They claim that since what matters about schools is not what they teach but whom they select, changes in schools should be interpreted as consequences of groups' efforts to gain or reinforce their hold over educational standards. Radical school critics go even further, emphasizing the role of education in training and disciplining an urban proletariat (Katz, 1971; Bowles and Gintis, 1976). They argue that education reinforces social inequality by legitimating and strengthening class domination. Educational change represents the outcome of class conflict, and the usual outcome is more effective if more subtle forms of domination. Finally, some claim that schools primarily express or inculcate cultural values (Durkheim, 1922; Mead, 1951; Meyer, 1977). Conflicts in cultural style among status, class, or ethnic groups show up as conflicts over what schools should teach, quite independent of the effects of schooling on the fate of individuals or groups.

In the face of these disagreements, how can we understand the origins and consequences of the free school movement? How did the radical but often short-lived educational experiments of the late 1960s and early 1970s reflect the technical demands of a modern economy, changes in class structure, conflict among social groups, and changes in cultural values? There are three plausible models for explaining why alternative schools proliferated in the 1960s and 1970s: "rebellion cooptation," "educational upgrading," and "postindustrialism." The models are not mutually exclusive and may even be complementary, emphasizing different aspects of the free school phenomenon. Each describes a correspondence between alternative education and some aspect of modern society. But to evaluate these models requires an analysis of group interests and group conflict: discovering who supported free schools and why reveals their broader sociological significance. Where different interests have converged or compromised, elements of all three models may contribute to understanding the final outcome. The models can be described briefly as follows:

*The rebellion cooptation model.* According to this model, alternative schools are a response to disorder in the schools and to demands for educational equality. Student rebels, students who present discipline problems, and disgruntled racial and ethnic minorities are channeled into alternative schools where, if they cannot be brought into the traditional system of control, they will at least not disrupt school for everyone else. Alternative schools deflect demands for equal educational opportunity by shunting the educationally disadvantaged into special schools where their poor skills will not be evident. Demands for an ethnically relevant education contribute to a more insidious form of tracking, leaving disadvantaged groups with the symbolic satisfactions of ethnic pride to compensate for the absence of real educational change.

*The educational upgrading model.* This model postulates continuity between the academic upgrading of elementary and secondary education following the Sputnik panic of the 1950s and the development of alternative schools. Alternative schools represent not a rebellion against academic values but the extension of ideals of independent inquiry, discovery method, and independent thinking from colleges and universities down into secondary and elementary education. Free school learning is an extreme form of the kinds of self-reliant learning promoted by university-developed teaching methods such as PSSC physics and the "new math."



*The postindustrial model.* In this view, alternative education is a response to the demands of a modern economy. In rebellion against the traditional culture of industrial society, alternative schools embody fundamentally new forms of organization and experience. These experiments in building a new social order on a small scale are responses to changing occupational demands in the most advanced, innovative, technologically complex sectors of the economy; these changing economic forces in turn create new groups and new values which radically challenge traditional social forms.

### The Rebellion Cooptation Model

It is always difficult to evaluate arguments that social reforms—like welfare programs (Piven and Cloward, 1971) or trustbusting (Kolko, 1967)—coopt discontent and stabilize the social order rather than produce fundamental change. Substantial pressure for change may be required to extract even the changes labeled cooptative, and reforms that deflect further pressures for change may nonetheless be substantial innovations (see the analysis in Block, 1977). But the reform-versus-revolution controversy aside, the rebellion cooptation model focuses attention on two important questions: what were the sources of discontent that led to demands for educational change in the 1960s? and why did some school administrators, along with national and local elites, take up the cause of school reform? The cooptation model can also lead us to ask what fundamental changes, if any, resulted from a movement that originally aspired to transform American education and ultimately American society.

There are three overlapping strands to the cooptation argument. One says that even what look like liberating or egalitarian reforms are in fact motivated by the needs of dominant groups (capitalists for Marxist critics like Bowles and Gintis [1976] and a variety of social elites and educational professionals for revisionist historians like Katz [1968]) to discipline and control the working class. A second line of argument is that even what start out as idealistic programs for reform are selectively implemented so that only those reforms that serve, or at least do not threaten, ruling-class interests are implemented (Bowles and Gintis, 1976). Finally, the most diffuse yet far-reaching criticism is that since schooling alone cannot change a class-stratified society, the focus on educational reform is itself a form of cooptation, diverting attention from the more profound need for political and economic transformation (Bowles and Gintis, 1976).

The cooptation theorists argue that the debate between freedom and

control in schools does not change the basic functions of schooling: social control and class domination. In the sobering view of revisionist historians of education (Katz, 1968; Lazerson, 1971; Karier, Violas, and Spring, 1973), if the child-centered-education movement of the present period is anything like the others in American history it will at best produce limited, class-stratified reform and at worst allow the educational system to absorb and control a new wave of disruptive immigrants (this time largely internal migrants—blacks coming North) while defusing incipient class conflict. As one critic summarizes the case,

> Through the reforms of the 1840s, Progressivism, and Rickoverism run debates between the hard and the soft liners. These debates pass for our educational reform history. However, none of these reform movements has disturbed the essentially unequal nature of American education; in fact, each in its way has contributed to the perpetuation of this inequality. Educational reform and [reformers] are intimately related to social control. They come along at times when society is experiencing unrest; the specific reforms lead to a lessening of fundamental tensions in the society and re-establishment of greater equilibrium. (Friedman, n.d.:18)

It has been claimed that even the reforms of the early twentieth-century Progressive educators, whose aspirations most closely resembled those of the modern free school movement, were selectively implemented so that in the end they reinforced stratification and created more subtle and effective means of social control (Bowles and Gintis, 1976). Progressivism ushered in "a decisive shift toward elite control of the schools" (p. 189) and new forms of educational stratification such as tracking and vocational education. The meaning of Progressive reforms was subverted as education "tailored to the 'needs of the child' " (p. 192) became separate and unequal education for children from different backgrounds. The liberating aspirations of Progressive reformers were doomed: "Idealistic Progressives worked in vain for a humanistic and egalitarian education. More in tune with immediate economic realities, the bureaucratization, tracking, and test-orientation of the school system proceeded smoothly, promoted by seed money from large private foundations, articulated by social scientists at prestigious schools of education, and enthusiastically implemented by business-controlled local school boards" (p. 200). No reforms could survive unless they "contributed to—or at least did not contradict—the role of the school in reproducing the class system and extending the capitalist mode of production" (p. 199).

All three versions of the rebellion cooptation model can be and have been extended to explain the contemporary free school movement, beginning with the claim that dislocations in contemporary capitalism have churned up a new group of troublemakers who cannot be assimilated within the traditional educational system. "The children of the black poor and the youth of the white well-to-do: in the 1960s they emerge as twin threats to social tranquility. Like the immigrants before them, they dress, talk, and act in unfamiliar and threatening ways. So, just as in the earlier periods surveyed thus far, educational reform is used once again to oil up the mechanism of social control" (Friedman, n.d.:22).



*Pacifying Dissidents*

The rebellion cooptation model seems to explain why Berkeley's school board and some school administrators tolerated and then advocated alternative schools. Free schools could isolate and pacify dissidents, channeling their energies away from the regular schools. The origins of Community High School and Other Ways, the first two alternative schools in Berkeley, are particularly instructive. Other Ways grew out of an after-school seminar for dissident teachers, held by Herbert Kohl in the building that had been used as headquarters for Berkeley's school integration drive. Community High School, similarly, was begun by a group of young teachers dissatisfied with the regular high school. Many were political radicals or innovative teachers who had been in conflict with their departments in Berkeley High School. Others had been active in forming a teacher's union to press for changes in the school as a whole. These teachers joined with increasingly defiant, countercultural, or politicized students to press the high school toward change. Some radical students had started an underground newspaper and were testing school rules about protest, and other "alienated" students, both black and white, had begun cutting classes and skipping school in record numbers. The attendance crisis weakened the control of the school over its students at the same time that violence and disruption were increasing within the integrated high school. Berkeley's high school was certainly ripe for cooptation. (See chapter 2 for a more detailed history of Berkeley's experimental schools; and see Sibley, 1972; Golden, 1975; Institute for Scientific Analysis, 1976; Cohen, 1978.) Alternative schools could contain the disease of rebellion by giving the rebels what they wanted for themselves, while quarantining them to prevent further contamination of others.

The cooptation model also seems to explain the school system's response to minority, especially black, parents and students. Despite Berkeley's early school integration, black children still lagged far behind whites in academic achievement. Black parents and educators were beginning to demand that the promise of integration—equal education—be fulfilled. With full integration and the abolition of tracking in the high school, there was also increased concern among white parents and teachers about violence and racial conflict in the schools. The critical observer might say that privileged white parents wanted a more separate, special education for their children and that Berkeley's alternative schools satisfied this demand by abandoning the democratic promise of the integrated, comprehensive high school Berkeley had just established.

Finally, the alternative schools could be used directly to buy off sources of discontent within the minority community. The alternative schools, especially after an infusion of foundation and federal money, allowed Berkeley to hire a whole generation of minority educators without taking jobs from whites. To satisfy the most politically conscious students, some separatist alternative schools provided a curriculum oriented specifically toward the cultural nationalism of blacks and other minorities, while in the intimate atmosphere of other integrated alternative schools, racial tensions could be reduced.

The social-control argument in the cooptation model, then, makes sense of some aspects of the free school movement in Berkeley: the period produced particularly threatening forms of discontent among black students and parents, and ethnically separate schools were regarded as an adequate remedy. It also accounts in part for why the Berkeley school district grasped at alternative schooling as a way of siphoning off disruptive radicals among both teachers and students. What this version of the cooptation model makes less clear is why elite white students and parents and a group of young, liberal teachers began to demand changes in the schools during the late 1960s, and in what way the kinds of alternative schools Berkeley and other communities created actually served to uphold or extend capitalist social control.

*Containing Reform*

The "selective implementation" aspect of the cooptation model provides an explanation for the limited, "experimental" thrust of the educational reforms of the 1960s and 1970s. At both federal and foundation levels, interest in alternative schools was in part a confession of helplessness. All were agreed that American education had failed to close the gap between rich and poor or to provide a truly liberating education for anyone. Yet a sure recipe or even plausible proposals for educational change remained elusive. The Ford Foundation (1974), an early and generous supporter of alternative schools, explained its support as owing in part to the failure of earlier efforts at reform:

> In the 1960s the federal government, private foundations, corporations, and community groups poured massive amounts of money and energy into efforts to change the public school system. The gloomy statistics documenting the shortcomings of public schools in the education of minority students highlighted the poor fit between school offerings and the needs and goals of many students.
>
> These large-scale efforts failed to produce large-scale changes, partly because it is so difficult to make a dent in the public school system. It bends, absorbs, and springs back into its original form. (p. 4)

At the federal level also, "alternatives" were a politically palatable, nonthreatening way of introducing piecemeal educational change. Alternative



schools have the ring of pluralist choice, not of radical change. They are designed to give each group of parents and teachers schooling appropriate to their needs, from the traditional "three Rs" to open classrooms (see the rationale in Fantini, 1978).

Dennis Cohen's case study (1978) of alternative education in Berkeley provides additional support for a cooptation view of the implementation of educational reform. Examining the way federally funded alternatives were established in Berkeley, Cohen argues first that the alternatives were so designed as not to challenge the basically hierarchical, bureaucratic, and profession-dominated pattern of school control in Berkeley. Although Berkeley's school officials were originally willing to shelter quite radical educational alternatives under the bureaucratic umbrella of the public schools (they ranged from militant black schools, to totally libertarian free schools, to parent-controlled schools), the alternatives were never given an autonomous organizational or political base and were never allowed to challenge the control of the professional administrators who ran the Berkeley schools (pp. 232-242).

Selective implementation can also be seen in the way educational radicalism was rechanneled by the influx of federal and foundation money, though not, perhaps, in quite the way the cooptation model would predict. Berkeley's alternative schools grew originally out of a kind of grass-roots organizing among largely white middle-class students and parents, but the city's application for federal funding brought new constituencies into the educational reform movement. This development had two effects. First, the demands of obtaining federal funding absorbed much of the time and energy of the original reformers and simultaneously cut them off from direct dependence on their original parent-student constituency. The necessity of their organizers' writing proposals, designing evaluation schemes, and preparing progress reports to fulfill federal requirements reoriented the original alternatives away from their community base. Furthermore, the schools' perceived source of support shifted away from the community. All alternative organizations that seek outside funding risk this sort of cooptation: they become less politically responsive as they become more financially secure (Rothschild-Whitt, 1977).

Second, federal and foundation support served to redirect a largely middle-class educational rebellion into new programs designed to meet the special needs of lower-class and minority students. Like the private free schools springing up around the country, Berkeley's original public alternative schools were primarily oriented toward a radical restructuring of classroom experience—toward dismantling the authority relationship between teachers and students and making education relevant to students' real-life experiences. But the additional alternatives created under Berkeley's Experimental Schools Project were responsive to a broader constituency—in particular, to minority parents, students, and teachers. The elitist

radicalism of the original alternatives was compromised in favor of reforms more responsive to minority interests: funding and legitimating of ethnically oriented education and the creation of a few radical schools that promoted new visions of ethnic pride and political militancy (although these more radical ethnic separatist schools were, perhaps predictably, short-lived). Thus, in an ironic way, the alliance of two constituencies and their two educational programs under the heading of alternative education may have undercut the radical thrust of each.

*Stabilizing Capitalism*

The third form of the cooptation model is almost certainly true but nonetheless not very useful in explaining the radical school reform of the recent period. Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis (1976) finally condemn contemporary school reform not because it furthers capitalist social control directly but because it fails to overthrow the capitalist order. They find that schooling coopts real discontent by perpetuating the myth that educational change can in itself solve deeper social problems.

> The social problems to which these reforms are addressed have their roots not primarily in the school system itself, but rather in the normal functioning of the economic system. Educational alternatives which fail to address this basic fact join a club of venerable lineage: the legion of school reforms which, at times against the better intentions of its leading proponents, have served to deflect discontent, depoliticize social distress, and thereby have helped to stabilize the prevailing structures of social privilege. (pp. 245-246)

A truly progressive program of educational reform "would have as its overriding objective the ultimate dismantling of the capitalist system and its replacement by a more progressive social order" (p. 246). In this sense school reform, except as part of a revolutionary socialist movement, always constitutes cooptation because it continues to legitimate political and economic inequality through the liberal myth of open opportunity.

The rebellion cooptation model offers a persuasive description of the limits of educational reform. Schools are, in fact, tied to the social and economic structure of the larger society, and they are unlikely to undergo dramatic changes independent of changing demands from specific social and economic groups. Furthermore, although school reforms may often be initiated by idealists who begin with only a vision of free, happy, self-actualized children, no reform can proceed very far if it seriously threatens the interests of powerful groups in American society—either entrenched school bureaucrats, local elites, or capitalist owners and managers.

Where the cooptation model fails is in its explanation of the *sources* of contemporary dissent. If we agree that the promise briefly offered to poor and minority students of a new attack on inequality in American life was a false one, quickly withdrawn, we must nonetheless ask what the initial impetus was for the educational reforms of the 1960s and 1970s. If these reforms were designed to solve new problems of social control in contemporary capitalism, we have yet to know why the reforms took the shape they did, whom they were supposed to control, and how. Although cooptation may explain why school districts, foundations, and the federal government accepted some reforms on a limited "experimental" basis, and why some of those reforms were allowed to die after a brief trial, the cooptation model still does not account for the appeal of free schools to their major proponents—the white upper-middle class. Of course, some parents wanted to "coopt" their rebellious children, and school districts wanted to "coopt" dissatisfied parents, students, and teachers; white liberals may have tried to "coopt" black demands by offering ethnic alternative schools. But all this still begs the question of why the free school ideology—its radical attack on authority—had such appeal to white liberal students and teachers, and to many parents. To understand the upsurge of free school ideology and practice in the educated middle and upper-middle classes, we must look beyond the cooptation model of school reform.[1]



### The Educational Upgrading Model

In some ways free schools resemble anarchist communes. Looked at from a slightly different perspective, however, they appear like colleges, graduate schools, or research institutes. It is possible to interpret free school pedagogy as training youngsters in the habits of independent inquiry, originality, and self-motivation that characterize the upper reaches of the academic system. Alternative education, rather than representing a rebellion against established educational forms, may simply be an extension of the styles and values of the universities into the elementary and secondary schools.

The comparison of free schools with graduate schools is not as farfetched as it may sound. In *The Academic Revolution,* Christopher Jencks and David Riesman (1968:510) conclude that "the academic profession increasingly determines the character of undergraduate education in America.

1. Marxist theorists do, of course, offer a theory of the origins of demands for change. They explain the *sources* (rather than the outcomes) of reform by a theory of perpetual rebellion. During every stage of capitalist development there are groups who are actually or potentially in rebellion; they resist capitalist control and threaten the stability of the capitalist order. Such a model does not seem to apply as satisfactorily to the educated upper-middle class of the 1960s as it does to groups of unassimilated immigrants in the 1850s or socialist workers in the 1920s. But Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis (1976) explain the university student movement and free school radicalism as rebellion by representatives of an increasingly proletarianized white-collar class, resisting its loss of elite status and traditional petty bourgeois independence under advanced capitalism. This model grounds the New Left and the free school movement in social change by including its elite members in a new image of an oppressed proletariat.

Academicians today decide what a student ought to know, how he should be taught it, and who can teach it to him. Not only that—their standards increasingly determine which students attend which colleges, who feels competent once he arrives, and how much time he has for non-academic activities." As the values of the academic profession increasingly dominate education in America, its model of education—the model of the research-oriented graduate school—becomes the model for college education everywhere, replacing older definitions of colleges as parochial, religious, social, or vocational organizations. Academic educational values also penetrate downward, as Jencks and Riesman point out, into secondary and elementary education.

Major elements of the academic model of education are independent inquiry, research productivity, and originality. Although Jencks and Riesman and others point out that the definition of knowledge accepted by the academic profession is a narrow one and that emphasis on quantity of publications and on empirically verifiable knowledge can constrict real originality, the independent research scholar is nonetheless the ideal toward which the "academic revolution" increasingly pushes faculty, graduate students, and undergraduates.

In some respects alternative school education provides still earlier preparation for independent research. First, of course, free schools encourage students to develop autonomous interests with which to motivate their work. It can be argued that it is primarily by failing to encourage independent work that traditional education maladapts students for the demands made on them at the top levels of the educational system. Indeed, some training in autonomy—in the ability to maintain sustained interest in one's work without external prodding—may be the major new skill required by those proceeding from the relatively structured education of high school and college to the demands of research-oriented academic training.

Furthermore, because free school education relies on students' interests rather than on a structured curriculum, students are encouraged to do independent projects, to follow their specialized interests as far as they can. In free schools, even small children become specialists. They study a particular tribe of Indians and are encouraged when they become more interested to pursue their own research into the subject. Whereas traditional education shows a concern for balanced coverage of many subjects, free schools encourage children to study one or two things in depth and to learn to pursue a single interest until it is exhausted. So, for example, at Group High the students who were most admired were those who had already learned the work patterns of academics—to pick an area of interest, specialize, and become expert in that area. Although free schools lack the emphasis on discipline, deadlines, and productivity that are also very much a part of academic life, one might say that they attack the particular set of trained incapacities that handicap many students and teachers at the top of the



academic system. An emphasis on autonomous work, on pursuing one's own interests, and on curiosity and exploration fits in well with the model of educational success promoted and increasingly demanded of graduates and undergraduates throughout the academic system.

Further support for the educational upgrading model comes from parallels between alternative schools and other attempts to improve traditional education. As academics in universities have turned their attention to secondary and elementary education, they have introduced new teaching techniques that rely on self-directed work, discovery of basic principles through induction, and the stimulation of students' curiosity. PSSC physics, the "new math," and the new biology reject rote learning and emphasis on known facts in favor of teaching basic principles of science through the process of discovery. Although new pedagogical methods based on inquiry and exploration have flourished most in natural science teaching for both elementary and secondary schools, there have been attempts, through such devices as games and inductive learning, to mimic academic research styles even in teaching social sciences.

Still more support comes from a look at the backgrounds and expectations of students in free schools. As I have pointed out, Group High's students were largely from well-educated, university-oriented families, and their parents placed tremendous value on independent exploration and individual creativity. Furthermore, although many of these students rejected the idea of going to college right away, those who wanted to go found colleges receptive. The independence, autonomy, and intellectual curiosity students could claim to have learned at Group High were precisely the values good colleges looked for in their students.

The academic upgrading model accounts for some features of the pedagogy and values of alternative schooling, and it also seems to explain some aspects of the social origins of the free school movement that were anomalies for the cooptation model. I have pointed out repeatedly that although free schools were proffered as solutions to the problems of working-class and minority students, the real enthusiasts of the free school cause were members of the educated middle and upper-middle class, precisely those students who might be headed for academic or professional careers requiring the kinds of skills free schools supplied. In addition, free schools, as we saw in the case of the Berkeley alternative schools, were promoted by a small but elite minority within the teaching profession itself.

In Berkeley it was a seminar at the university's school of education that led to the formation of the group of teachers who established Community High School. Just as nationally much of the political and lifestyle radicalism of the 1960s had begun at the colleges, so it was those Berkeley teachers most caught up in the ferment of the nearby university campus who rebelled against traditional educational approaches and, attracted by liberal currents in the broader intellectual community, pressed for changes within the public

schools. Not only were teachers in the original cohort who founded Berkeley's first alternative schools likely to be young and liberal, but they were also generally better trained academically than most public school teachers. This founding group of teachers tended to have master's degrees in their major academic fields as well as the education courses necessary for teaching credentials. Most did not envision teaching as a lifetime career. Teaching was important to them because it was part of a larger social and political battle, but when that battle subsided these free school teachers went on to careers in art, political organizing, or psychology, or went back to school to prepare for roles as social innovators in other fields.

Brian McCauley, Sanford Dornbusch, and W. Richard Scott (1972) compared the backgrounds and training of one hundred teachers in twenty-four Bay Area alternative schools with those of one hundred teachers from five of the area's public schools. Although the alternative school teachers (disproportionately young and male) were paid considerably less and a substantial proportion (26 percent) had dropped out of college, nearly as many had advanced degrees as teachers in the public schools, and "fifty-six percent of the respondents in alternative schools had attended prestigious institutions, whereas only 19 percent of the public school sample had done so" (p. 35). These findings are supported by Joyce Rothschild-Whitt's data (1977:12-13) on the remarkably privileged backgrounds of the alternative organization members (including free school teachers) she studied.

Thus the academic upgrading model might account for why a new group of young teachers fresh from college and graduate school tried to inject into their own teaching some of the values transmitted to them by elite colleges and universities. Academic upgrading might also explain why some elite educational specialists—like those at the Ford Foundation or the U.S. Office of Education—originally supported alternative education. Although free schools claimed to be radical experiments, they in fact embodied elements of intellectual attitudes and work styles that were pervasive in the most prestigious sectors of the academic world. Parents of many free school students were university-oriented professional, technical, or intellectual workers whose own values were compatible with the values of radical free school teachers and students. Creativity, autonomy, and freedom in intellectual pursuits were more in tune with academic values than was the routine pedagogy of the traditional schools.

The academic upgrading model, of course, does not deny group conflict, and it may even overlap at points with a cooptation model. But if academic upgrading, rather than social control, has been the force behind educational reform, then different groups will be identified as the important combatants in recent educational battles. Instead of conflict between capitalists and workers (even proletarianized white-collar workers), the academic upgrading model focuses on struggles among different factions of the educational establishment, and among different consumers of the services schools provide. Middle-class parents who want to prepare their children for college and graduate school support reforms that are resisted by the more traditional educational bureaucracy in local school districts and by lower-middle-class and working-class parents. But the more elite educators see entrenched teacher and administrative interests as a barrier to their progress in upgrading their schools to make them more like elite colleges and universities. Thus the Ford Foundation and some "enlightened" federal officials entered the battle on the side of innovative school administrators like those in the Berkeley school district. In less progressive school districts, where public schools were more resistant to change, foundations supported private alternative schools so as to press school districts toward change (Fantini, 1974).



There is convergence between this group-conflict version of the academic upgrading model of alternative education and the cooptation model. What constitutes academic upgrading for upper-middle-class students is nothing of the sort for students who are not likely to go to college. Learning autonomy, curiosity, and self-expression is beneficial for studnets who will move into worlds where such traits are rewarded. For other students, learning confidence or creativity might be life-enhancing but will not contribute to economic or even academic success (see the discussion of these issues in chapter 6). What improves the career opportunities and life chances of upper-middle-class students may hurt students from poorer backgrounds who would do better to master basic skills that show up on standard achievement tests and provide entrée to upper-working-class and lower-middle-class jobs. Academic upgrading can thus be seen as a response to the interests of elites, albeit liberal and educated ones, rather than to the interests of broader lower-middle-class and working-class groups.[2] By forging a temporary alliance with some members of minority groups, members of the educated upper-middle class were able to create support for their educational aspirations within the public schools.

For all that it does explain, however, the academic upgrading model fails to locate the free school movement in a broader political context. It does not show how free schools were linked to the political radicalism of the New Left, to the broader counterculture, and to revolts by young professionals

2. Some early free school proponents were insensitive to these issues. Herbert Kohl's account of *36 Children* (1967) suggests that his educational reforms were as much solutions for his own problems and the problems of people like him as for the problems of his pupils. (He had spent "several years at graduate school as a Ph.D. candidate in philosophy before discovering that for all my love of scholarship I was too restless to be a good scholar" [p. 58]). Kohl reports that he taught his ghetto students Greek myths, free verse, and artistic self-expression (as well as more practical skills such as test-taking). He loved the children and encouraged them to like themselves. But his hatred of classroom routine and his distaste for the one "tense and ambitious" pupil who finally made it to college (p. 218) indicate very little sympathy for the ordinary benefits of middle-class life to which some of his students may have aspired.

against traditional professional roles. In addition, "academic upgrading" hardly explains the radical passion of the free school movement, the degree to which its participants envisioned it as the antithesis of everything the traditional academic system represented. Until we can understand a radicalism of the privileged that called for the destruction of traditional structures of hierarchy and inequality while it implicitly affirmed many elite values in spite of itself, we shall not have satisfactorily explained the free school movement. The search for such an explanation must lead beyond the schools to the economic and social relations of advanced capitalist societies.

### The Postindustrial Model

According to the postindustrial model, alternative schools signal the emergence of a new stratum, with its own bases of cultural and political cohesion, within the technical and professional elite. Although the term *postindustrial* can be misleading (when it is taken to imply a society that has dispensed with industrial capitalism), it does point to the importance of a new group of professional, technical, and managerial workers who are to be found in the most innovative, fastest-growing sectors of the modern economy and the state. The occupations of this elite increasingly require innovation and flexibility, which place special burdens on both individuals and organizations. A stratum of society whose power rests on knowledge, innovation, and organizational skills has been making new cultural and political demands, many of which have found expression in the free school movement.[3]

But the postindustrial model implies more than a simple shift in the education or skills of the work force in response to changing demands of the economy. In fact, postindustrialism manifested itself in the radical student movement, a leftward shift in the political attitudes of educated elites, the personal and social experimentation of the counterculture, and a revolt by young professionals against hierarchy and professional dominance. Free schools grew out of these diverse social movements, and cannot be adequately understood without a broader analysis of contemporary social and

3. While non-Marxist social theorists have made premature announcements of the impending arrival of complete postindustrial society (Bell, 1973), Marxists and neo-Marxists have wrestled with the theoretical puzzle of a thriving middle class in contemporary capitalism. Marxist theorists have attempted, with varying degrees of success, to force this middle class into one of the traditional Marxist class categories: declining petty bourgeoisie, "new working class," or simply managerial arm of the bourgeoisie (Mills, 1951; Gorz, 1964; Mallet, 1975; Wright, 1978). But recently Barbara and John Ehrenreich (1977a, 1977b) have proposed a theory of the "professional-managerial class." Although the Ehrenreichs underestimate the importance of cultural style and work experience in shaping the values of this new stratum—and overestimate the extent to which the professional-managerial class is defined by its role in controlling the working class—they have begun to explain the "radicalism of the privileged" that surfaced in the New Left and the counterculture of the 1960s and 1970s.



economic change. These movements expressed the rising political aspirations and the distinctive social values of the postindustrial stratum. In the 1960s this stratum began to demand greater power and influence, but it also began to develop autonomous cultural and organizational forms that reflected its special occupational orientation.

Alternative organizations such as free schools, communes, and radical professional collectives are not themselves the vanguard of either economic or political change. Rather, they are experiments in new cultural or organizational patterns corresponding to the changing experience of a new stratum. Thus free schools do not just train young people in the skills required by an advanced economy; they create new styles of social organization and cultural meaning that go beyond the economic and technical changes that originally produced them. In particular, they give distinctive cultural and political form to the aspirations of a new stratum of professional, technical, and administrative workers.

John Kenneth Galbraith (1967) has made the most straightforward case for the rising power of knowledge elites. Using Marxian imagery, he sees a class emerging whose power is based on a new mode of production. In each era, Galbraith argues, that class supplying the factor of production in shortest supply, the one that makes other factors productive, becomes dominant. In feudal societies land is the crucial factor of production and landholders are the dominant class; capitalists are the dominant class in industrial societies; in modern technocratic societies, those who control the production and application of knowledge—the "technocrats"—are the dominant class. A new mode of production makes knowledge, innovation, and planning the crucial inputs to production, and makes those who control knowledge the ruling class.

Daniel Bell (1973) also describes a new class: a knowledge class. He cites the exponential growth in knowledge production and the enormous increase in productivity of knowledge as evidence for the existence of a postindustrial society: "The postindustrial society, it is clear, is a knowledge society in a double sense: first, the sources of innovation are increasingly derivative from research and development (and more directly, there is a new relation between science and technology because of the centrality of *theoretical* knowledge); second, the weight of the society—measured by a larger proportion of Gross National Product and a larger share of employment—is increasingly in the knowledge field" (p. 212). Like Galbraith, Bell argues that "knowledge and technology have become the central resources of the society" (p. 263) and that a new class based on knowledge is growing in numbers and influence. The increasing strength of this class is to be estimated by looking at the number of trained scientists and researchers, the levels of employment in various sectors of the technological economy, and the proportion of people receiving higher education.

Bell and Galbraith are too sanguine about the shift to a postindustrial or

technocratic society, ignoring the continued dominance of the social relations of industrial capitalism. Yet in other respects both men, while exaggerating the power and importance of the technocratic "knowledge class," also underestimate the degree to which this stratum of experts, innovators, and technocrats makes new social and political demands within the framework of advanced capitalism. What forms a new stratum is not simply a change in occupational position or skills: its social values and strategic interests are shaped by its emerging role in production and the commitments it develops about the social organization of production. It is this new set of cultural values, social relationships, and organizational forms that actually begin to change the larger society. New values and ways of life tied to new ways of organizing production (both production in the narrow sense, as in research-based electronics or chemical firms, and the social technologies of management consulting, organization, policy planning, and so forth) then constitute the basis for group identification and for autonomous political demands. If there is a postindustrial society, it is not because the conditions of work or social life have been transformed throughout the economy. It is instead because a postindustrial *elite* has developed a new set of social and political interests that challenge many elements of traditional social organization.

*Politics*

Free schools and other alternative organizations emerged from three interrelated political-cultural movements of the 1960s and 1970s. Each movement had its origins in the postindustrial stratum and expressed aspects of the social and economic aspirations of that group.

In the student movement of the 1960s and early 1970s one can see the political aspirations of a knowledge class. Analysts of the student movement were puzzled at first by two apparent anomalies. First, if students were revolting against neglect or mistreatment in their universities, why was it the successful students at the best schools who rebelled? Second, if the situation of college students—young people detached from adult responsibilities and denied adult privileges—is inherently alienating, why did young people rebel in the 1960s when they had been relatively quiet and apolitical in the 1950s?[4]

4. It is in trying to explain the university student movement that Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis (1976) encounter the greatest difficulty. Although they would like to blame student radicalism on resistance to the proletarianization of white-collar work, they acknowledge that the elite base of student radicalism "is hardly consistent with the industrialization of the university hypothesis. The most liberal institutions were not spared their share of radical protests" (p. 215). Thus Bowles and Gintis alternate between the view that something about liberal education is inherently radicalizing—"It is simply impossible for higher education to conserve its traditional liberal arts structure and to transmit useful high-level skills to students without, at the same time, developing some of the students' critical capacities and transmitting some of the truth about how society operates" (p. 206)—and insistence, despite the fact that student protests erupted at the best universities during the peak expansion of academic funding and job opportunities for educated workers, that students rebelled because bureaucratized, proletarianized work left them "essentially declassed" (p. 215).



A technocratic, or postindustrial, explanation of student rebellion seems to accord best with what is known of the timing, content, and social base of the student movement. Repeated studies showed that student radicals were not academic failures or misfits. Indeed, they were among the best students at good schools, and they were among the most likely to be pursuing academic careers (Somers, 1965; Flacks, 1967a, 1967b, 1970; Keniston, 1967, 1968; Lipset, 1971). Student rebels were not rebelling *against* the university —or against their parents (Flacks, 1967b)—but in favor of the values of academia and of their well-educated, liberal parents (Flacks, 1967b; Keniston, 1967).

The rising power and influence of knowledge and of knowledge-creating elites accounts for the source and timing of the student movement. During the early 1960s, academics and intellectuals seemed increasingly influential. Grant money flowed freely, the prestige (and salaries) of academics grew dramatically, and government policymakers seemed to rely more and more on academic experts' advice. Academics felt that what they thought mattered. Furthermore, this new self-confidence flowed downward into the student community. The source of the student movement's political passion was not just its critique of American racism and the Vietnam War, or its analysis of inequality and powerlessness, but its assumption that the right answer, the answer based on knowledge, should prevail. Students felt they had the answers, understood the real issues behind national policy, and ought to have the power to change that policy.[5]

But students did turn against part of the academic and professional establishment: those content to serve dominant groups and traditional purposes rather than declare their political autonomy. The real enemy was the "technician" who provided knowledge or professional expertise without demanding real influence. As Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis (1976:214) point out, there is "a growing commitment among students, young teach-

5. The argument that students were following the lead of their elite, influential professors receives further support from Seymour Martin Lipset (1974). Like their students, socially critical faculty are apt to be among the most privileged rather than the most oppressed members of their profession: "A variety of surveys of opinion and behavior within the academic community find that the more socially critical, those more rejective of the status quo, are more likely to come from the more successful, those who are regarded by their peers as the most creative. Within the academy, those most involved in research activities, who publish more, who are at the more prestigious universities, are more disposed to a critical *Weltanschauung* . . . Those academics involved in disciplines concerned with 'basic' research or the creative arts are much more disposed to favor the 'adversary culture' than professors dealing with the more applied professional fields" (p. 23).

ers, and other professionals that their function is not to administer society, but to change it drastically." As one segment of the knowledge elite has developed a new group consciousness, they have turned their fury on those of their fellows who willingly "sell out" their talents to traditional elites.

*Culture*

Richard Flacks (1967b), confirming the richer qualitative portrait drawn by Kenneth Keniston (1968), argued that student radicals—like later members of the counterculture—rejected hierarchy, authority, and tradition while they valued autonomy, equality, and participation. He called the unique constellation of values he found among student radicals "humanistic," showing "a concern with individual development and self-expression" and "for the social condition of others" (p. 20). In comparing activist and nonactivist students and their parents, he found the students scoring high on "moralism and self-control" particularly unlikely to be activists, and parents of student activists strikingly low in their belief in traditional discipline and authority. The parents of activist students "were convinced that traditional morality systems were hypocritical and repressive, and they supported a morality emphasizing expressiveness" (p. 23). This complex of humanistic values—rejection of authority, belief in self-expression, and concern for the well-being of others—distinguished student radicals and the educated, often professional, families from which they came.

But these values themselves grow out of the requirements of innovative technical and professional work. Melvin Kohn (1969), in a series of studies conducted in the United States and Italy, has demonstrated a tendency for parents of higher class position disproportionately to value self-direction for both their children and themselves in contrast to values of obedience and conformity. The middle-class emphasis on autonomy and self-direction, he argues, is a product of the greater autonomy required by middle-class work and the greater education of middle-class respondents. Education "provides the intellectual flexibility and breadth of perspective that are essential for self-directed values and orientation" (p. 186). But occupational self-direction makes an independent contribution to explaining parental values: "Each of the three conditions that make for occupational self-direction—the absence of close supervision; doing complex work with data or with people, and not working with things; and working at complexly organized tasks—is significantly related to fathers' valuation of self-direction for their children" (p. 161). Thus parents value either discipline and external authority or autonomy and self-direction because these traits are rewarded in their own work lives, and they want their children to learn the values necessary for adapting to the world of work.

The same dynamics described by Kohn explain why a segment of the American middle class—those who do complex work requiring knowledge,



innovation, or flexible organizational styles—taught their children the extreme version of "self-direction" that Flacks and Keniston found among student radicals in the New Left. And these same requirements—for autonomy, creativity, self-motivation, and new ways of interacting with organizational superiors and subordinates—account for the orientations of parents and students in the free school movement Students who saw in their parents or expected for themselves work lives requiring independence and self-direction defied authority and demanded an education that would strengthen them in the same virtues. Their parents viewed deference to authority and dependence on the direction of others—quintessential values of traditional schooling—as negative influences that threatened to cripple their children's full development.

The reorientation of individual lifestyles and values in the contemporary period has been dramatized most visibly in the youthful counterculture, but there is evidence of a broader shift in these areas. College students' attitudes became considerably more antiauthoritarian, self-expressive, and politically radical between 1968 and 1971, as some of the political ideas of the New Left and the cultural orientations of the counterculture spread beyond the original circles in which they developed (Yankelovich, 1974). Similarly, Robert Wuthnow (1976) demonstrates that, at least in an avant-garde region like the San Francisco Bay Area, social, personal, and political experimentation fostered by the counterculture has diffused relatively widely, especially among the well-educated young. Finally, Ronald Inglehart (1977), in an ambitious study of changing political attitudes in Europe and the United States, finds a new set of "postmaterialist" values emerging. Postmaterialist politics tends to be a politics of the young, affluent, and well-educated who value cultural goals more than traditional economic ones and place the protection of free expression above maintenance of social order. Stating that "formative affluence" and education both contribute to postmaterialist political priorities, Inglehart concludes that postmaterialism signals the emergence of "higher needs" in a generation whose basic requirements for security and material well-being have been satisfied. But his data are more compatible with the argument that a new educated elite who rely on knowledge, flexibility, and creativity in their work lives prefer self-expression and participation in the political sphere: "For younger, economically secure groups, new items were at the top of the agenda. Efforts to fight the dehumanizing tendencies inherent in Industrial society took high priority; it was a fight against hierarchical relationships on both the domestic scene and in international politics" (p. 286). Inglehart sees postmaterialist values as spreading throughout all strata of modern Western societies, but it is more realistic to view these values as the culture of a relatively narrow postindustrial stratum. New forms of production require new personal adaptations, as individuals recognize that only by continually

renewing their own skills and developing capacities for creativity and innovation can they remain economically productive (see Hirschhorn, 1974; Sarason, 1977; Block and Hirschhorn, 1979).

*Group Life*

A third element must be added to the postindustrial explanation of the origin of free schools: the demand for changed organizational forms. Free schools were only one of a variety of alternative organizational experiments seeking to abolish authority and hierarchy and to establish new, integrative forms of group participation. These alternative organizations—free clinics, food coops, legal collectives, and free schools—had in common the determination to abolish traditional patterns of power and authority in organizational life and in the relations of professionals and clients. Indeed, from the earliest political efforts of the original Students for a Democratic Society in the 1960s, what characterized the New Left was a concern for organizing and empowering the poor to demand political recognition from local governments and client rights from government service agencies (Cloward and Piven, 1974; Ehrenreich and Ehrenreich, 1977b).

Most dramatic has been the emergence of radical movements within the established professions and semiprofessions. Radical professionals have challenged the traditional definition of professional-client relations, attempting to raise client status and create new forms of social services. At the same time, within alternative professional organizations, new egalitarian organizational patterns have developed to complement new definitions of the professional's role (including, of course, an attack on the idea of professionalism itself; see Gross and Osterman, 1972; Bailey and Brake, 1975; Holleb and Abrams, 1975; Taylor, 1975; Rothschild-Whitt, 1977).

The free school movement was in part a revolt within the teaching profession. In Berkeley, as elsewhere, young teachers—often recent graduates of prestigious schools of education—began to challenge the traditional organization of schooling and to search for new definitions of their professional role. Some free schools, and many alternative organizations such as free clinics, were founded by activists to challenge traditional patterns of professional dominance from outside the professions themselves. But whatever the mix of professionals and lay practitioners in any given alternative organization, most had in common the fact that they made a radical attempt to democratize the relationship between professional and client, making them allies and collaborators, and a commitment to redefine the nature of legitimate professional services, stressing the link between client "troubles" and the larger political system.

How is this professional revolt linked to the other aspects of postindustrialism? Despite the emergence of more democratic work patterns in the technologically complex sectors of modern economic organizations—the research and development firms, electronics firms, and consulting firms



described by analysts such as Tom Burns and G. M. Stalker (1961)—it is particularly in the service sectors of modern society, among service professionals rather than technical workers, that drastic challenges to traditional organizational values have emerged. Although corporations have dabbled in "sensitivity training" and experiments in limited worker democracy, and "organic management" has emerged in some of the most technically complex and innovative sectors of the economy (Burns and Stalker, 1961; Bennis and Slater, 1968), it is teachers, social workers, lawyers, doctors, and young academics who have founded alternative, collectively run, politically radical organizations.

Free school teachers had a double ambition: a desire to change society as well as to teach children. And this goal corresponds to the general aspiration of radical professionals, who want to restructure society rather than just deliver services (see, for example, Bailey and Brake, 1975). Alternative institutions are meant to provide not only a model of new, more democratic social relationships but also a base for political organization and education of client groups. The egalitarian, collectivist style of countercultural alternatives expressed directly the search for new values and organizational forms compatible with postindustrial work. But some postindustrial professionals also sought to create a new political base in the government-financed, bureaucratized world of social services. As policy planners, social service administrators, or political actors, they too needed new organizational skills and capacities for flexibility and innovation. The professional revolts of which the free school movement was a part, however, demanded not only a more egalitarian approach to social services but also a new political role for the organizers, providers, and clients of such services. Clients were to be the political base for the professional wing of the innovative postindustrial stratum. Professionals who wanted to move their work out of the market (and into the public sector) and give it broader political focus played a leading role in founding alternative service organizations like the free clinics, legal collectives, and free schools described in this book.

IT IS NOT possible to make a definitive choice among the competing explanations of the free school movement provided by the rebellion cooptation, educational upgrading, and postindustrial models. Each explains some aspects of a complex social phenomenon. The cooptation model certainly seems to explain why some political leaders, both in local school districts such as Berkeley and at the national level, favored free schools for a period as a way of defusing political protests by radical whites and militant blacks. Yet it is not immediately clear whether the free school movement actually provided novel forms of social control for a newly restless segment of the proletariat, either working-class blacks or recently proletarianized educated middle-class whites.

The educational upgrading model, on the other hand, goes some way

toward explaining the popularity of alternative educational approaches among parents and children of the upper-middle class. The autonomy, creativity, and self-expression encouraged in free schools resemble the intellectual equipment needed for success in professional and academic work. Making children love school may be extremely important to parents who see that their children's futures rest almost exclusively on educational attainment. But to stop at the educational upgrading model is to ignore the broader political movement of which free schools were a part. A full explanation must encompass a set of interconnected social movements—the student New Left, the counterculture, and the professional revolt.

I have argued that the mid-1960s and early 1970s witnessed the first stirrings of the political, social, and cultural aspirations of a new stratum of society. Young members of the educated middle class and professional and technical workers whose conditions of work—characterized by reliance on knowledge and demand for innovation—I have called postindustrial, formed a social movement based on a vision of a new cultural, organizational, and political world. Members of this stratum had distinctive interests growing out of the changed premium their work lives placed on flexibility and innovation. For them, continuing self-development appeared the only way to remain effective in innovative occupational roles (Block and Hirschhorn, 1979).

But a new ideology of personal autonomy, self-expression, and self-development is only half the solution to the needs of the educated stratum. The other half is provided by altered social forms and a new culture of social relationships, suited to the new productive arrangements. Here we find the sources of the organizational radicalism of the free school movement. Free schools were, in part, experiments in creating organizational and ideological forms that could meet the needs of postindustrial occupations for the coordination of autonomous, innovative workers in flexible patterns. The interest of upper-middle-class parents and their children in preparation for the demands of postindustrial work explains both the specific features of free schools as organizations and the enthusiasm of the educated upper-middle class for such schools.

The unique timing of the establishment of these schools in the late 1960s and early 1970s also depended in part on the upswing of a larger political movement. The student New Left expressed the aspirations for increased political influence of a social stratum that felt, especially during the heyday of academic funding in the 1960s, that it ought to be able to influence national policy. The movement also envisioned a new kind of society—more democratic, more participatory, and with greater scope for individual development and meaningful social life. The political arrogance of the movement was based on its members' sense of the rapidly increasing importance of their stratum, and its confidence sagged dramatically as enrollments, funding, and academic jobs dried up in the 1970s. But the larger changes in



social and political attitudes begun by the New Left and the counterculture have continued to spread (even while their most intense manifestations have faded) because real changes in conditions of work, culture, and organization make them meaningful. The new interests of the postindustrial stratum make its politics antiestablishment, though not fully egalitarian. To the degree that educated workers develop cultural and organizational patterns in tension with those of traditional capitalism, they are driven to an oppositional stance.

In addition to answering the needs of some middle-class students and parents, free schools also grew out of a revolt within the teaching profession itself. Like other alternative organizations of the period, free schools answered demands for more democratic, collective forms of professional work and for a new integration of clients into service organizations. They sought to equalize the relations of professionals and clients and to politicize social services. These political efforts to organize and mobilize clients reflected not only the desire by some members of the traditional professions to have an impact on social policy but also the interest of the professional stratum in expanding its political base. Students in free schools learned some of the radical ideology and group skills that would be useful when they joined the ranks of the new professionals.

Finally, we cannot fully understand the social role of alternative education without returning to the issue of social control. Although I have claimed that social control in the sense intended by cooptation theorists is not an adequate interpretation of the educational reforms of the 1960s, there is a sense in which social control is the essence of the alternative school movement. I have argued throughout this book that free schools embodied a new model of organizational life; they rejected traditional forms of social control based on hierarchy and authority, substituting for them more indirect, collective, and internalized controls. These new forms of social control grow directly out of the demands of professional, technical, and administrative work in modern society, but they are not imposed by capitalists or other ruling groups on a restive working class. Instead, they are forms of social regulation that grow out of the requirements of upper-middle-class workers themselves, who seek new cultural models of organization—new ways of regulating and coordinating group life. Free schools represent one important, if evanescent, embodiment of these cultural and organizational imperatives.

Thus the cooptation theorists are right in their focus on social control but wrong in the particular application of their argument. Although free schools were tolerated in part to coopt discontent and were implemented so as to leave entrenched patterns of schooling and school administration intact, they did not represent a way of imposing social discipline on a rebellious white-collar proletariat, cheated out of its original claims to independent professional status. Instead, free schools and other organizational ex-

periments of the mid-1960s and early 1970s were self-assertive claims by an elite of educated professional and administrative workers for forms of culture, social organization, and political power suited to their own patterns of work and personal experience. Central to those demands was the principle of participatory democracy, with its potential for individual autonomy and collective flexibility; yet at the same time they embodied an attempt to bring into being, in admittedly fragmented, contradictory, and incomplete ways, a new model of social control to regulate organizations without authority.

# Conclusion

# THE MEANING OF ORGANIZATION IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

THE DYNAMICS OF organizations without authority raise the question: why would an organization abandon authority? In addition to the reasons described throughout this book, further explanations are provided by the sociological literature on organizations, especially studies of bureaucracy that deal with the limitations of and alternatives to traditional hierarchical authority.

Max Weber (1925) originally argued that bureaucracy—an organization of offices with a strict division of responsibilities, clear lines of authority and accountability, written rules, and a separation of the rights and duties of office from the personal resources of individual officials—would inevitably dominate modern society because of "its purely technical superiority over any other form of organization. Precision, speed, unambiguity, knowledge of the files, continuity, discretion, unity, strict subordination, reduction of friction and of material and personal costs—these are raised to the optimum point in the strictly bureaucratic administration" (p. 214).

But the features of bureaucracy that ensure strict subordination and effective hierarchical control do not always contribute to efficient task performance. Stanley Udy (1959), for example, in a survey of production organizations in one hundred and fifty nonindustrial societies, finds the "bureaucratic" features of organizations negatively associated with the "rational" ones. Hierarchy, a specialized administrative staff, and differentiation of rewards according to office contribute to effective centralized control. But these bureaucratic aspects of organization coexist uneasily with rewards based on performance, clear demarcation of organizational tasks, and limited demands on organization members. Thus Udy concludes that the optimal organizational form depends on the level of technology involved. All organizations trying to combine hierarchical control with the

rational performance of specialized tasks must develop "accommodative mechanisms" to bridge these two functions. Arthur Stinchcombe (1959), also working from Weber's classic outline of the features of bureaucratic administration, argues that when an organization does not have a stable, predictable task, bureaucratic administration does not develop. In the housing construction industry, a predictable set of skills are required, so construction companies rely on stable spheres of authority and responsibility built into the craft organization of the building trades. But because the precise mix of products and the flow of work are unpredictable, other features of bureaucracy—reliance on written files and a stable structure of hierarchical offices—do not develop. James Thompson (1967) has argued more generally that stable, rational administration cannot develop when organizations must work in unpredictable environments on tasks involving uncertainty. Thus bureaucratic organization, though it has the advantages Weber originally attributed to it, is inadequate in unstable environments for tasks requiring flexibility and innovation when goals cannot be translated into a stable structure of rules, jurisdictions, and channels of authority and communication. In such organizations, a flexible work group with coordination by "mutual adjustment" replaces coordination through standardized rules or central planning.

Traditional bureaucratic controls are also inadequate for regulating specialized expertise, expertise itself representing a way of dealing with complex and uncertain technologies. The sociological literature on problems of professionals in bureaucracies (Scott, 1966) and on staff-line conflict (Dalton, 1959) indicates the difficulties of integrating expert workers—those who use complex skills in conditions of uncertainty—into bureaucratic hierarchies. Bureaucratic supervision fails because hierarchical superiors are unable to judge the work of their expert subordinates, and expertise itself becomes an autonomous source of power, competing with the bureaucratic authority of office. Power remains grounded in the unique knowledge and skills of individuals or in their professional status rather than in the formal authority of the offices they occupy.

Pressures on organizations to find alternatives to hierarchical authority are strongest where traditional incentives and sanctions, however elaborately arranged and calibrated, are insufficient. Where workers, because of specialized skills, the need for creativity, or the claims of professional autonomy, have a wide sphere of discretion, or where the complexity and unpredictability of the organization's task make centralized monitoring of task performance impossible, hierarchical controls fail. Thus physicians in a medical clinic (Freidson, 1975) or scientists in research and development firms (Burns and Stalker, 1961) cannot be "made" to do their jobs well by traditional bureaucratic means. Such organizations must find alternative ways to monitor performance and to inspire their members with a sense of purpose and commitment.



Thus three sets of conditions drive some modern organizations to search for alternatives to bureaucratic authority. Uncertainty (high rates of change or innovation) requires flexible work groups that have open patterns of communication and can coordinate themselves by mutual adjustment. Specialized knowledge (complex technical expertise or professional skills) limits the effectiveness of hierarchical controls and breaks down the authority of office. Work requiring initiative and creativity requires new ways to inspire and motivate an organization's members. These challenges lead organizations to renounce authority and to search for new sources of social control.

### New Collective Forms

Throughout this book I have described the dynamics of "organizations without authority." One difficulty with this formulation is that for the kinds of tasks modern organizational life requires, the idea of an organization, in the sense of a bounded sphere of coordinated activities with a given function and specific personnel, may itself be inappropriate.

In a speculative essay entitled "Society's Frontiers for Organizing Activities," James Thompson (1976) has argued that the 1960s and 1970s have been a "watershed period" for determining "which organizational configurations are viable for new conditions" (p. 236). The new conditions to which Thompson refers resemble those I have outlined above. Increasingly complex interdependence breaks down the distinction between private and public spheres, requiring that "we organize on a broader scale to solve problems of a wider scale" (p. 239). "Local" organizations with specific tasks are replaced by networks of organizational effort, bringing the capacities of many organizations together in a complex interdependency. Second, the "pace of change" means that "interdependence not only covers a wide territory, but events anywhere within that territory can have rapid consequences elsewhere and call for the speedy mobilization and deployment of resources" (p. 240). Finally, as technology becomes "increasingly knowledge-intensive," it is less tied to a particular location or organizational structure. Under these new conditions, Thompson concludes, "we will learn—and have been learning—to organize our activities into large, non-local configurations, to marshall resources from far and wide and deploy and redeploy them as needs, desires, problems, and knowledge change" (p. 240).

A consequence of these changed tasks is a change in organizational form —or rather the emergence of a sphere in which the traditional assumptions about formal organizations no longer hold, in which formal organizations will be replaced by more fluid "administration of temporarily organized activities" (Thompson, p. 245). In such complex systems, individuals will no longer be "members" of a single organization. Instead, they will be participants in "systems of complex, coordinated activities," in which they may

'work for" one organization while another pays their salary (pp. 236-237). Furthermore, organizational activities will no longer be confined to a specific task carried out in a given location. For large-scale projects, "any given formal organization involved may be devoting all or a major portion of its resources and energies to a product or service for a clientele it has never before served and at a considerable distance from its geographic location. Once the mission has been completed, that organization may never again be involved in the same configuration of formal organizations" (p. 237). Finally, the assumption "that an organization revolves around a unitary authority system [is] breaking down" (p. 238). Thompson cites examples suggesting that "complexly organized activities need not rely on authority as the glue which holds them together. If we look at some of these activities from the social level I believe we see division of labor, coordinated activity, hierarchy (of knowledge and prestige), mobilization, and allocation and reallocation of resources—but not authority" (p. 239).

Certainly the sophisticated organizational systems Thompson discusses are vastly more complex in technology and in their problems of coordination and control than the alternative organizations I have described. And yet the new organizational challenges Thompson outlines in many ways resemble what I have delineated as the characteristic features of organization without authority. In chapter 1 I argued that alternative schools broke down the distinction between the institutionalized sphere of organizational life and the "outside world." The specialized roles and styles of behavior normally characteristic of schooling blended into the "real world" outside of school, and the private thoughts and feelings of teachers and students, as well as affairs of the larger community, became a legitimate focus of schooling. Most important, authority, as constituted by a specialized set of roles and rules in which the right to command resides, was dismantled. But as Thompson indicates, what the abolition of authority really means is the abolition of formal organization itself, and its replacement by a sphere of coordinated activity where individuals and groups are united by their shared engagement in a project or task rather than by their location in a single place, under a single institutionalized system of authority. Although the small, almost primitive organizations of the counterculture cannot serve as models for the systems of coordinated activity that are emerging at the frontiers of organizational change, their dilemmas prefigure many of the dilemmas of larger, more complex systems of organization without authority.

What are the characteristics of such systems of organized activity, abstracted from peculiarities of the free school context? First, these organizational systems are formed of individuals, not offices. The distinction between the abilities and resources of individuals and the rights and duties of their organizational positions is lost. This change means, first, that there is tremendous pressure on individuals to use their "private" resources for organizational ends. What appeared as the problem of personal influence for the teachers at Group High and Ethnic High—their need to draw on their own personalities to do their work—is in fact only one manifestation of a more general shift in modern organizational life. Tom Burns and G. M. Stalker (1961:viii), writing about the evolution of "organic management" in technologically innovative electronics firms, note its consequences for the individual: "In organic systems, the boundaries of feasible demands on the individual disappear. The greatest stress is placed on his regarding himself as fully implicated in the discharge of any task appearing over his horizon, as involved not merely in the exercise of a special competence but in commitment to the success of the concern's undertakings approximating somewhat to that of the doctor or scientist in the discharge of his professional functions." Teachers at Group High and Ethnic High experienced their jobs as occasionally stimulating and exhilarating, but they also found themselves exhausted by the constant pressure to find new sources of glamour and personal prestige with which to do their work. Burns and Stalker make similar observations about the strains of working in innovative industrial enterprises where "the extent to which the individual yields himself as a resource to be used by the working organization" is much greater than in traditional mechanistic systems: "The organic form, by departing from the familiar clarity and fixity of the hierarchic structure, is often experienced by the individual manager as an uneasy, embarrassed, or chronically anxious quest for knowledge about what he should be doing, or what is expected of him, and similar apprehensiveness about what others are doing. Indeed . . . this kind of response is necessary if the organic form of organization is to work effectively" (pp. 122-123).



These emerging organizational systems make demands on individuals but also depend upon them. They are built of individuals with their collection of knowledge and skills rather than of offices with specific rights and responsibilities. Many of these organizations' capacities and resources are "stored" in individuals, not in organizational structures. Thus what appeared in Group High and Ethnic High as the problem of charismatic leadership, wherein individual teachers acquired influence to the extent that they embodied ideal traits that could inspire students, is equivalent to the reliance of the organic organization on the expertise of individuals. Burns and Stalker point out that influence in organic systems rests with those who have greater expertise in a given task: "The lead in joint decisions is frequently taken by seniors, but it is an essential presumption of the organic system that the lead, i.e. 'authority,' is taken by whoever shows himself most informed and capable, i.e., the 'best authority' " (p. 122).

The problematic feature of personal influence at Group High and Ethnic High was that "expertise" in a traditional sense seemed irrelevant when the school's tasks were unclear and its "technology" primitive. Nonetheless, teachers in these alternative schools were trying to express through their

own lives some vision of the kinds of adults students might like to become. n alternative schools, as in the technologically sophisticated firms Burns nd Stalker describe, influence rests on the attributes of individuals—their ersonal skills, knowledge, or powers of persuasion—and not in institutionalized roles. Similarly, physicians in a prepaid medical practice (Freidson, 1975) rejected all attempts to control their work through a structure of ormal authority. Because, in their view, medical work necessarily involved liscretion and judgment in uncertain circumstances, they felt that control hould come only in the form of advice from respected colleagues, informal anctions such as the withdrawal of small reciprocal favors, or damage to omeone's reputation through gossip about his failings. Personal influence grounded in shared values (including respect for expertise or experience) rovided the only foundation for collective social control. In the medical group, as in other technically complex sectors of modern organizational ife, personal and organizational resources cannot be separated. Individuals an make claims on one another only in terms of their own needs and abilities in relation to a common task.

I have argued that in some modern organizations authority no longer nheres in a specialized set of roles or rules. Formal authority, even in the ense of externally validated "authoritativeness," ceases to be a relevant ource of influence. But does this mean that there is no institutionalized ource of influence? I do not think so. Rather, authority passes to a collectively sustained sense of purpose: "[The] activities of each member of the rganization become determined by the real tasks of the firm as he sees hem [rather] than by instruction and routine" (Burns and Stalker, 1961: 125).

The idea that each member's activities are directly determined by the organization's task may seem utopian. But another way to characterize the eatures of innovative activity systems is to look at how such organizations deal with purpose—the relation between goals and action. In traditional formal organizations, the organization's structure—its functional divisions, chain of command, and specification of particular roles and tasks—and its rules, from its charter to its technical procedures, embody commitment to a set of tasks and the capacity to perform them. But when an organization's tasks are continually changing in unpredictable ways, it cannot rely on a fixed structure to embody or implement its goals. What replaces formal structure is a collective capacity for continual, conscious attention to purpose. Indeed, it becomes inappropriate to speak of an organization and more appropriate to talk about capacities to undertake and implement purposes.

Philippe Nonet (1974) has argued that all organizations must develop some capacity to pay conscious attention to purpose in order to avoid the dangers of rigid formalism, on the one hand, and "opportunism," the "unguided adaptation to events and pressures," on the other (p. 12). When



formal structure is the only embodiment of organizational purposes, the organization may become rigid and unresponsive to its environment. But when adaptation to the environment is made too easy, organizations slip into opportunism, losing their original mission. Nonet insists that "opportunism and formalism are two phases of the same basic institutional disease" (p. 13). Both result from an inability to sustain a sense of purpose. Thus "the central problem of institutional design lies neither in the scope of administrative discretion, nor in the locus of authority, nor in any other aspect of organizational structure per se, but rather in the extent to which an institution is infused with a sense of purpose. The institutional effects of rules, delegation, participation, and other such devices, are fundamentally contingent upon the variable ability with which institutions give authority to purpose in their deliberations" (p. 15).

Purpose, as Nonet notes, is a cognitive or ideal achievement. An institution's members can find and maintain a sense of purpose when they can analyze the relationship between specific actions and larger principles. The institution must sustain a sense of its mission while engaging in critical self-examination, active debate, and exploration of its environment. In organizations with variable tasks carried out in complex, unpredictable environments, the capacity to sustain purposes becomes the heart of organizational life. Without formal structure, purposes—rather than a particular location, institutional core, or set of fiscal controls—constitute the organizational system, which may, as James Thompson (1976) suggests, be formed of members from a multitude of different institutions.

Group High and Ethnic High seem, at first glance, to be notable for their lack of purpose, or rather for their having purposes mired in uncertainty and self-doubt. And yet their members were obsessed with the search for common goals. Indeed, as I argued in chapter 6, what these schools ultimately taught were group skills, primary among which was the capacity to search for and sustain collective commitment to purposes. Group discussion was the core of organizational life because it provided a way of making collective purposes conscious and relevant to the actions of each member of the organization. The emphasis on continual discussion and debate, the obligation of each member of the organization to share her ideas and to respond to the needs of others, and the continual monitoring of the group's efforts and achievements in fact represent a form of collective coordination perfectly adapted to the challenge of flexible, open organized activities. In such settings commitment to purposes is given priority over more traditional forms of accountability, and conscious attention to purpose becomes the source of coordination and control. Tom Burns and G. M. Stalker (1961:122) note precisely this sort of coordination through purposes in the electronics firms they studied, where "the emptying out of significance from the hierarchic command system . . . is countered by the development of shared beliefs about the values and goals of the concern. The growth and

ɔcretion of institutionalized values, beliefs, and conduct, in the form of ɔmmitments, ideology, and manners, around an image of the concern in ɜ industrial and commercial setting make good the loss of formal structure."

Organizations without authority are formed of groups of individuals ɾiented to purposes rather than to roles structured around specific tasks. he sense of purpose develops and is sustained in a collective context, foɪsed by continual group discussions. But this reliance on discussion reɹires a climate in which communication is open, and such communication ɪn flourish only when an organization strives for equality, or at least when renounces the hierarchical incentives and sanctions that lead members of ost organizations to withhold information from superiors or competitors. he sort of open communication that existed at Group High and Ethnic igh is particularly vital in the kinds of research and development work ɹrns and Stalker studied: if scientists are to develop innovative applicaɔns of scientific technology, they must talk continually with those who ill be using the equipment they develop. And in turn those who will use ·oducts developed by research scientists need to be made aware of changg technological possibilities which may in turn suggest new needs they ight ask the researchers to try to meet. Thus the British team that develɔed radar during World War II (in contrast to their German counterparts) ɛpt up a constant exchange of information and ideas between the technical ɛvelopment specialists and the military men who were aware of the operaɔnal uses of the new radar technology (Burns and Stalker, 1961:40-42). ɪese meetings worked because egalitarian norms allowed each person to y what was on his mind without regard to rank or authority.

Burns and Stalker note that, for all the innovative firms they studied, "the ɔeration of an organic system of management hinges on effective comunication . . . What is essential is that nothing should inhibit individuals ɔm applying to others for information and advice, or for additional effort. ɪis in turn depends on the ability to suppress differences of status and of ɔhnical prestige on occasions of working interaction, and on the absence barriers to communication founded on functional preserves, privilege, or ɛrsonal reserve." Crucial to such openness, ultimately, was a collective mosphere, "a way of behaving which facilitated this freedom of intertion" (p. 252). Burns and Stalker refer to a "code of conduct"—a kind of ɹrmative cultural style, on which the whole capacity for organic manageent rests. For one firm facing rapid change, "the organizational problems the enterprise turned almost entirely on finding the right code of conduct ɪich would make for effective communication—to avoid occasions, as ɪe head of a laboratory put it, 'when I'm explaining to a chap and he says ·es, yes" and I'm not at all sure whether he's caught on' " (p. 94).

Status equalization and the abolition of hierarchical authority do not, of urse, make everyone equal. Differences in experience and technical ex-



pertise (and power as well) are a pervasive feature of informally regulated task organization in firms of the type Burns and Stalker describe, just as idiosyncratic sources of personal charisma were important in the social organization of Group High and Ethnic High. But there is an important difference between the way traditional and alternative organizations handle inequality. I have argued that in contemporary alternative organizations, status equalization holds in check the divisiveness of competition for unequal positions. Equality promotes collective solidarity so that members can identify with one another and with their shared task. The lack of invidious comparison among members means that participants can afford to invest their identities in their organizational performances. Thus equality, and the refusal to offer members differential rewards and sanctions, can lead to a more intense involvement of members with the organization and to more penetrating forms of social control.

Incentives and sanctions do not disappear, but they are lodged outside the immediate organizational arena. A politics of principle and reputation replaces one of empire building, alliance formation, and back-stabbing. In traditional hierarchies, structured tasks and roles provide a stable "game" against which there arises "a second game for initiates which grows out of the first" (Crozier and Thoenig, 1976:567). For example, structural barriers to the flow of information allow politically astute organization members to build alliances or jockey for positions by making informal exchanges of valued information. But in the kinds of organizational systems I have described here, there is very little structure to play against. Indeed, since the organizational system is often impermanent, building a political base or fighting for rewards within it makes little sense. Instead, organizational members expect to win rewards from outside the organization when they move beyond it. What they acquire within the organization are experience, work associates, and a reputation that will carry them beyond it. Thus, although involvement in the organization is intense, long-term loyalty is likely to be weak. Such complex organized systems are often short-lived in any case, lasting only as long as a given combination of resources is needed for a certain task; the innovative individuals who work in them are likely to move from group to group and project to project while they accumulate a reputation, a collection of contacts, and a set of purposes that generate future opportunities.

### The Future of Organization Without Authority

An organization without authority is threatened neither by rebellion against its chiefs, since it has none, nor by the rigid formalism that frequently paralyzes traditional bureaucracies. But what do endanger such organizations are various forms of disintegration. The individual skills or personalities of charismatic figures may fragment the organization into fiefs, each cohering around an individual leader. The organization's collective

life, if too intense, can promote divisive conflicts, and if too weak can be no more than an assemblage of cliques or friendship groups. Finally, the very freedom that allows members to invest themselves in the organization may make too heavy demands on the self. And the organization, by renouncing the power to reward individuals differentially for their performances, runs the risk that collective goals will be slighted in favor of activities that enhance the purposes or reputations of individuals. Thus there are schismatic tendencies precisely in the organization's egalitarianism. Individuals may fight for principles that interfere with the organization's purposes but leave intact (or enhance) the individual's reputation. And in a group of equals, conflicting goals or visions easily collide without being resolved.

The underlying dynamics of organization without authority are, then, characterized by the tension between cohesion (of purpose, individual effort, and group interchange) and disintegration. We have seen the conflict between these two tendencies in every aspect of life at Group High and Ethnic High, and in reports of many other alternative organizations. The workings of organizational control and conflict—both practical and symbolic—revolve precisely around this tension. But the capacity of organizations to manage the tension—to weight the balance in favor of cohesion rather than disintegration—depends on factors outside problems of organizational design or organizational life itself. The capacity of organizations without authority to hold their members, coordinate effort, and sustain a sense of purpose is related in part to developments in the wider culture. Thus it was a shared countercultural ideology that permitted Group High, unlike Ethnic High, to turn its members' autonomy, their claim to be free and self-actualizing, into an intense demand for public sharing of private feelings. It was ideology and the set of group skills emphasized in alternative organizations that allowed some of them to tip the balance from dissension toward cohesion. The capacities of groups to bring conflicts out into the open, to give voice to disagreements, and to arrive at a shared sense of purpose depend in large part on wider cultural developments in ideology, language, and interpersonal skills. At Group High, however stilted and artificial the ideology of individualism and community often sounded, it provided the school with resources that were lacking in the collective culture of Ethnic High.

The sources of social control that provide alternatives to authority depend on the capacities of an organization to turn what are initially short-term, private solutions to the problem of social control into fully collective resources. Thus charisma, group solidarity, and equality can each become disintegrative rather than integrative unless they are backed up by collective resources. And the capacity of groups and organizations to generate those resources depends in large part on culturally grounded meanings. The youth culture of the 1960s, in both its political and countercultural phases, served among other things to provide experimental cultural and organizational forms to meet the new challenges faced by a segment of the educated upper-middle class. The children of professionals and academics who populated Berkeley's free schools came there to learn the group skills and to act out the ideology that, in slightly altered form, provides the basis for new organizational patterns in the innovative sectors of the public and private economy. Thus Group High and other alternative organizations of the 1960s and 1970s represented in part attempts to put an antiauthoritarian ideology into practice. They also represented attempts to create new organizational forms and to develop and realize an ideology that could sustain new patterns of organizational life. Although the extreme antiauthoritarianism of the counterculture, with its passionate revulsion against structure, hierarchy, and discipline, is not likely to be widely diffused in modern societies, the organizations it gave rise to (and the skills and ideologies members of these organizations learned) were responses to real limitations of traditional organizational forms and the ideologies that sustain them. As innovative work, professional autonomy, and the need for independent initiative make traditional authority unworkable, the need for new ways to regulate, control, and coordinate collective effort becomes more pressing.

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