are many visible examples of curtailment of freedom, think of the many more unseen examples of restraint—individuals who practice self-repression and thereby help perpetuate this climate of fear! How many times have teachers held back from expressing their sincere beliefs for fear of being identified with what some people would call subversive views.” Having established that the climate relied on external and internal repression, Skaife also recognized the extent to which attacks were made. Highlighting a ploy greatly used by propagandists of the period, he argued that charges of communism had been expanded to include any leftist leaning tendencies. Thus, educators came under attack if identified as “Leftists,” “Gulliberals,” “Pinkos,” “Do-Gooders,” and “Anti anti-communists.” In examining this practice, Skaife concluded that “This approach can be even more dangerous to liberal thought than the charges of communism hurled at innocent individuals, since it amounts to an extension of the term

‘subversive’ to include more non-conformist patterns of thinking.”\(^\text{169}\) Believing these allegations to indicate that democracy had come under attack in the post-war years, he argued that it was educators who needed to return American society to a rational mode of thinking. Skaife closed with the assertion, “As members of a profession vital to the preservation of the American democratic way of life, we must courageously stand up for the things in which we believe. We must not allow ourselves to be intimidated by bigots and cranks.”\(^\text{170}\)

In 1954, the NEA and the New York Teachers Association responded to the constraints placed on educators with *Freedom to Learn*.\(^\text{171}\) Providing a dual message, the film presented a complicated problem faced by educators in the Cold War period. Firstly, the film provided an examination of the ideological constraints placed on educators in regard to the teaching of communism. Secondly, these constraints were juxtaposed by an emphasis made on the value of critical thinking in the United States as a contrast to the practices of the Soviet Union. As such, the film offers an excellent assessment of the contradictory role of educators in the period: their profession denoted a dedication to the value of academic freedom, but the Cold War consensus required that they spend a certain amount of time contributing to the ideological persuasion of students.

The film introduced viewers to Mrs. Orin, an eleventh and twelfth grade social studies educator under investigation by the school board for her teaching practices. Mrs. Orin was being evaluated following an incident wherein the parents of one of her

\(^{169}\) Skaife, “Public Education at the Crossroads,” 502-503.  
\(^{170}\) Skaife, “Public Education at the Crossroads,” 510.  
students, Helen Hinkle, found notes on communism in their daughter’s notebook. In a flashback scene the contents of the notebook in question were shown. They read: “Theory of Communism: dictatorship of the proletariat, government control of economy,” followed by a list on the “Principle differences between Communism and Democracy.” Despite the fact that these notes portrayed an adherence to anti-communist expectations, Mrs. Orin was under suspicion for addressing the topic.

In another flashback, the initial meeting between Helen’s parents and the school’s principal was used to argue that the Cold War consensus could be made compatible with academic freedom. When Helen’s father asked of Mrs. Orin, “Why does she have to teach all of that controversial stuff? She’s just stirring up trouble!,” the principal’s response was framed in a terminology that maintained a distinction between “good” and “bad” concepts while supporting the responsibility of educators to teach controversial subjects. He stated, “Well now Mr. Hinkle, most of our studies are made up of accepted truths and values, but the schools must also give the students an opportunity to study issues such as communism. A respect for facts, a constant search for truth, and a knowledge of the world as it actually is today are most essential in our democratic way of life.”

Returning to the hearing, Mrs. Orin was accused of attempting to teach her students to be communists. In defense, she retorted, “Well, I teach about communism. I’d rather say that we study about it. I feel an obligation to help my students find out everything which affects their lives, and I think you will all agree that communism has affected each and every one of us. If we don’t understand all the facts about communism, how can we know how to fight it?” Following a reference to communism as
“one of the most disturbing influences in the world today,” she asserted “These are controversial subjects, and the teacher’s job is not to decide them, that is a job for all the people. The teacher helps student learn how to think, not what to think about them. There had been times and places where the government thought it knew what was right and told the teacher exactly.” Menacing music played in the background as Mrs. Orin continued, “There was a time in Germany, and in Italy, and in Japan and now in Russia. The United States? Somehow I can’t fit our country into that pattern. We are a nation of free individuals,” and at that the music brightened. In asserting that she was not an advocate of communism, Mrs. Orin repeated her intention to show students “The real dangers it [communism] presents to our free and democratic way of life.” In describing her teaching methods, she contended, “We can study the theory of communism and learn how its present masters have used the ingredients of terror and obliterated the most elementary rights of free men…And finally, we can intelligently compare communism with our own form of government.” In returning to the classroom for a depiction of what was actually taught that fateful day, Mrs. Orin was shown engaging her students in a discussion of the differences between democracy and communism. Democracy in this scene was characterized by freedom of religion, trial by jury, secret ballot, freedom of speech and press, and freedom to learn. In direct contrast to this description was that provided for communism which, according to the film, discouraged religion, was run by secret police, ruled by one party, dominated by state control and censorship, and corrupted by communist ideology. In a final statement, Mrs. Orin argued, “This is our problem today. We are still fighting tyranny over the mind of man.” Curiously, viewers were never shown the fate of Mrs. Orin.
In a sense serving as a reflection of the burden placed on educators charged with subversive behavior, the primary function of the film was to juxtapose the freedom of American education with the constraints of Soviet education. Given the pressure placed on educators regarding curriculum requirements in the Cold War, it was certainly an inaccurate depiction. Moreover, although Mrs. Orin stated several times that the school system should introduce students to all forms of government, the film denied any intelligent overview of communist ideology, instead relying on the standard Cold War rhetoric.

**Conclusion**

As demonstrated by instructional films, fear of reprimand often resulted in an interpretation of communism that equated the ideology to unrelated systems. When the issue was engaged directly, it enforced an anti-communist sentiment by equating communism to Stalinism or automatically labeling communism as a threat to the American Way of Life. Although educators initially supported these depictions, the growing extremism of film interpretations and the limits placed on academic freedom as a result of McCarthyism, resulted in calls for reform. This transition in sentiment reflects the complicated view educators maintained regarding their role in ideological management when instructional films negated objectivity in favor of pure propaganda.
Chapter IV:
Education Made Imperative: The Role of the Atomic Threat

The potential for nuclear annihilation both justified and encouraged the role of the school in ideological management. That the survival of civilization appeared to be at stake made the role of the educational system in fostering a particular worldview a perceived necessity. The willingness of educators to accept this grave responsibility may be attributed both to a genuine concern for public welfare and to the fact that it improved the societal importance of their positions. In part, the latter point had an economic component: if teachers could demonstrate the significance of their rank, the educational system was more likely to receive funding from the state and local levels. As a result of this situation, most educators initially adhered, without complaint, to the official perspective on nuclear armament. The interpretation of atomic instruction, as a result of this relationship, underwent a particular periodization. In stark contrast to the development of ideological issues discussed in previous topics (the presentation of Americanism and communism), the increased intrusion of the federal government into educational civil defense measures witnessed a marked de-radicalization in atomic instruction. Federal infiltration, however, additionally minimized the participation of educators in determining the objectives of atomic education. Although their voices were largely silenced in the period, increasingly ideologically based interpretations of the
nuclear threat would create a backlash in the 1960s, reflecting educators' unwillingness to continue to serve as ideological managers.

The educational trends were reflected by instructional films. Prior to the loss of America’s nuclear monopoly, educators received little guidance from the federal government as to how the issue of atomic energy should be taught. As a result, educators and instructional films were primarily concerned with preparing for foreign development of the atomic bomb by asserting the need for international control over nuclear weapons. Much of this instruction was predicated on fear, highlighting the potential destruction of atomic warfare. The successful detonation of the Soviet’s first atomic bomb in 1949 signaled the nuclear phase of the Cold War, exacerbating the arms race to apocalyptic levels. In response, the federal government for the first time became involved in the production of instructional films as a means of preparing citizens for the possibility of a nuclear strike. In January 1951, President Truman created the Federal Civil Defense Administration (FCDA) to mitigate civilian vulnerability to Soviet attack. The involvement of the FCDA ushered in a new kind of film that, while acknowledging the threat of nuclear weaponry, emphasized the potential for survival through an attack. This interpretation is referred to as the security-fear dynamic—juxtaposing the polarized concepts of danger and safety. Often the security-fear dynamic was aided through an appeal to patriotism, making retreat during a nuclear attack tantamount to treason. Finally, beginning in the mid-1950s, a change in federal policy fostered a final transition in film. As President Eisenhower called for a reinterpretation of atomic power that encouraged an understanding of its beneficent
potential, films largely dropped the issue of fear, and focused instead on benign and dispassionate interpretations of atomic energy.

These transitions were often denoted by changes in the visual and audio elements of films. Over the course of the period, films often replaced charged words regarding warfare with euphemisms (such as disaster and emergency) that made atomic bombing sound like a natural disaster. Imagery was used too, as threatening issues were often represented through animation, reserving live-action shots for more benign scenes.

**Inducing Terror**

In “‘A is for Atom, B is for Bomb:’ Civil Defense in American Public Education, 1948-1963,” JoAnne Brown contends that while civil defense had become a way of life in the early Cold War period, “it was teachers and school administrators at the state and local levels who brought civil defense programs to life and translated fear into routine.” Although civil defense efforts had continued after the Office of Civil Defense (OCD)—a World War II agency—was terminated in 1945, the nation lacked a consolidated agency for this endeavor. While federal and civic organizations continued to produce defense materials, it was the responsibility of educators to dispense pertinent information, a task they accepted enthusiastically.

Educators became involved in the issue of atomic warfare shortly after the bombing of Japan in 1945. The initial thrust of education on atomic power was based on anxiety. It was clear that the United States would not retain an atomic monopoly

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indefinitely. In anticipation of the inevitable development of atomic weaponry on behalf of hostile nations, policymakers and educators sought to prevent the potential of a catastrophic nuclear war. Calling for an international control of nuclear weapons, educators were to serve as promoters of universal harmony. In attempting to fulfill this obligation, however, educators relied heavily on the concept of fear. This appeal would find visual representation in early postwar instructional films.

In October 1946, “Education for the Atomic Age” was selected as the theme for American Education Week. *See and Hear* featured the topic extensively in their issue of the same month. Emphasized were both the potential destruction of civilization at the hands of the weapon and the contention that universal harmony would provide the only surefire method of preventing such a disaster. Although it placed a tremendous burden on the school system, the publication’s devotion to the issue denoted acceptance of the task on behalf of educators. This unchallenged commitment must be attributed to the perceived enormity of the situation. This point was emphasized by Professor Thorfin R. Hogness in “Education for the Atomic Age.” Hogness’ assertions were backed by a long list of credentials: he was Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Atomic Scientists of Chicago, Professor of Chemistry at the University of Chicago, the former Director of Chemistry for the University of Chicago’s Plutonium Project (a section of the Manhattan Project), and formerly Scientific Liaison Officer in the American Embassy in London.

The role of the atomic bomb as an unprecedented force in society, according to Hogness, necessitated the assertion of control of the weapon by society as a whole. He stated, “It is the prerogative of citizens of the democracies to be masters of their own
fate.” In this period of unprecedented uncertainty, education, in Hogness’ view, was integral to this understanding. He argued that “The people must will to live. Education must reinforce that will with the time implications of nuclear energy. Education must help provide a sound foundation, based on facts, upon which the people can base their decisions.

Accompanying Hogness’ assertions was a list of “Atom Facts: True and False.” Not only did this list serve to reinforce the sentiment of fear, but it also presented issues that would be repeatedly asserted in early atomic instructional films. In seeking to dispel common myths regarding America’s safety from nuclear assault, Hogness argued against the claim that other nations did not have the materials or finances needed to develop an atomic bomb. He stated, “All major powers have access to the raw materials necessary to produce atomic energy and atomic bombs” and that “Any nation that can afford an army or navy can afford atomic weapons which are relatively inexpensive.”

Moreover, the technical ability to develop atomic weapons was not an obstacle. As chillingly offered by Hogness, “Most of the information necessary to the production of atomic weapons already has been published…What our scientists have done, others can do.” The tenor of fear was reinforced through the assertion that “More powerful and destructive weapons are in prospect.” In a final declaration regarding the extremity of the situation and the expediency with which it should be carried out, Hogness stated: “Other nations are bending every effort to develop atomic weapons.

175 Hogness, “Education for the Atomic Age,” 15.
176 Hogness, “Education for the Atomic Age,” 15.
177 Hogness, “Education for the Atomic Age,” 15.
Scientists predict that this will be accomplished within from three to five years. It also is predicted that the armament race is likely to lead to another war unless effective means of controlling this new weapon are adopted on an international scale."

Arguing for the need to assert international control over atomic weapons and a tempering of fantastical ideas regarding the potential of atomic power, Hogness called on educators to assist in dismantling myth and asserting truth. He noted:

The scientists who helped to develop the methods used to release this greatest known force—a force that can destroy civilization or one that can be used for far-reaching constructive research and development—has created problems that are new to mankind. They are aware of the vast implications of atomic energy. They call on you—the teachers of our future citizens—to help in the enormous task of straightening out the mental confusion regarding atomic energy and its implications and to bring about an awareness of this vital problem."

Through this statement, Hogness highlighted a prominent trend in atomic discourse: although the potential benefit of atomic power was recognized, the most pressing matter was to discuss its negative societal implications rather than to portray its scientific workings.

Following his piece was “Atomic Picture Story,” a bulletin board blueprint for use by educators, compiled by editors of See and Hear. Reiterating the concern emphasized by Hogness, the editors stated that “Our school responsibility is not to make atomic scientists out of Johnny and Mary, but to help them decide in what form of existence they are going to place their faith and their trust.” The underpinnings of this statement were clear: it was the duty of the school to make children proponents of an international control of nuclear weapons. In order to do this, educators appealed to fear.

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178 Hogness, “Education for the Atomic Age,” 15.
179 Hogness, “Education for the Atomic Age,” 52.
180 “Atomic Picture Story,” compiled by the editors, See and Hear (October 1946): 16.
It was believed that if schoolchildren understood the potential threat of atomic warfare, they would adhere to the stance of weapons control. Among the images displayed was a photo of the charred remains of a Hiroshima building after the bombing of Japan. The accompanying note read, “Without wise control of atomic energy, your schoolhouse may look like this someday.”\(^{181}\) Under another photograph featuring a figure covered head to toe in fallout gear, including a complete helmet and inhaler, the editors noted, “Without wise use of atomic power, will some future dictator send children to school like this?”\(^{182}\) In a final statement they noted, “Atomic power can achieve a higher standard of living or complete destruction. What can you do about it?”\(^{183}\) The sentiments offered in this display presented the issue of atomic energy in terrifying terms. An appeal to fear was used heavily to reinforce the need for international control of nuclear weapons. Although the ultimate goal made sense, the targeting of children in this approach is highly disconcerting. The severity of the themes assessed and their depiction in the periodical suggests that educators were actually seeking to reach the broader community through their children.

The underlying motivation for this approach was a humanistic sentiment resulting from the effects of the bombing of Japan in 1945. These feelings were reinforced by Herbert L. Seamans in “Within the Next Ten Years?” in the February 1947 issue of See and Hear. Seamans, Director for the Commission on Educational Organizations of the National Conference of Christians and Jews, highlighted a shift in popular perception regarding atomic energy following the bombings. Identifying the celebratory atmosphere surrounding the discovery of atomic energy he noted, “Our civilization has been

\(^{181}\) “Atomic Picture Story,” 17.
\(^{182}\) “Atomic Picture Story,” 17.
\(^{183}\) “Atomic Picture Story,” 17.
preoccupied with inventions and the application of the results of pure science.” The bombings had, however, “ushered in a new era in which human relations must become the paramount interest of all thoughtful people.” In asserting the need for weapons control, Seamans made a moral appeal, stating “Either we will bring this terrifying new force under moral and spiritual guidance, or it will become the instrument of death directed by the demonic forces of bigotry and hate.” Fearing that the nuclear arms race between the United States and the Soviet Union would negate the moral complexity of the conflict, Seamans urged to educators to correct the imbalance. He argued that educators “have so much to do with the attitudes and behaviors of the young that education for good human relations in the atomic age is a responsibility that cannot be passed over without endangering society.” Pleading for a moralistic interpretation of nuclear control, Seamans continued, “We retain the secret for the time being, and this fact places on us grave moral obligations. We have become the most powerful and wealthy nation in the world. We can make or break the peace, depending on our enlightenment and courage. What we do depends largely upon what kind of education is provided for all, particularly children.” Imploring the educational system to take on this responsibility, he noted that within the United States approximately one million teachers, “help to shape the understandings, attitudes and emotional stability of nearly thirty-five million children. It is to you, the teachers of our schools, therefore, that this article is addressed.” Seaman’s statements were significant in identifying several

185 Seamans, “Within the Next Ten Years?,” 14.
186 Seamans, “Within the Next Ten Years?,” 14.
187 Seamans, “Within the Next Ten Years?,” 14.
188 Seamans, “Within the Next Ten Years?,” 14.
189 Seamans, “Within the Next Ten Years?,” 14.
themes that proved recurrent in both the educational interpretation of the atomic issue and in instructional films on the topic: the climate of fear, the role of educators in managing opinion, and the appeal for international unity as a means of mitigating the potential for war.

The perception of atomic energy maintained by educators in the early postwar period provided the foundation for the earliest instructional films on the subject. In 1946, their concerns were mirrored directly by the film *One World or None*. Produced for the National Committee on Atomic Information by Philip Ragan Associates with the technical assistance of the Federation of American Scientists, the film was distributed for both theatrical and non-theatrical audiences. Narrated by Raymond Swing, a radio journalist and influential commentator of the era, the film sought to emphasize the potential destruction of atomic weaponry by dismissing commonly accepted theories regarding the safety of the United States from atomic assault.

The film, consisting of both animated sequences and live footage, represented a tremendous practice in the appeal to fear, demonstrated immediately with its opening shots of mushroom clouds billowing out from atomic explosions. The tone of the film was further revealed as each word of the title flashed onscreen with a sharp drum beat, culminating in yet another shot of explosions. In dispelling the idea that America’s nuclear monopoly was safe, Swing engaged in a listing of the contributions of various scientists to the discovery of atomic energy, revealing their nationality through the appearance of national flags over an image of the world. As each stage in the history of the atomic bomb’s history was reached, the accompanying music modulated one chord

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190 *One World or None*. Film. Produced by Philip Ragan Associates for the National Committee on Atomic Information, 1946. Youtube. [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com).
higher, the intent being to build a sense of impending doom. This sequence climaxed with Swing’s assertion that “This pooling of knowledge is shared by all—there is NO secret!”

After a brief description of atom splitting, Swing asked, “Should the people of the world use this energy for the destruction or the betterment of mankind? The United States used this power to destroy Hiroshima!” A placard then appeared onscreen reading, “To understand better the destruction at Hiroshima let us see what this same bomb would have done to an American city.” In a particularly intense segment, the viewer was given the perspective of an atom bomb being dropped on New York City. As the music built, the camera zoomed down sharply. In an effort to show that there would be no time to prepare for an attack of this magnitude, illustrations of terrified men, women, and children flashed momentarily across the screen before they were replaced by footage of a mushroom cloud. As the camera panned out to show the now destroyed city, Swing hurriedly explained, “A flash! A blast! The release of deadly radioactive rays! In a matter of seconds downtown New York would be a massive ruin.” Narrowing in on one area, a skull appeared with rays shooting out of it in all directions. Swing continued, “Throughout the entire lower end of Manhattan most people would be dead! All buildings from Washington Square to the Battery would be destroyed!” To demonstrate that no area of the country—east coast, mid-west, or west coast—was immune from danger, this description was repeated for both Chicago and San Francisco. For each city, local landmarks were referenced, which appeared to be an attempt on behalf of the filmmakers to personalize the destruction.
Although powerful on its own, this sequence was ended abruptly with a loud “Clang” of music as Japanese letters scrolled across the screen and another mushroom cloud appeared. Over actual footage of the devastation of Japan after the bombings of 1945, Swing commented, “One atomic bomb did this to a city and its people.” The direct reference to the people harmed by the bombs was unique to the early period of atomic films, and would be dropped by later films attempting to provide a sense of security in the face of atomic warfare. Also unique was the inclusion of graphic footage from the bombings that highlighted the human toll. Multiple clips of dead bodies and people receiving medical care—most notably children—were shown with only the accompaniment of threatening music, which served to further dramatize the scene.

When the screen eventually faded from this segment to black, Swing returned to explain, “Even the most ruthless aggressors of the past had no such weapon.” He then engaged in a discussion of the casualties caused by previous advances in weaponry, with cartoon representations of each example appearing onscreen. For each, the total body count was represented by the depiction of illustrated white crosses against a black background. Swing stated, “A soldier of Alexander with one spear killed one. Napoleon’s cannon in one firing killed twelve. The Kaiser’s Big Bertha killed eighty-eight. Hitler’s B-2 killed one-hundred and sixty-eight. Japan’s war against the United States ended after a B-29 dropped one atomic bomb that killed close to one-hundred thousand.” Here crosses filled the screen completely, as the camera scrolled to reveal them for a full 32 seconds as music played in the background. In further dismissing any notions of American security from attack, Swing noted:

The deadly power can be exerted at great distances. The first atomic bomb was dropped on a round-trip of three thousand miles on August 6, 1945. On
November 20\textsuperscript{th} of that year, the effective range was extended to eight thousand miles. The United States had demonstrated that an atomic bomb could be launched to reach any country in the world—a grim reminder to all nations that had the bomb and this plane been in possession of the Axis powers, they could have conquered the world!

These assertions provided an opportunity to explore an alternate reality in which Nazi Germany had control of the atomic bomb. After describing how Hitler would have no doubt used this power against the United States, and urging that there would have been no preventative measures for such an attack, Swing asserted that control of atomic weapons had to be granted to the United Nations. He stated that it was, “an imperative necessity that all the nations of the world unite to avert catastrophe. The United Nations has established a worldwide control of atomic energy and of other weapons of mass destruction.” In a particularly powerful closing statement, Swing contended in impassioned tone, “Atomic energy freed from the menace of war can be for all people, in all nations, the great fusing force of one world! The choice is clear, it is life or death!”

During this sequence a cartoon image of the world appeared onscreen with an atomic bomb dangling above it. As the bomb fell, the film ended by returning to the series of crosses shown earlier.

**The Security-Fear Dynamic**

The successful detonation of a Soviet atomic bomb in 1949 ended America’s nuclear monopoly. In that same year, the fall of China to communism exacerbated international tensions. In April 1950, the United States began a massive buildup of both nuclear and conventional forces, and the Korean War broke out later that year. These issues intensified the United States’ policy of nuclear deterrence, the use of nuclear
weapons in response to enemy attack. The arms race had entered a frightening new chapter. The formation of the Federal Civil Defense Association was a response to these events, and it had tremendous implications for the treatment of the atomic issue in education. The FCDA was to serve as a supervisory and inspirational agency. The actual implementation and funding for civil defense measures was left to state and local governments. The FCDA did, however, produce educational and propaganda materials for local agencies. Although its activities were in no way limited to the educational system, the FCDA found in the schools a perfect conduit for relaying information, and the majority of the organization’s materials were developed with the intention of use in the schools.

The selection of the school as the arena in which to launch an information campaign was based on several arguments. While governmental agencies responded to civil defense directives as best they could, financial restraints made existing educational systems the most fiscally sound method of extending the official perspective. The schools additionally provided an information chain wherein the broader community could be reached through a transfer of knowledge from children to parents. Finally, the public school system had a precedent of including safety drills for the protection of students (e.g. fire and tornado drills). Educators were drawn to the campaign both as a result of genuine concern and because it fortified their positions in society.

The formation of the FCDA marked a transition in the content and emphasis of atomic films. According to Guy Oakes’s *The Imaginary War: Civil Defense and American Cold War Culture*, the central question facing the United States government
during the early stages of the Cold War was, “If the price of freedom proved to be nuclear war, would Americans be willing to pay?”

Oakes maintains that Cold War mobilization rested on moral foundations. The American citizenry had to be convinced simultaneously of the danger posed by the Soviets and that, in the case of deterrence's failure, the consequences would be tolerable. He argues, “Americans would accept the risks of nuclear war only if they could be assured that a nuclear attack on their own cities would not be too costly.”

This depended on a demonstration that at a minimum, they would survive and be able to return to their familiar pre-attack lives. The civil defense programs of the 1950s represented an attempt to produce this demonstration by persuading Americans that they could be trained to protect themselves from a nuclear attack. Oakes’ contentions would find validation in the transition in educator sentiment from prevention of, to preparation for atomic warfare following the establishment of the FCDA.

The shift in concern was asserted by Paul C. Reed in an editorial, “Survival from A-Bombs,” for the February 1951 issue of Educational Screen. In noting that, “The A-bomb has become a much more real and personal threat,” Reed identified the change in primary concern, stating, “The American people want to know in very personal terms just what such a catastrophe would mean to them—and what they could do about it.”

Through a genuine expression of fear, Reed indicated both the desire for materials to assist in this endeavor and the responsibility of the educator to participate in the distribution of survival materials. He stated, “We can fervently hope the facts the films

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192 Oakes, The Imaginary War, 6.
193 Oakes, The Imaginary War, 6.
teach will not need to be used—but we must make sure we know in case we need to know. Each one of us with any ability, any responsibility for bringing films and people together has a job to do.”

While Reed’s assertions reflected the change in concern regarding survivability, the failure to establish an international control of nuclear weapons prior to Soviet attainment also had implications for the means of asserting peace. In the March 1951 issue of *Educational Screen*, Helen E. Coppen of the Institute of Education at the University of London identified disenchantment with former efforts in “What can school films do for Peace?” In providing her perspective, Coppen argued that “The oft-quoted opening sentence of the preamble to the United Nations charter—‘Since wars are made in the minds of men’—and similar over-optimistic statements have led a good many people to assume that greater international understanding will automatically lead to a lessening of the probability of war. That is only partly true.”

Identifying the ineffectiveness of films in realizing this goal, she noted, “Some extravagant claims have been made for the film as a tool of mass education, as a subtle influence for good or evil, as a propaganda weapon.” However, according to Coppen, films themselves were not able to elicit the desired response. The role of the educator in civil defense, she argued, needed to be increased so that the messages espoused by instructional films were fully absorbed by the pupil. In support of this perspective, she noted that “an inculcation of the habit of cooperation and an increase in sympathetic understanding of other peoples will contribute to the establishment of attitudes which work for peace.

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197 Coppen, “What can school films do for Peace?,” 103.
rather than for war.” Although this argument was directed at attaining peace, it reflected a desire among educators to intensify their efforts in ideological management and hinted at the elaborated concepts of fear and security addressed by instructional films.

The security-fear dynamic was introduced by instructional films early in 1951. For example, the January 1951 issue of *Educational Screen* featured an advertisement for Cornell Film Company’s *Pattern for Survival*. The advertisement itself presented a threatening image, featuring an illustration of a city decimated by an atomic blast with fires covering the ground. In the background a man was shown on all fours reaching out for aid as he crawled along a cracked sidewalk. In the foreground a young woman cried out while clutching her infant child. Over the image the advert read, “How You Can Stay Alive in an Atom Blast.” Underneath the circumstances were provided through the statement, “If one enemy plane gets through…Will you die in the blast and the heat and the deadly Gamma-rays? Or will you find out—in time—how to prepare against the A-bomb, how to shield yourself and your loved ones, how to know when you are safe?”

The twenty minute film was devoted to explaining where to find shelter, what materials should be kept within the home in case of an attack, and how to cleanse one’s self of radiation. Despite the appeal to fear made prevalent in the image depicted, the advertisement additionally read, “*Pattern for Survival* does not frighten. It explains dramatically.” Included in was a plea for the use of the film within the school. A note superimposed over the image read, “Educators Prevent Panic In Your Schools. This

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198 Coppen, “What can school films do for Peace?,” 103.
200 *Pattern for Survival* Advertisement, 25.
important film has been planned to reach the school child on his own level. He sees dozens of familiar scenes: a mother and children in the kitchen, men at work, automobiles, people in the street and so forth. He sees thrilling scenes of atomic explosions. The objective in this compilation was to express to children how genuine the threat of atomic warfare was and how it could affect them on a personal level. This sentiment is juxtaposed with the idea that security would be possible if preparations were made. The dual ideas of danger and security would be the most pronounced characteristic of all instructional films covering the topic of atomic weaponry following the loss of America’s nuclear monopoly. Indeed, the message to educators in the advertisement continued with the argument that within the film, “The danger is made real, but the means of personal defense are just as real.”

An assessment of the film was given in the March 1951 “Teacher-Committee Evaluation of New Films” in *Educational Screen*. The group noted that William L. Lawrence, scientific writer for the *New York Times* and narrator for the film, introduced the topic with the assertion that “much of the power of the A-bomb is psychological and that people must be informed about its nature and control.” The statement reinforced efforts to mitigate public fear concerning the outbreak of atomic warfare. This issue would be upheld by many films on atomic weaponry and was reflected in simplistic and untrue assertions regarding the precautions that could be made to protect an individual in the case of an atomic assault. For example, according to the committee, *Pattern for Survival*, “emphasizes such rules as not looking at the light from the explosion, falling on

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201 *Pattern for Survival* Advertisement, 25.
202 *Pattern for Survival* Advertisement, 25.
one’s face and putting one arm over the back of the neck, staying inside for twenty-four hours to avoid radioactive mist after an underwater explosion, careful washing of parts of the body exposed to mist, and cooperating with civilian defense authorities.”

Offering the common view of this kind of interpretation, in their appraisal the committee openly recognized the unsophisticated explanation provided, but applauded the film as its ability to “simplify the problems and dangers encourages rational and optimistic consideration and discussion.” The expression of pleasure with the sense of calm such a description engendered indicated an adherence to the principle of mitigating fear over encouraging honest discussion.

Providing the notion that preparedness to nuclear attack was equivalent to that for natural disasters was Encyclopaedia Britannica Films’ 1951 release, *Atomic Alert*, produced in collaboration with The Division of the Physical Sciences, including the Institute of Nuclear Studies, of the University of Chicago. Although more staid than other films, the film repeated many themes asserted by educators and provides an excellent example of the security-fear dynamic in operation. Initially the film seemed to adopt the same perspective that *One World or None* had five years earlier, providing a similar sequence of animation in which an atomic bomb was dropped on an American city. As the film paused on the resultant devastation below, however, the horror of the event was curtailed by the narrator, who noted that the potential for nuclear assault was miniscule and that safety measures were available in the case of an attack. He stated, “The chance of your being harmed by an atomic bomb is slight, but since there is a

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chance, you must know how to protect yourself.” This theme was continued in a later scene when, over live action shots of actual nuclear bombs exploding, the narrator reminded viewers that “We have the national defenses to intercept an enemy and we all must form a team to help each other through emergencies.”

After providing an extensive account of security measures and the responsibility of citizens in case of an attack, the film transitioned into an appeal to fear. Over a live action sequence of a group of high school students walking together the narrator asked, “What if a warning siren sounds? What should you do?” As the siren blared, the teenagers dispersed, following the narrator’s instruction to “Look for cover, the nearest cover. Don’t try to make it home unless home is the nearest place to go.” One student remained behind, looking perplexed. Speaking with increasing urgency, the narrator responded to this tentativeness, “Don’t hesitate—find cover!” The boy finally managed to stumble to the nearest house and knock on the door. Approving of his behavior, the narrator commented, “Everyone is in on this, strangers will understand. Finding shelter quickly may save your life.”

Changing to a scene of siblings, Ted and Suzie, home alone during the air raid, the narrator noted, “If you’re home you have work to do.” After making the recommended preparations, Ted and Suzie headed down to their basement when they were interrupted by a radio announcement stating that the siren was only a practice drill. Suzie, approximately eight years of age, scoffed at this announcement, “See, it’s just practice, all this rushing around for nothing.” Ted, a much more mature fifteen, chastised his sister for her naiveté. He stated, “Now there’s just where you’re wrong, we need this practice. Now come on let’s do our job.” Ted received praise for his dedication
to civil defense as the narrator noted, “That’s good thinking. We all need practice.” After the narrator engaged in a description of Ted and Suzie’s basement, the epitome of a homemade shelter, Ted noted, “You know Suzie, this stuff would come in handy on a camping trip.” Suzie, the comic-relief character responded, “I’d a lot rather be at a camping trip.” This brief scene served as an obvious attempt on behalf of the filmmakers to minimize the intensity of the topic discussed through the inclusion of lighthearted banter between siblings.

This carefree atmosphere was short-lived, however, as the narrator temporarily left Ted and Suzie to demonstrate safety procedures for various scenarios in which a person might be caught off-guard during a siren. In multiple scenes, teenagers were shown calmly responding to an attack, moving orderly into shelters and following instructions to sit down and cover their heads in a uniform fashion. The narrator stated, “So far you’ve been watching a practice drill, but what if there’s a bombing, a bombing that comes without warning. What is your job then?” Over instructions to find cover and stretch out, teenagers in a variety of social settings responded accordingly.

Returning to Ted and Suzie, now under a real attack, the security-fear dynamic reached its crescendo. After they heard over the radio, “The air burst of 3:01PM was zeroed on union station. Heavy damage extends from about 14th street north to as far south as the waterfront, and…” Ted chimed in, “Whew. You know we’re lucky. That blast was miles from here.” In speaking with sudden urgency, the radio commentator returned to note, “I’ve just been handed a bulletin. There’s been an underwater burst at the waterfront. Water thrown up by the bomb is falling as mist and rain and it is radioactive! Avoid radioactive mist and rain…” Ted and Suzie discussed radioactivity in a calm
manner until they heard a knock on the door, revealed to be the block ward, Mr. Carlson. Mr. Carlson appeared to tell the children that the emergency was over. Accompanying him was a Mr. Franklin, a radiological monitor for the local civil defense unit there to measure for radioactivity. Bolstering the notion of security, the film displayed an upbeat ending as Mr. Carlson informed Ted, “I saw your mother down at the shopping center. She’s fine,” and that Ted’s father was, “down at headquarters and man he’s really busy,” before informing him that there was no radioactivity on their property. These statements reinforced the idea that people could find security in an attack by following procedure. The narrator closed by stating, “Doing a good job means simply following the rules in an alert or an attack, and waiting until all is clear again. In this early and troubled stage of the atomic age, our very lives may depend on always being alert.”

In their assessment of Atomic Alert in the April 1951 issue of Educational Screen, “The Teacher-Committee Evaluation of New Films” noted that the film, “should be effective not only in showing them [schoolchildren] how to protect themselves and why effective atomic defense ultimately depends on their ability to do their job, but also to overcome the common fear that an atomic bomb explosion is synonymous with annihilation.” This statement indicates a significant corollary to the theme of mitigation of fear: child responsibilities in the face of an atomic assault. The disparity between the insistences that an atomic bombing would not necessarily result in devastation proves inconsistent with the repetitive assertion within films that children had to adhere to a particular protocol not just during an assault but in developing precautions prior to an

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assault. It is significant to note that the committee concluded their appraisal with the assertion that “Encyclopaedia Britannica Films produced Atomic Alert in response to a great demand for an atomic information film on the school level and as a result of their own belief that such a film was needed.”\(^{208}\) This statement shows that educators desired films on atomic energy as a component of the school’s instruction of threat preparedness.

Perhaps no other film better demonstrates the security-fear dynamic than *Duck and Cover*.\(^{209}\) The most well-known of the atomic safety instructional films, *Duck and Cover* was declared “historically significant” by the United States Library of Congress and inducted for preservation into the 2004 National Film Registry of “culturally, historically and aesthetically significant” motion pictures. Produced in 1951, but first shown publicly in January 1952, *Duck and Cover* was an official Civil Defense film produced in cooperation with the Federal Civil Defense Administration and in consultation with the Safety Commission of the National Education Association. Archer Productions Incorporated was contracted to produce the film as part of the government’s nationwide “Duck and Cover” public awareness campaign.

Flipping between animated and live action shots, the film covered various scenarios wherein school children were forced to confront the bomb unassisted by adults. It is eerie to consider the audience for this film and the method in which it was offered—a combination of animation and song (to appeal to children) with terrifying concepts. Threat became the central theme of the film as an off-screen commentator repeatedly implored children to be prepared as the bomb could hit at any time, with or

\(^{208}\) Larson, “Teacher-Committee Evaluation of New Films,” 149.
without warning. While the film emphasized that children could remain safe during an atomic attack if they followed the protocol to “duck and cover,” the sense of paranoia engendered by the film is highly disconcerting.

The film opened with an animated sequence. An anthropomorphized turtle, sporting a bowtie and safety helmet, strolled contentedly along a scenic path. When threatened by a stick of dynamite, the turtle, revealed to be Bert, ducked into his shell, preventing himself from being harmed. The film used this scenario as an introduction for preparedness in the face of atomic attack. As the screen zoomed in on Bert safe in his shell, a narrator asserted, “Be sure and remember what Bert the turtle just did friends because every one of us must remember to do the same thing.” After unsuccessuflly trying to coax Bert out from his shell, the narrator explained, “You see Bert is a very, very careful fellow. When there’s danger, this is the way he keeps from being hurt.” In transitioning to the central focus of the film, he changed tone in completing this thought, stating seriously, “Sometimes, it even saves his life.”

Switching to live action, the film depicted a group of schoolchildren practicing to “duck and cover” under their desks as the narrator noted, “We all know the atomic bomb is very dangerous. Since it may be used against us, we must get ready for it, just as we are ready for many other dangerous that are around us all the time.” This statement reflects the attempt among film producers to normalize and sanitize the atomic threat by comparing security procedures to those practiced for natural disasters. In fact, the film specifically compared the “duck and cover” technique to similar methods used in case of fire (fire drills) and automobile accidents (driving safety rules).
The assertion that nuclear warfare could be prepared for in the same way a natural disaster could be prepared for was juxtaposed with a sense of urgency as the narrator asserted, “You will know when it comes—we hope it never comes, but we must get ready.” A second animated sequence was used to demonstrate the destructive potential of an atomic bomb. The narrator first identified the signal that a nuclear weapon has been detonated. He stated, “There is a bright flash; brighter than the sun, brighter than anything you’ve ever seen.” Onscreen appeared a rural American home. Following a quick flash illuminating the screen, the house collapsed, a fence was uprooted, and surrounding vegetation incinerated. Accompanying the aggressive imagery was the narrator’s contention that “If you are not ready and did not know what to do, it [the blast] could hurt you in different ways. It could knock you down hard or throw you against a tree or a wall. It is such a big explosion, it can smash in buildings and knock signboards over and break windows all over town.” The fearsome episode was mitigated as the screen panned to reveal Bert the Turtle safe and unharmed within his shell. The narrator reiterated the possibility for security by noting, “But, if you duck and cover, like Bert, you will be much safer.” “Now,” the narrator chuckled, “You and I don’t have shells to crawl into like Bert the Turtle, so we have to cover up in our own way.” The recommendation was to drop to the ground and duck into a ball, covering the neck and face. Insisting that children remain on constant alert for an atomic assault, the fear-inducing narrator contended, “Always remember, the flash of an atomic bomb can come at any time, no matter where you may be.”

The remainder of the film focused on what children should do during a surprise attack. This segment was introduced by the narrator, who, over clips of people calmly
entering shelters following an air raid siren, asserted, “But sometimes, and this is very, very important—sometimes the bomb might explode without any warning. Then, the first thing we would know about it would be the flash, and that means duck and cover fast, wherever you are! There’s no time to look around or wait! Be like Bert, when there is a flash, duck and cover, and do it fast!” His tone during this assertion became increasingly intense, contradicting the passive images onscreen. The following “surprise attack” scenes were highly revealing as the filmmakers chose, in every scenario, to show children caught in an atomic attack during everyday activities. The obvious intent here was to reinforce the idea that the bomb could drop at any moment and that children could never be indifferent to the threat. In class, the cafeteria, the playground, at home, in the neighborhood, at a picnic, on the school bus—no place was safe.

The fearful nature of these depictions was heightened when the narrator reminded children that they would have to rely on themselves to remain safe during an attack. He asserted, “Getting ready means we will all have to be able to take care of ourselves. The bomb might explode when there are no grownups near.” Over an image of two children leaving home as their mother waved goodbye, he continued “Paul and Patty know this and they are always ready to take care of themselves. Here they are on their way to school on a beautiful spring day. But no matter where they go or what they do, they always try to remember what to do if the atom bomb explodes right then.” He yelled out to Paul and Patty, “It’s a bomb! Duck and Cover.” The children obeyed and threw themselves against a building. The theme was repeated over the image of a young boy riding his bike. Reinforcing the sense that no place was safe, the narrator asserted, “Here’s Tony going to his cub scout meeting. Tony knows the bomb can
explode anytime of the year; day or night he is ready for it. [to Tony] Duck and Cover!"

Tony, in lightning-fast response, jumped off his bike and cowered against a small dividing wall. The narrator responded with delight, calling out, “That a boy, Tony! That flash means act fast!”

Time and again, the sense of paranoia was enforced by the film through assertions such as, “Sundays, holidays, vacation time—we must be ready every day, all the time to do the right thing if the atomic bomb explodes.” The final remark by the narrator was an assertion that grownups may not be around when the bomb explodes. Speaking directly to the film’s audience, schoolchildren, the narrator chillingly stated, “Then, you’re on your own.”

*Duck and Cover* was made the subject of the Teacher-Committee Evaluation of New Films in the March 1952 issue of *Educational Screen*. Recommending the film for first, second, and third graders, the committee’s appraisal indicated significant developments in instruction of the topic of atomic attack. Identifying a shift from the appeal to fear to a threat mitigating approach, they argued that the film, “should be welcomed because of its excellent mental hygiene approach; rather than appealing to the fear instinct it has underlying qualities of cheerfulness and optimism.” Additionally significant was the committee’s recognition of a divergence of opinion among educators regarding the consequences of this type of training. After having contended that “Bert the Turtle,” “affords much-needed comic relief,” they argued that “Even though some teachers feel that air-raid drills alarm the children, there are others who feel that such

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drills and discussions give them a feeling of security from knowing what to do.”

It is interesting that the debate concerning the possible repercussions of employing instructional films as a measure of instruction was addressed by the committee. In a final analysis the group also celebrated the film’s adoption of a simple message, “Duck and cover,” to adequately inculcate the desired behavior of students in the event of an attack.

Because nuclear assault was now a realized possibility, while the element of threat was maintained, films and educators alike urged that there were precautions one could take to defend themselves from harm during a bombing. The contradictory message espoused was that children had to be made aware of the real threat of nuclear annihilation, but that they could safeguard themselves so as to prevent harm. The paranoia induced by this rhetoric, and the unclear assertions regarding both the potential for and survival during an atomic attack reflects the troublesome consequences of ideological management within the school.

Retreat as Treason

Just as the security-fear dynamic was used to de-legitimize the apocalyptic perception of atomic attack, an ideological underpinning was attached to civil defense education following America’s loss of nuclear monopoly and the formation of the FCDA. Contributors to educational journals, often members of civil defense groups, urged teachers to emphasize the importance of morale in educating students on civil defense. In instructional films, this appeal to patriotism often equated retreat during an atomic

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assault to treason. By encouraging attention to matters of ideological persuasion, the threat of nuclear warfare fostered the importance of allegiance to a particular worldview that promoted Americanism and discouraged communism or communist sympathy.

In the April 1953 issue of The Elementary School Journal, Clara P. McMahon, a member of the Federal Civil Defense Administration, referenced the issue of patriotism in relation to atomic education in “Civil Defense and Education Goals.” In introducing the topic, McMahon asserted that “Any threat to our national security makes it imperative that the schools intensify their efforts to accomplish their goals, while assuming the additional responsibility of adjusting the curriculum to develop in the pupils the qualities and characteristics needed in such an emergency.”212 In attempting to identify a link between civil defense goals and educational goals, McMahon engaged in a discussion of the goals of civil defense. Following this elucidation she contended, “The relation between these concepts and the aims of education is particularly evident in the areas of civic responsibility and the improvement of human relations, for the philosophy that underlies civil defense is based on the individual’s realization that his participation in the local civil-defense organization is a major factor in the preservation of our democratic heritage.”213 In providing a list of “attitudes” fostered by educational units on civil defense, McMahon included the following: “Responsibility for participating in a civil-defense activity,” “A desire to help others in time of need,” “Loyalty and steadfastness toward our democratic heritage,” and finally, “Optimism in facing the future.”214

The themes referenced by McMahon were extrapolated upon by Anthony J. Russo in “A Unit Outline for Teachers: Civil Defense Instruction in Providence” appearing in the May 1953 issue of *The Clearing House*. Russo, a teacher in the Providence, Rhode Island school system, additionally served as a civil defense consultant for the city’s Department of Curriculum Research, a position that required him to assist in the development of the schools' civil defense program and to serve as a liaison between the local Civil Defense Council and the schools. Introducing the relationship between the atomic issue and education, he opened with the statement, “Educators agree that civil defense is a vital part of citizenship training.” After asserting that “civil defense instruction should permeate the entire curriculum rather than be appended as an extra subject,” Russo made the strange contention that through this practice, “civil defense receives the attention it deserves in context with the factors that make it necessary and with no danger of overemphasis, which might lead to unwarranted fear and anxiety.” Although the contention that the making of civil defense applicable to every subject would mitigate fear appears ludicrous, Russo’s assertions again highlighted the security-fear dynamic. What is more significant, however, were his contentions regarding the relationship between patriotism and atomic education.

In addressing the necessity for morale to be made an important issue in curricula, Russo urged educators to inform their students that “World Wars I and II proved that in modern times industrial production and civilian morale have as much to do with winning a war as an army and navy. So it is expected that in World War III, the

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216 Russo, “A Unit Outline for Teachers,” 544.
enemy will try to knock out and to break down our morale (i.e., our will to fight) even before they try to defeat our Armed Forces.”

This argument was aided with the assertion that “Until world peace is assured, we must be prepared physically and psychologically for any attack on the United States. Civil defense contributes to both physical and psychological preparedness. Preparedness in itself will deter a potential enemy from attacking us, since an enemy who knows that his victim is ready for any emergency will be more likely to avoid open conflict on the battlefield.”

Produced by Castle Films in 1951, *Survival Under Atomic Attack* was an official United States Civil Defense Film produced in cooperation with the Federal Civil Defense Administration. As one of the earliest FCDA films, *Survival Under Atomic Attack* demonstrated the security-fear dynamic and introduced to the topic the issue of patriotism in the face of a nuclear assault. The film opened with the sound of a plane tearing through the air. A couple, shown working in their backyard, dropped their activities at the sound. Famed broadcast journalist Edward R. Murrow, serving as the film’s narrator, offered in reasoned tones an explanation for the scene. He stated, “Let us face, without panic, the reality of our times. The fact that atom bombs may someday be dropped on our cities, and let us prepare for survival by understanding the weapon that threatens us.” Although the concept was threatening, Murrow, in his tone and word choice, served as a rational and calming authority.

Nonetheless, the fear element remained. Immediately following the initial clip, live footage of the devastation of Japan post-bombing was shown. While Murrow engaged

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217 Russo, “A Unit Outline for Teachers,” 545.
218 Russo, “A Unit Outline for Teachers,” 548.
in a description of the dangers presented by a nuclear assault, for every hazard discussed there was provided a reassuring message. For example, Murrow noted, “In Japan whole buildings were flattened by its [the bomb’s] force, however, many buildings of sturdy construction, even though close to the explosion, remain standing.” This sentiment was repeated when, over images of injured and sick Japanese receiving medical treatment, Murrow asserted that “the majority of people exposed to radiation recovered completely, including a large percentage of those who suffered serious radiation sickness.” Over a clip of a Japanese family happily eating a meal together, Murrow continued, “Today, they lead normal lives—they bear children, their children are normal.” Throughout this entire segment, the bombing of Japan was discussed coolly as though it were a natural disaster rather than a military attack at the hands of a super-weapons.

Transferring to a discussion of an attack on American soil, Murrow made an appeal to patriotism by arguing that domestic militarization would become necessary in such a scenario. He stated, “Our cities are prime targets for atomic attack, but mass evacuation would be disastrous.” Over clips of jammed highways and empty warehouses, he continued, “An enemy would like nothing better than to have us leave our cities empty and unproductive.” This assertion was justified through the contention that the Cold War made the home front the frontline. As stated by Murrow, “Our factories will be battle stations. Production must go on if we are to win.” Likewise, he asserted, “our offices and homes will also be posts of duty, not to be deserted.” The duty to remain at one’s post during an attack reflects directly the notion that to retreat would not only be ineffective, but unpatriotic as well.
Moving to a discussion of how to protect oneself, the film panned to reveal a couple—the same initially shown searching the sky for the bomb—sitting in their living room and reading a pamphlet titled, "Survival Under Atomic Attack." Murrow contended "With the knowledge of the first atomic explosions to guide us, our chances for survival will be far better than those of the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki if we act on our knowledge and are prepared." As Murrow went over the procedures for setting up a home bomb shelter, the couple was shown happily following his instructions. Contributing to the upbeat vibe of this sequence, cheery music played in the background. Included in the shelter preparation scene was a young boy, dressed in a cowboy costume, handing his mother a forgotten can-opener. He received warm smiles from mother and father. No one depicted in this scene demonstrated any sense of alarm at the prospect for which they were preparing.

When an air-raid siren sounded, the family leapt to action. Outside, a man caught unprepared for the bomb dropped to the ground and covered his head with a coat as debris—including thick metal pipes and bricks fell around him. No person depicted during this scene suffered any injury, and the only follow-up provided by Murrow was the suggestion that any person who came into contact with radioactive fallout wash themselves thoroughly. In closing he contended, “If the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki had known what we know about civil defense, thousands of lives would have been saved. Yes the knowledge is ours, and preparation can mean survival for you. So, act now. Someday, your life may depend on it.” This final assertion reiterated the frequently asserted issue of security in the face of disaster. The potential for death from
an atomic bombing was acknowledged, but mitigated through the assertion of safety precautions.

In escalating the theme of patriotism touched upon briefly by *Survival Under Atomic Attack*, the film *Our Cities Must Fight* equated retreat during an atomic assault to treason. The film, another in the series of official Federal Civil Defense Administration films, was produced in 1951 by Archer Productions Incorporated. While the film was dull in terms of imagery, taking place primarily within an office and with all dialogue provided by two individuals, the messages espoused—particularly efforts to assert domestic militarization—were significant.

The retreat-as-treason theme adopted by the film was apparent from the start. In a newspaper editor’s office a disembodied hand pulled a sheet from a typewriter reading, “‘Lead Editorial’…The Enemy will have no trouble winning the next war. Too many Americans will desert their cities at first sign of danger. This is treason.” Displeased with these statements, the figure crumpled up the page and tossed it aside. Having spotted his friend walking down the hall, he called out, “Oh, hi there Fred, I was trying to get a hold of you. Park your hat and grab a chair, huh.” Fred responded, “I just got your message, Jack, what’s it all about?” Jack then explained his predicament. He had received a letter from a reader that stated the following:

‘Dear editor, usually I agree with your editorials, but your call for civil defense volunteers was nonsense. If this city is attacked my plans are made and they don’t include waiting around to get killed. I’m going to take my family to a place in the country where we’ll be safe. I think I’m as patriotic as the next guy, but I’d be pretty dumb to remain in this city when those bombs start falling.’

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Fred, in reaction, expressed sympathy for Jack’s position and the two engaged in a discussion of the seemingly growing number of what they referred to as the “take to the hills” population. Addressing viewers that might fall into this category, Fred noted, “And the worst of it is that most of them are intelligent people, good citizens if you like, but they’ve made up their minds without thinking—they’re letting fear push them.” These sentiments established the overall rhetoric of the film, emphasizing the point that patriotism demanded bravery in the face of potential nuclear assault.

This position was bolstered by a discussion of the futility of attempting escape in the case of an atomic bombing. These assertions were offered under the framework that “if war comes and we desert our cities, we’ve lost the war.” Fred and Jack delineated the practical infeasibility of mass evacuation noting that retreaters would pack the highways and therefore cause mass traffic wherein nobody could escape and rescue vehicles would be prevented from reaching those in actual danger. Fred attempted an appeal to emotion in discussing this issue, stating, “If this were our town and you or someone you loved were trapped inside of it waiting frantically for help, that help would never come.” This line of argument was assisted by the contentions that citizens had a duty to remain behind and help in whatever way possible as Fred continued, “We know that mass evacuation can never be permitted if only for one reason, an all important one, the fact that every able-bodied person is needed in the city before as well as after an attack.” Militarization of the home front was emphasized through the assertion that “We must realize that in modern warfare, city dwellers find themselves right in the front lines. After an attack, our first responsibility will be to keep our heads and get back to our jobs.” Jack contributed to this conversation by
referencing the security appeal. He stated, “You know Fred, actually staying in the city
to help after atomic attack is not nearly as dangerous as a lot of people think. The
danger of, well, lingering radiation is not really very serious. After an atomic air burst,
the danger of radiation and falling debris is over within a minute and a half.”

Returning to a discourse on the duties of citizenship, Fred and Jack made
repeated allegations of treasonous activity. In a particularly impassioned speech, Fred
argued:

Modern warfare has no respect at all for civilians. Like it or not, each of us has
his share of fighting to do, his share of danger to face. Running away from that
duty would be desertion pure and simple. In the army it would mean court-
marshal. As a civilian it would not only be treasonable, but it would mean having
to live with the knowledge that in deserting your responsibility, you had failed
yourself, your family, your friends, your city. Deserting our cities would be
handing the enemy a victory far greater and less costly to them than they could
ever achieve through bomb damage alone. Their very idea in attacking our cities
would be to destroy our will to fight. The enemy knows that a city deserted by its
people is a city robbed of its power to resist, of its power to produce.

Fred’s assertions regarding the responsibilities of a militarized home front were
reinforced by Jack’s appeal to ideology, as Americanism and Soviet aggression were
discussed side-by-side. He noted:

Yes, there are some pretty grim prospects ahead of us. The hell of an enemy
attack could come smashing out of the sky at any time, and every last one of us
will have to be ready to face what happens then. There will be plenty of suffering,
plenty of misery, broken homes, death, dangers that used to belong only to
soldiers, but we’ve got to be able to take it and come back fighting. Everything
we’ve hoped for, everything we believe in, everything America has fought for will
depend on us and what we do. You know, a lot of people behind the iron curtain
are wondering if we can take it if we’re ever attacked. They’re carefully
measuring our courage, our capacity to fight, our capacity for sacrifice. They
think they have the answers. Well, you and I and every American has to examine
their minds and hearts and come up with a few answers of their own. The
question is, have Americans got the guts?
In a particularly emotional closing, Jack turned to the camera and asks the audience, “Have you got the guts?”

Aside from the rather ludicrous assertion that the radiation resulting from an atomic blast would dissipate within ninety seconds, this film was significant because it added to the standard aims of persuasion (the amelioration of fear and simultaneous intimidation) the issue of shame. The contention was made that during a period of unprecedented war, the home would be the frontline and that, in addition to being unsuccessful, retreat would be un-American. Citizens had a duty to stay and fight the enemy.

**The Benevolent Atom**

When the failure of the Korean War demonstrated that the United States could not afford to continue waging wars with conventional weapons, President Eisenhower shifted policy to rely more heavily on nuclear weapons. He recommended that the United States attack enemy forces with smaller nuclear weapons or strike directly at the nation causing the conflict. In 1954, the Administration adopted a policy of “massive retaliation,” meaning that the United States would respond to Soviet expansion with nuclear attack. On December 8, 1953, President Eisenhower delivered a speech entitled “Atoms for Peace” to the UN General Assembly in New York City. Ostensibly, the speech was meant to provide a sense of security to a world facing nuclear brinkmanship. Eisenhower, however, was additionally motivated by the desire to encourage allied European nations to adopt nuclear weapons as a replacement for more expensive and less aggressive conventional weapons. In order to assuage fears
that the United States intended to provoke a nuclear war in Europe, Eisenhower’s intent in this perspective was to provide a sense of reassurance. Regardless, the “Atoms for Peace” speech, which became a formal campaign in 1957, reflected a new era of atomic films. In a stark departure from previous film categories, this new kind of film emphasized the potential benefits of atomic energy over the possibility of warfare and sought to make the atomic bomb appear no more threatening than conventional weapons. As argued by Paul Boyer in *By the Bomb’s Early Light: American Thought and Culture at the Dawn of the Atomic Age*, this change in policy attempted to refute the movements for international atomic controls by de-emphasizing the role of nuclear power in warfare. He states that “speculation about atomic energy’s glorious promise enabled Americans to turn from the immediate reality of its military use, and even to view that use as a necessary stage in a larger, beneficent process.”

The period of the “Benevolent Atom” film largely represented an eclipsing of educator involvement in atomic instruction, replacing its influence with that of the business community. Some educators, however, perhaps in reaction to the climate of fear previously fostered, supported this trend by arguing that the old interpretations had been oversimplified. Despite being published seven months prior to Eisenhower’s speech, Anthony J. Russo’s “A Unit Outline for Teachers: Civil Defense Instruction in Providence,” in addition to promoting the issue of patriotism, appealed to the benevolent atom depiction. As a vestige of the security-fear dynamic, Russo noted that “Use of atomic energy for military purposes forebodes the destruction of civilization as we know

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it.” Russo thus called upon educators to inform students that “Development of atomic energy for peaceful purposes has far-reaching implications for the betterment of the world.” The following list of these benefits was provided: “Socially (e.g., in its use by the medical sciences);” “Economically (e.g., in the development of low-cost power everywhere, with all that would mean in raising the standards of living);” and “Politically (e.g., in its effect on national rivalries).” This last point is significant as the “atomic bombs prevent atomic bombing” argument would be made often in this phase of film type.

Although predating Eisenhower’s speech, John Sutherland Production’s 1953 film A is for Atom in many ways reflected the same sentiment of the atom presented by Russo. Sponsored by General Electric, a manufacturer of nuclear power and nuclear weapons components, the film demonstrated the infiltration of the business community in instructional films. This factor helps to explain its positive tone as A is for Atom, avoided apocalyptic scenarios in favor of a light-hearted scientific interpretation of atomic energy. Presented entirely in animation, this goal was achieved through the use of anthropomorphized atoms displaying playful characteristics.

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222 Russo, “A Unit Outline for Teachers,” 548.
223 Russo, “A Unit Outline for Teachers,” 548.
224 Russo, “A Unit Outline for Teachers,” 548.
225 Russo, “A Unit Outline for Teachers,” 548.
Following a brief appeal to the idea that the United Nations should assert control over atomic weaponry, the film moved away from any discussion of the bomb’s use in warfare. This departure was justified through the narrator’s contention that “With this discovery at the time the free world faced a war for survival, it was little wonder the first thought was a weapon.” This line of argument followed Paul Boyer’s contention, “That atomic energy had been first introduced as a destructive force, some argued, was simply an unfortunate twist of history that distorted its true significance.” Having dismissed nuclear armament as a key issue, the film embarked on an assessment of the scientific workings of atomic energy, explained primarily through characters inhabiting “Element Town.” Although decently informative, the benign and even entertaining depiction of atomic energy negated any fear of nuclear power.

This sequence was followed by a long assessment of the potential benefits of atomic power. For example, predictions were made regarding the use of atomic power as an alternative source of energy in transportation through depictions of nuclear-powered cars, trains, and planes. As the narrator asserted, “Truly the superpower which man has released from within the atom’s heart is not one, but many giants,” enormous, glowing, and preternatural figures appeared onscreen. Representing the potential uses of atomic energy, these giants were identified by the narrator as The Warrior, “the destroyer;” The Engineer, “seeking to provide vast quantities of energy to run the world’s machines;” The Farmer, “helping to better feed tomorrow’s world;” The Healer, “helping to diagnose and cure the sick;” and The Research Worker, “working on in the fields of pure science to reveal more of the mysteries of the universe.” Reiterating the

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227 Boyer, By the Bomb’s Early Light, xix.
benevolent atom theme, the narrator argued, “But all are within man’s power, subject to his command. On man’s wisdom, on his firmness in the use of that power depends now the future of his children and his children’s children in the new world of the atomic age.” Although the film could not escape entirely the rhetoric of fear surrounding the atom—indeed, it opened with a discussion of the use of atomic power in warfare—its ultimate goal was to dissipate fear and emphasize the potential benefit of atomic energy. As a result, the nightmare of atomic warfare was transmuted into a hero of industrial progress.

Following the trends presented in *A is for Atom* was Wilding Picture Productions Incorporated’s 1955 *About Fallout*. On the surface, the film appeared to appeal directly to the formerly popular security-fear dynamic. While maintaining some of those elements, however, *About Fallout* was unique in its dispassionate discussion of the effects of nuclear bombing. Although the film focused on a more traditional topic than that assessed in *A is for Atom*, its presentation likewise asserts an unthreatening and impersonal interpretation of the atom. Unsettling concepts were depicted in animation, while preventative measures were cheerily depicted in live action.

Sponsored by the Department of Defense, the film opened with a scrolling text stating, in terrifying honesty, the repercussions of nuclear fallout:

> If our country should ever be attacked by nuclear weapons, many would die instantly from the destructive blast and heat. There is no certainty about which places would be hit.
> But millions more, outside the relatively small areas of complete destruction would be spared. However, they would be endangered by a broader threat—the spreading radioactive fallout which could cover most of the country.
> We owe it to ourselves, our families, and our country to know how to protect ourselves from fallout. Our survival could depend on how well we are prepared to meet this threat.
In stark contrast to this opening narrative, total alarm was mitigated by the narrator who, speaking in calm and authoritative tones informed the viewer that the planet was in fact already surrounded by radiation from the sun’s rays. Images of a happy couple on the beach were used to demonstrate how radiation could be felt on the skin. In discussing the effects of radiation overdose, the narrator, without emotion, explained, “When radiation penetrates the body, the cells are injured. Most of them can repair themselves if the total dose over a period of time is not too high.” However, according to the narrator, “if radiation continues the cells will be destroyed beyond repair…If people received more than 200 roentgens [the measurement of radiation] within a few days, many would be sick and some might require medical care. 300 roentgens would cause severe radiation sickness, or possibly death. And as we go beyond 300 the danger increases rapidly.” In spinning these sentiments in a less terrifying direction, he stated, “But we are not without personal weapons of defense.”

Distance, according to the narrator, was helpful as, “Radiation from particles 50 feet away, for instance, would not affect us as much as particles a few feet away.” Other methods of defense included position in any kind of shelter during an attack. It was recommended that those trapped inside of a building during an assault should remain in the middle floors of the building, thus avoiding falling fallout particles and those collecting at ground level. Materials, such as concrete and steel, were recommended in providing shielding from penetrating rays.

Switching from cartoon graphics to real-life, a third ally, time, was discussed. The narrator explained, in contrast to the previous assertions regarding ninety seconds of danger, “For deadly as radiation is, it has a fortunate weakness: a rapid rate of decay.
Suppose a nuclear explosion takes place at twelve-noon. By one o’clock let’s assume all the fallout is down. Then the total residual radiation would be at a high level. By seven o’clock it’s down to one-tenth. In two days, though still dangerous, it’s only one-hundredth. But in two weeks it’s only one-thousandth. So we would not have to take maximum precautions indefinitely.” Although this description was more accurate than former assertions made in films, it was presented in such a way that made the danger appear miniscule. The minimization of fear was continued through explanations of methods for surviving fallout. Every part of this segment was devoted to offering benign steps of protection. For instance, the narrator happily asserted that if fallout settled on food, no harm would come to individuals should they eat it. Over an image of an attractive young woman, beautifully dressed despite her apparent experience with atomic warfare, washing tomatoes, the narrator continued, “You simply remove the fallout particles using everyday methods of food preparation—peeling, wiping, or washing. Fallout swallowed accidentally with food or in drinking water would do you no immediate harm, but for long-term safety, it’s best to filter the fallout particles out.”

In his closing statements, the narrator highlighted the issue of security. In emphasizing the ability to protect oneself through adequate shelter, he stated, “That’s why the federal government has a nationwide shelter program. The goal is, adequate fallout shelter space for every man, woman, and child. And this goal can be reached, for with knowledge of radiation we can face the facts about fallout and take action to protect ourselves against this hazard of the nuclear age.”

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warfare were discussed, this film is significant in its ultimate assertion regarding the relative ease in which security could be ensured.

The dangers of atomic weaponry were never fully denied, yet the implication that previous assessments had overstated the bomb’s destructive power yielded peculiar depictions wherein atomic energy was either regarded as a potential benefit to multiple sectors of society or a component of the national arsenal no more threatening than conventional weaponry.

**Conclusion**

Perhaps no other category of Cold War instructional film received as much attention as did those regarding atomic energy. In part, educator contribution to the issue reflected the severe implications the development of atomic weaponry had on society. However, the topic also justified the importance of the educational system. That educators reinforced the trends in the federal stance on atomic power supports this view. The culminated effect of this relationship was a general de-radicalization of the issue. The initial promotion of intense and terrifying depictions of atomic assault in instructional films was subdued in light of federal intervention in civil defense operations. The subsequently dispassionate interpretation of atomic energy reveals that educators, who were heavily involved in the issue of civil defense, rarely challenged the official stance on the depiction of nuclear energy. Much of this acquiescence was the result of personal interests among educators. Their role as civil defense initiators supported the significance of their role in society at large and contributed to their designation as ideological managers. Federal intervention, however, additionally showed how
educators could be eclipsed by the mandates of ideological management in the school. Educators initially demonstrated tremendous fear regarding the potential for nuclear warfare. Significantly, these assertions lessened over the course of the period as the official stance on atomic weaponry encouraged a more dispassionate interpretation. The period of acceptance was temporary. In the 1960s, educators would react to the minimization of their control, asserting disapproval for educational ideological management. This sentiment would contribute greatly to the dismantling of the Cold War consensus, to be discussed in the next chapter.
Conclusion: The Dismantling of Consensus

The dismantling of the Cold War consensus cannot be given an exact date. By 1965, however, the seeds of dissent had been thoroughly sown. In the early 1960s, indications of discontent following a number of social events opened the floodgates. The numerous public protests witnessed during this period, engaging issues such as the civil rights movement, nuclear weapons, the Vietnam War, and more were a response to the disparity between the rhetoric fostered by America in the 1950s and the reality of the American experience. When these issues could no longer be ignored, the consensus began to dissolve. These factors had tremendous implications for the role of the school in ideological management. A vast majority of social unrest had been first expressed on college campuses by students who had grown up in an educational system that fostered adherence to the consensus. Their demonstration of disillusionment was widely recognized by educators at all levels, who then began to question their own involvement in this disillusionment. Soon educators at all levels were pushing back, seeking to regain a former method of teaching that made critical education the most important aim of the school. This shift was reflected by instructional films, which dropped almost entirely topics related to the Cold War consensus in favor of less controversial matters such as drug abuse and driver safety. They therefore serve as an excellent representative of the self-enforced change in purpose among educators.
The National Defense Education Act

The use of the school as a tool for ideological management had implications for the determining of educational policy, which became a factor in the dismantling of the consensus. Prior to the Cold War, the educational system ran independently from the federal government and policy was largely determined by the National Education Association. However, the slow intrusion of federal influence gradually disassembled this system. A prime indicator of this shift was the passing of the 1958 National Defense Education Act. The push for major federal involvement in public schools was sparked by the launching of the first Earth-orbiting artificial satellite, Sputnik I, by the Soviet Union on October 4, 1957. In the context of the international arms race, the launch seemed to represent America’s failure to keep up with the Soviets. As argued by historian Joel Spring in Images of American Life: A History of Ideological Management in Schools, Movies, Radio, and Television, “Of course, part of the blame was placed on the public schools.”230 As a result, President Eisenhower passed the NDEA to promote the development of more scientists and engineers. The act provided funding for hiring more local high school science and mathematics teachers and for purchasing related equipment. It increased by five hundred percent the amount allotted to the National Science Foundation to develop new courses in these fields. It also provided money for programs to fund promising college students, and funds supporting foreign language and vocational guidance. However, by allocating funding to particular programs, the

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NDEA removed financial control from the NEA, severely limiting their jurisdiction over educational objectives and practices. According to Spring:

The legislation opened the door to major federal support and involvement in American public schools. But the nature of the federal support under the NDEA was completely contrary to the type of federal financing the National Education Association had campaigned for since the 1930s. The rejection of NEA proposals and the anti-NEA sentiment of proponents of the NDEA legislation reflected declining NEA and increased federal influence over national educational policy.\(^{231}\)

Federal regulation of public schools diminished the power of educators, therefore minimizing the significance of their role in society—one of the factors that originally encouraged the use of the school in ideological management. As stated by Spring, “NDEA legislation began linking educational policy directly to national policy objectives. It symbolized the triumph of Cold War educational policies.”\(^{232}\) It was only in the 1960s that the NEA would seek to reassert its authority, becoming the largest teachers union in national policy objectives.\(^{233}\)

**Civil Rights**

Despite the depiction of racial harmony promoted by the Cold War consensus, the civil rights movement continued to intensify in the early 1960s. It was clear that the atmosphere of supposedly mutual civility and respect were a poor substitute for actual equality. Throughout the period of the Cold War, civil rights advocates had, as argued by Wendy L. Wall in *Inventing the “American Way”: The Political Consensus from the New Deal to the Civil Rights Movement*, “put equality rather than comity at the center of their consensual vision...Rather than ignoring power imbalances, they tried to use the

language of consensus to correct them.\footnote{234} Advances had been made during the period, such as the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision that made legal segregation of public schools unconstitutional. Lingering dissatisfaction with the rate of change in the racial hierarchy, however, fostered a new method of civil rights activism that emphasized public demonstration over litigation as the best way to enforce change. Direct Action protests, such as the sit-in movement, that sought to combat racial segregation on a grassroots level, became increasingly popular in the 1960s.

Passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 proved the success of this form of tactic. President Johnson’s legislations on racial issues were significant, but they also highlighted the issue of inequality and fostered a sharper response to injustice. As argued by Steven M. Gillon in *The American Paradox*, “Ironically, just when Johnson was legislating into law the most progressive domestic legislation in history, African American discontent reached a new high. Between 1964 and 1968 the United States experienced the most intense period of civil unrest since the Civil War.”\footnote{235} The introduction of the Black Power Movement further highlighted the issue of racial injustice and solidified backlash to the former consensus. Black Power additionally made education a particular component of activism. As noted by Gillon, “African American parents pushed school boards to approve the teaching of black history and culture. College students pressured administrators to recruit black teachers and students, create Afro-American cultural centers, and institute Black Studies classes

Nuclear Weapons

Throughout the early Cold War period, the threat of atomic warfare had been used to justify adherence to the consensus. For educators, it made their role in ideological management all the more important. Although concern regarding nuclear weapons was never absent, beginning in the early 1960s, public protests against the issue of atomic power emerged. For instance, in 1961 about 50,000 women marched in sixty American cities to demonstrate against nuclear weapons in the Women Strike for Peace movement. Anxiety concerning the potential for nuclear war did not reach its peak, however, until the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962. When the United States discovered Soviet nuclear missile sites in Cuba, the government responded with a blockade of the island. As tensions mounted between the U.S. and the Soviet Union, according to Gillon, “The nation, and the world, teetered on the edge of nuclear war.” An agreement between the two superpowers was eventually made, but, while Americans had faced the threat of nuclear attack from the Soviet Union since 1949, it had never seemed so possible as during the Cuban Missile Crisis. The exacerbation of public fear was revealed as the number of bomb shelters built during that fall skyrocketed and the schools intensified their duck-and-cover drills. The event set in motion a widespread discontent with nuclear weaponry reflected in part by the adoption

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236 Gillon, The American Paradox, 181.
237 Gillon, The American Paradox, 152.
238 Gillon, The American Paradox, 153.
of the 1963 Nuclear Test Ban Treaty that banned atmospheric and underwater nuclear testing.

**Vietnam**

The escalation of the nuclear arms race and America’s intervention into newly independent nations in Asia, the Middle East, Latin America, and Africa provoked criticism of the strategy of limited warfare and questioning of the moral validity of battles waged in the name of anticommunism. The most significant sixties encounter with Cold War containment tensions, however, was the beginning of the Vietnam War. Working under the “domino theory,” originally developed by President Eisenhower, the United States came to believe that if Vietnam fell to communism so would the rest of Southeast Asia. In July 1965 President Johnson announced that he was committing American ground troops to offensive operations in Vietnam. This number rose continually and the war would prove an enormous U.S. failure. The increasing death-count and apparent futility of Vietnam resulted in the erosion of public support for the Cold War.

Vietnam highlighted public distrust regarding the standard Cold War position that the United States was leading a free world crusade against a communist conspiracy to conquer the earth. Consumed by rigid anticommunism, American policymakers neglected to confront the nationalist impulse behind the Vietnamese revolution. Insisting on viewing Ho Chi Minh as a pawn of Soviet and Chinese aggression, the United States aided in the transformation of a local struggle into a superpower conflict. The military’s failure in Vietnam, despite its enormous advantages in firepower, underscored the fundamental problem with America’s Vietnam policy. America’s intervention into local
struggles was justified as a part of the superpower competition between democracy and communism. Continued failures, however, suggested an arrogance of power amongst American policymakers. Moreover, intervention unleashed the contradiction between American ideals and international interests. Imposing itself into the political workings of foreign nations contradicted America’s supposed dedication to self-determination and freedom.

Most anti-war demonstrations took place on college campuses. These demonstrations resulted in increased scrutiny placed on educators for perceived subversion, but there was also a trickle-down effect to high schools. The anti-war movement was not largely publicized until 1965, when extensive news coverage was given to the Students for a Democratic Society’s March on Washington movement. The anti-war movement spread to the schools largely through the power of television. Constant broadcasting transformed the anti-war campaign of the SDS into a nationwide crusade. Moreover, according to Spring, “Besides providing graphic news coverage of the Viet Nam war and anti-war demonstrations, television programming began to reflect the increasing divisions among the U.S. population over continued pursuit of the war.”

The Influence of the Student Movements

Racial conflict, nuclear annihilation, and warfare exposed the faults inherent to the consensus. The cultural and political assumptions of the 1950s had not stood the test of time. During this period, it was the college student who most vociferously introduced challenges to the system. Of course, dissenters had always existed. In the 1950s it was the Beat poets and artists who offered challenges to the consensus. In the

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239 Spring, *Images of American Life*, 221.
1960s, however, the sheer amount of young people in the country and the collectivism they achieved through increased college enrollment provided a nation-wide force. As argued by Gillon:

Young Americans in the 1960s were not the first to speak against the injustice and hypocrisy of their elders, but social and demographic forces provided this generation with new clout. The postwar baby boom had dramatically increased the number of college age students in America. In 1965, 41 percent of all Americans were under the age of twenty. College enrollments soared from 3.6 million in 1960 to almost 8 million in 1970. Because colleges contained the largest concentration of young people in the country, they became the seedbed of youth protest.  

Although students adopted a number of causes, they were united by the desire to expose the contradictions of the consensus—the lessons they had received throughout their youth. This point was reiterated by Gillon, who noted, “At the heart of the youth rebellion of the 1960s was a desire to challenge the established political and cultural order.” The formation of “The New Left” was a direct response to the conformist culture of the 1950s. The leading New Left organization on college campuses, the Students for a Democratic Society, had formed in 1962. The New Left and the SDS tackled a number of issues, among them poverty and racism, but the core was a rejection of the idyllic image of American society that had not proven itself viable. As stated by Gillon, “In 1963, 125 SDS members, mostly middle-class white men and women, set up chapters to organize poor whites and blacks in nine American cities. Other members traveled to Mississippi in 1964 as part of the Freedom Summer organized by the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC-144). Direct exposure to the brutality of southern justice radicalized many of the students, who

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returned to campus the following fall searching for an outlet for their fear and anger.”

It was the Berkeley Rebellion of 1964, however, that served as a watershed event in the role of college students in public activism. In October, 1964, students at the University of California at Berkeley, in an unprecedented protest, demand that the university administration lift a ban on on-campus political activism and acknowledge the rights of academic freedom and freedom of speech for themselves and their professors. The protest initiated the Free Speech Movement (FSM). As noted by Gillon, the revolt, “quickly spread to other campuses and championed many causes, from opposing dress codes to fighting tenure decisions.” The New Left and student activism never articulated a coherent alternative vision for America and they championed diverse issues including anti-imperialism, anti-capitalism, anti-war, and anti-discrimination. Yet, as stated by Gillon, “They shared a sense of anger with the existing system, but they often fought over tactics.” It is important to consider that the Berkeley rebels were students of the consensus. The central issue they were fighting against was the intellectual paternalism enforced by the consensus when they were in primary and secondary school. Not only does this issue indicate discontent with the role of the school in ideological management, but it also led educators themselves to question their role in the emergent discontent.

The Road to Critical Education

The student protests helped to unleash educators’ frustrations with the consensus. This influence was demonstrated by educators’ contributions to popular

242 Gillon, The American Paradox, 185.
243 Gillon, The American Paradox, 186.
244 Gillon, The American Paradox, 186.
periodicals. In the Summer 1966 issue of *Daedalus* devoted to the subject of Tradition and Change, Martin Meyerson in “The Ethos of the American College Student: Beyond the Protests,” identified the origins of the student movement in the oppression of the consensus culture. He argued:

The Berkeley events signified to many the end of the ‘silent generation,’ the years since World War II during which college and university students presumably viewed the American scene with little, if any, critical judgment. The students of that period were thought to be silent because of the timidity created in the time of the late Senator McCarthy or because of placid acceptance of college life as a set of rites preparatory to becoming junior organization men or suburban parents.245

Meyerson’s assertions were significant as they indicated a newfound willingness among educators to challenge the system. For instance, in an editorial for the special December 1967 issue of the *The Phi Delta Kappan* on “The Growing Dimensions of International Education,” Stanley M. Elam exhibited disapproval for the implications of the Vietnam War for American education in “The Political Threat to International Education.” In 1966, President Johnson had passed an International Education Act to improve international relations through education. By the fall of 1967, however, the Act remained unfunded by Congress. The cause of this postponement was that federal funds had been funneled from the allotted education budget to the war effort. As argued by Elam, “there is not the slightest hope that the potential of the International Education Act will be released so long as the United States spends $2 billion a month fighting in Vietnam.”246 Obstruction of the Act, according to Elam, was only one facet of the trouble the war had caused for education. He expressed concern regarding whether or not

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education for peace was actually desired by policymakers considering the ideological basis they made to justify the conflict. In this view, education for peace would contradict the reasons for U.S. intervention in Vietnam. He noted:

As a matter of fact, we might as well admit that the whole thesis of this special issue, that the dimensions of international education are growing in America, is a doubtful one. Will Russia indeed give North Vietnam any help it asks for...? Are the Chinese already sending ‘volunteers’ into the struggle as Pearl Buck has stated at Indiana University in October? If so, we are already fighting the third world war, this time without allies against the two largest nations in the world. If so, educators talking of international education as the solution to the problem of peace are like Alice in Wonderland, ‘child of the pure unclouded brow and dreaming eyes of wonder.’

In fact, according to Elam, educators had contributed to the lack of attention paid to international education. He referenced the “refreshing” and “chilling” assertions made by Fred Hechinger at the International Conference on the World Crisis in October to bolster his point. According the Hechinger, “While the popular fairy tale insists that education and knowledge will bring peace and understanding to all nations, the seasoned educator knows that much education is doing more to reinforce nationalistic hostilities than to dissolve them.” These assertions spoke to a desire among educators to change their teaching methods to implement change rather than reinforce the status quo. In arguing that teachers needed to, “slow down catastrophe and speed up education,” he contributed a critique of the Vietnam War that contradicted the noble efforts of American foreign policy fostered by the consensus. Elam argued that “The tragedy of America is that President Johnson turned from the war on poverty and ignorance at home, which he understands, to fight a people he does not understand for

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reasons that are at best doubtful.” Elam’s statements indicate disillusionment with the consensus among educators who had for so long supported an education that made them uneasy.

Professors’ support for the students was demonstrated by William Boyer in “War Education,” published in the May 1967 issue of *The Phi Delta Kappan*. Boyer, an associate professor of education at the University of Hawaii, Honolulu, first tackled the subject of nuclear armament. The undercurrent of disapproval for America’s nuclear policy was evident in his evaluation of the arms race. Boyer argued:

> We have built national policy on conventional wisdom. We first created a capacity to defend ourselves against attack. When ICBM’s with nuclear warheads made defense impossible, we changed to a strategy of offense, and counted on a balance of terror for our defense. We worked to achieve a ‘balance’ in our favor, and so effected a persistent escalation of terror. Finally the burgeoning armament on both sides produced the capacity for mutual annihilation. Yet the arms race continued and resulted in the era of overkill. We then gained national security through a policy based on the escalation of overkill.

In noting that a particular language was adopted to support this policy, Boyer noted, “Justification has been grounded in the need to defend the ‘free world.’ Such policy, based on an assumed absolute goodness of our goals, has needed no reconsideration.” In light of current circumstances, however, he argued that contradictions in the ideology of Americanism had become apparent and could no longer be ignored. While noting that “No nation easily admits that the traditional beliefs are no longer valid,” he argued that issues of life and death were at stake. In calling for revision, Boyer stated, “C. Wright Mills has pointed out that the main cause of World War III will be preparation for war. We cannot blissfully continue to ignore the

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consequences of the attitudes and beliefs that war education produces.” According to Boyer, the smaller conflicts sponsored by the United States in the Cold War, including the war in Vietnam, would produce an escalation in tension that could result in thermonuclear warfare if left unchecked.

According to Boyer, the form of military education that fostered the potential for nuclear warfare had infiltrated the schools. In acknowledging that ideological management had existed in the schools prior to the escalation of the arms race, he noted that “As American culture becomes more war-oriented, the value system of the armed forces often becomes a model for the American way of life.” Boyer argued that the new responsibility of the school, if it was to assist in peace, was to prevent the self-fulfilling prophecy of warfare as imposed by military education by turning to critical education. He argued:

Public schools are among the institutions which usually reinforce conventional, pre-atomic ‘wisdom.’ To help prepare students for the atomic age, however, they could point out that the established outlook and the mass media which usually support such an outlook are representative of a traditional point of view. The school could help students examine unconventional alternatives and compare them with established orthodoxy.

Indicating support for the initiatives of the student campaign, Boyer even asserted that if military recruiters were permitted into the schools, “Those who can explain the laws and procedures for conscientious objectors should be made equally available.” Central to his entire argument was a call for objectivity, a more balanced perspective on issues. These assessments contradicted the severe confines in which educators had operated under the consensus.

253 Boyer, “War Education,” 419.
In part, it was the direct assault on the consensus by the student movements that urged educators to adopt critical thinking as a primary function of the school. Noting that the protests neglected the complexity of domestic and international issues in favor of rebelling against the consensus, many educators promoted the use of the school in providing a critical analysis in a response to abject extremism. Exhibiting guarded support for the objectives of the student movement within this interpretation was Philip G. Altbach, a research sociologist for Harvard University’s Center for International Affairs. In “A Wide-Angle View: The Student Movement and the American University,” published in the April 1966 issue of *The Phi Delta Kappan*, he assessed the reawakening of student activism and political concern, noting that “The new left is characterized not so much by specific political programs as by a desire to work actively for social progress.”

Identifying the origins of the movement in the sanitized version of policy fostered under the assessment, Altbach referred to a “fuzziness of views” sponsored by the movements. He noted:

> Many student activists work for democratic values in the United States but fail to condemn the totalitarianism of Communist China or the Viet Cong. Part of this fuzziness stems from a reaction against the Cold War slogans and anti-Communist hysteria of the McCarthy period. The new left tends to distrust its elders, and expresses a high degree of alienation from the institutions of the political, social, and educational establishments. One of the slogans of the Berkeley revolt was ‘never trust anyone over 30’—indicating that age necessitates compromise.

Having emphasized the contention that the student activism was a direct challenge to the forced consensus of the previous decade, Altbach implored educators to take these changes into consideration. He continued:

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Despite its shortcomings and failures, the new student generation has made a more substantial impact on its environment and on American higher education than any group of American students since the volatile 1930’s. Professors and administrators may not always approve of the tactics or goals of the new student movement, but they cannot overlook the new trends on the campus. If the generational and political gaps between administrator, teacher, and student can be bridged, a vital source of energy as well as insight into important educational and social issues may be constructively used.\footnote{260}

The insistence that professors allow for the critical perspective to drive higher education additionally influenced public schools at the primary level. This stimulus was reflected by Gerard Duffy’s “Controversy in the Classroom,” in the May 1968 issue of The History Teacher. The perspective held by Duffy, a high school teacher of English and History for the Hawthorne, New York school system, was made clear through the article’s introduction: “Confronted by the new activism of many of his students, the history teacher may well hesitate about what course to take. For this author, however, there is no choice but to take the class boldly into the arena.”\footnote{261} Articulating his appeal within the framework of constraints placed on the academic freedom of educators, Duffy listed several examples of these restrictions:

A Negro high school teacher in East Orange, N.J., is removed as student council advisor for supervising the reading of allegedly ‘provocative’ Negro poetry. The school superintendents of four large cities, including New York, back the right of high school students to wear their hair long. A Las Vegas teacher is ousted from the teachers union and threatened with loss of job after refusing to salute the Flag in protest over the government’s Vietnam policy. A Midwestern teacher’s contract is not renewed when he returns from an anti-war rally in New York. In Chicago, when ladies from Women Strike For Peace visit Bowen High School to advise students on applying for draft exemption, they are called traitors and their literature is burned. The House Un-American Activities Committee subpoenas membership lists of campus groups opposing the Vietnam war at the University of Michigan and UCLA. A teacher in Vermont is dismissed after participating in civil rights activities and criticism of local educational policies.\footnote{262}

\footnote{261} Gerard Duffy, “Controversy in the Classroom,” The History Teacher, 1, No. 4 (May, 1968): 33.
\footnote{262} Duffy, “Controversy in the Classroom,” 33.
In reiterating the contention that the modern circumstances could no longer be avoided, he asserted that “Issues like these have captivated our younger generation. The apathetic generation of a decade ago is already a distant memory. We are in the midst, for better or worse, of the thoughtful generation, a generation led by activists who have taken to the streets to protest the hypocrisies and empty values of the world handed down to them by their parents.”

In assessing the current generation, Duffy noted, “peace, drugs, race, academic freedom, the quality rather than the glittering quantity of American society are the heart of the matter; they are ‘what it’s all about.’” The role of American education in the face of such activism, according to Duffy, was to respond to unrest through critical education—addressing controversy and hypocrisy and fostering analytical assessment. In arguing that educators need to address all issues currently facing students, ranging from conformity to LSD, Duffy stated, “Education, by definition, guides and satisfies the inquiring mind, and pursues truth wherever it may lead.”

Duffy recognized that engaging these issues would be controversial. In providing some examples he noted:

Should the history teacher move his class beyond the interpretation of history and question the morality of war, for instance? Should he move into such areas as the ethics and legality of the Vietnam situation? Should the credibility gap be discussed? If we take our role seriously as probers of humanity, we have no choice but to open up these areas for discussion. If we are truly educators, we must include in our presentations the fact that our President lied during the U-2 Affair and the Bay of Pigs invasion, for instance, and if this prompts students to complain that they can never be certain that they are hearing the truth from the government, is this not a sound conclusion?

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263 Duffy, “Controversy in the Classroom,” 34.
264 Duffy, “Controversy in the Classroom,” 34.
265 Duffy, “Controversy in the Classroom,” 34.
266 Duffy, “Controversy in the Classroom,” 34-35.
In a final assertion concerning the necessity of critical education, Duffy referenced the stifling confines educators had previously faced. He argued that “The bold approach to our vital problems, unfettered by fear of pressure from parents or administrators, open-minded and forever searching, should apply to all of these problems—to the morality of war and discrimination, to anti-Semitism, the United Nations, loyalty oaths, demonstrations, civil liberties, strikes by teachers, middle-class status-seeking, social climbing and hypocrisy.”

A Change in Film Content

1961-1965 witnessed the radicalization of the civil rights movement, the first U.S. bombings of North Vietnam, the landing of the first Marines in South Vietnam, and the first antinuclear and antiwar marches on Washington, D.C. By 1965 fractures in the Cold War consensus could no longer be ignored. The producers of instructional films, undoubtedly influenced by the change in the cultural atmosphere, rejected controversial topics related to Cold War issues in favor of less politically charged topics. Indeed, by 1966, as noted by Ken Smith in Mental Hygiene, it was drug and driver-safety films that “would carry the torch of social engineering into the next decade.” These films included such titles as Alcohol is Dynamite, Highways of Agony, Keep Off the Grass, Narcotics: Pit of Despair, and Red Asphalt. In a particularly astute assessment of the influence of the dismantled consensus on the instructional film industry he continued, noting that national movements had, “chipped away at the fixed social order championed in mental hygiene films. Absolutes were no longer absolute; society

267 Duffy, “Controversy in the Classroom,” 35.
became divided, factioned, factioned. The concept of change took root."\(^{269}\) In arguing that young people of the 1960s wanted visual education to mimic the reality sponsored by television news Smith argues that "No physical obstacle prevented mental hygiene films from making this change...But there was a philosophical roadblock: mental hygiene films engineered opinion; they did not objectively report it."\(^{270}\) The ideological basis on which Cold War instructional films had gained their prominence had difficulty adjusting to the new demands. Much of this was due to the fact that their societal importance had diminished. This shift was reflected in part by the demise or reconfiguration of the most popular educational journals on instructional films: *Educational Screen* and *See and Hear*. In 1956, *Educational Screen* merged with *Audio-visual Guide* to form *Educational Screen & Audio-visual Guide*; this publication was disbanded in 1971. *See and Hear* was absorbed by *Business Screen Magazine*, notable for its lack of concern for education in favor of advertising, in 1954. By 1970 “mental hygiene” films, including those concerning Cold War topics, had all but disappeared.\(^{271}\)

**The Circle Completed**

Initial acceptance for the role of the school in ideological management was motivated by valid concerns regarding universal changes to the modern world. The experience with Nazi indoctrination during the Second World War elicited fear regarding the potential use of ideology for nefarious means. The emergence of the Soviet Union

\(^{269}\) Smith, *Mental Hygiene*, 237.
\(^{270}\) Smith, *Mental Hygiene*, 237.
\(^{271}\) Smith, *Mental Hygiene*, 238.
as a superpower similarly adhering to a worldview that divided the world into warring
camps presented a threat to international stability. The postwar hegemony of the United
States encouraged the adoption of a propaganda campaign directed at preventing
domination by a system deemed dangerous and expansive.

The imbedding of propaganda in education, however, increasingly obscured the
division between fact and speculation and fostered serious misinterpretations of history,
current affairs, and national interest for a generation of students. The presence of a
critical subset of educators recognized these repercussions and made their unease with
the use of the school in ideological persuasion known. Despite their concern regarding
the accumulative gap between educational propaganda and critical thinking, the power
of the Cold War consensus overshadowed this perspective.

Much of this propaganda campaign relied on the medium of instructional films,
which were used in schools nationwide. Although their contribution to the Cold War
consensus is today minimized, it is important to recognize that these films were
considered acceptable tools of instruction. As stated by Smith, “To view them solely as
a source of cheap laughs is, frankly, to miss most of the reason they’re interesting.”

These films were viewed by millions of schoolchildren during the early Cold War period.
Serving as a conduit for Cold War propaganda they offered a warped interpretation of
American life. The perverted explanation of domestic affairs and international events
imposed upon children by instructional films are disturbing. If any good can be found
from this kind of institutionalized propaganda, it is that those same children grew up to
participate in the student movements of the 1960s. Moreover, for those educators who
had offered critiques of the method of instruction in the 1950s, the 1960s provided them

272 Smith, Mental Hygiene, 12.
with the opportunity to spread the message of critical education. The illusory national consensus could no longer channel or contain dissenting voices by the mid-1960s. Bolstered by the student movements, educators changed course and adopted critical education over ideological management as the primary concern of the public school.
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