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Liberal Democratic Civic Education and Rampage School Gun Violence: Why We Need an Alternative Theory of Democracy to Guide Contemporary Civic Education

Samantha Deane

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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

LIBERAL DEMOCRATIC CIVIC EDUCATION AND RAMPAGE SCHOOL GUN
VIOLENCE: WHY WE NEED AN ALTERNATIVE THEORY OF DEMOCRACY TO GUIDE
CONTEMPORARY CIVIC EDUCATION

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

PROGRAM IN CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL POLICY STUDIES

BY
SAMANTHA DEANE

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ABSTRACT

In this dissertation, which relies on philosophical inquiry, I use the case of rampage school gun violence to explore democratic education. Drawing a distinction between liberal foundational democratic education, which aims to educate the individual on how to become an autonomous rational agent and pragmatic-antifoundational democratic education, which looks to help individuals understand agency as shared, I argue antifoundational democratic education teaches individuals how to affect their environment and take responsibility for the renewal of their democratic society. Rather than allocating blame in the singular individual, antifoundational democracy teaches citizens how to share the blame, take responsibility for unacceptable violence, and participate in the renewal of a democratic society. Specifically, I claim antifoundational democratic education distributes responsibility for rampage school gun violence to various human and nonhuman actors and teaches individuals how to make sense of each agent's actions. In so doing, antifoundational democratic education prepares individuals and communities to leverage their understanding of complex causal networks to enact changes that will to stop the rampaging.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Of the challenges facing American education today, none causes more horror among parents, educators, and citizens than rampage school gun violence. Rampage school gun violence exploded in the 1990s. Between 1992 and 1999, there were at least 11 instances of rampage school gun violence, which resulted in the death of 43 students and teachers and the injury of many more.¹ Yet, the phenomenon of rampage school gun violence did not end with the 20th century; instead, it became a defining feature of 21st century American education. Rampage school shootings, where a student or former student shoots and kills at least four members of the school community — often for what they represent, and not who they are — on school grounds, are significant and defining events that continue to shape education in American schools. In fact, since Sandy Hook, the rampage that killed 20 first graders and six adults in 2012, there have been over 150 regular school shootings; although, few have made the news.² In between regular school shootings, rampages burst on the scene, like the one in Parkland, Florida on February 14,

¹ Jonathan Fast, *Ceremonial Violence: A Psychological Explanation of School Shootings*, 1 edition (Woodstock, NY: The Overlook Press, 2008).

² The tally depends on how one defines rampage school shootings. Priya Krishnakumar, “Mapping school shootings nationwide since Sandy Hook,” *LA Times*, April 12, 2017, accessed on August 13, 2017, <http://www.latimes.com/local/education/la-essential-education-updates-southern-since-sandy-hook-a-gun-has-been-fired-1491953275-htmstory.html>; “A Look At All 11 School Shootings That Took Place In The First 23 Days Of 2018,” NPR.org, accessed February 12, 2018, <https://www.npr.org/2018/01/24/580433745/a-look-at-all-11-school-shootings-that-took-place-in-the-first-23-days-of-2018>.

2018 where 17 high school students were killed.³ The memorial for the thirteen victims of the 1999 Columbine High School rampage school shooting features stones engraved with proclamations and questions from the school and community. One inscription asks: “It brought a nation to its knees, but now that we’ve gotten back up how have things changed; what have we learned?” What have we learned? How have things changed? These questions are the pulse of any work on rampage school shootings. I am not focusing on rampage school shootings because they make schools especially unsafe. Schools are still the safest place for children to spend their time.⁴ I am focusing on rampage school shootings because these violent incidents have continued unabated in a society that claims to value social progress.

This dissertation focuses on the case of rampage school gun violence to highlight the significant limitations liberal democratic education can perpetuate. I contend that rampage school gun violence puts in sharp relief the limitations of liberal democratic education, which locates agency exclusively with individual actors and obscures the way in which responsibility and agentic capacity is distributed among a network of actors. This project is a continuation of work begun by a group of philosophers of education who contributed to a special issue of *Educational Theory* in 2015. As one of the only comprehensive set of essays by philosophers of education on the issue of rampage school gun violence, these essays foreground my argument in this project. In particular, I draw on ideas generated by Bryan Warnick and co-authors, Amy Shuffelton, Harvey Shapiro, Gabriel Keehn and Deron Boyles, and Aislinn O’Donnell. Bryan Warnick and

³ Jess Bidgood et al., “The Names and Faces of the Florida School Shooting Victims,” *The New York Times*, February 15, 2018, sec. U.S., <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/15/us/florida-school-victims.html>.

⁴ Dewey G. Cornell, *School Violence: Fears Versus Facts*, 1 edition (Mahwah, N.J.: Routledge, 2006), 18–23.

his co-authors hone in on the ways in which the meaning of American schools impacts the likelihood that young people will view schools as appropriate sites for gun violence.⁵ Amy Shuffelton examines the making of masculine honor and the importance of receiving recognition from one's honor peers, especially for young men.⁶ Harvey Shapiro suggests that the binary separation of abnormal rampage school shootings from normal instances of school gun violence confounds our understanding of, and responses to, mass school shootings.⁷ Gabriel Keehn and Deron Boyles, explicitly point to the way the neoliberal, corporate organization of schools transforms students into consumers and consumables.⁸ Finally, Aislinn O'Donnell urges educators to adopt an antiheroic pedagogy that invites the learner to envision gentler responses to human suffering and violence.⁹

I do not extend any of these particular arguments; rather, I echo and explore a general sentiment that resonates throughout the *Educational Theory* special issue on rampage school gun violence. Although each writer draws from a different set of literature to make specific claims about the cultural roots of rampage school gun violence, the articles converge around a web of complex factors and relationships that contribute to rampage school gun violence. In other words, each author agrees that rampage school gun violence arises out of some complex and

⁵ Bryan R. Warnick, Sang Hyun Kim, and Shannon Robinson, "Gun Violence and the Meaning of American Schools," *Educational Theory* 65, no. 4 (August 1, 2015): 371–86, <https://doi.org/10.1111/edth.12122>.

⁶ Amy Shuffelton, "Consider Your Man Card Reissued: Masculine Honor and Gun Violence," *Educational Theory* 65, no. 4 (August 1, 2015): 387–403, <https://doi.org/10.1111/edth.12123>.

⁷ Harvey Shapiro, "When the Exception Is the Rule: School Shootings, Bare Life, and the Sovereign Self," *Educational Theory* 65, no. 4 (August 2015): 423–40, <https://doi.org/10.1111/edth.12125>.

⁸ Gabriel Keehn and Deron Boyles, "Sense, Nonsense, and Violence: Levinas and the Internal Logic of School Shootings," *Educational Theory* 65, no. 4 (August 2015): 441–58, <https://doi.org/10.1111/edth.12126>.

⁹ Aislinn O'Donnell, "Curriculum as Conversation: Vulnerability, Violence, and Pedagogy in Prison," *Educational Theory* 65, no. 4 (August 2015): 475–90, <https://doi.org/10.1111/edth.12128>.

complicated set of events that has taken place in schools and in the social world of teenagers. Moreover, there is agreement that rampage school gun violence is correlated to an unwillingness or inability to understand this kind of violence as normal in a society that privileges war, control, dominance, individuality, and consumption. Each contributor to the issue, therefore, comes to say rampage school gun violence is “normal” insofar as one considers factor x, y, and z. For example, Keehn and Boyles highlight President George W. Bush’s comments at the Virginia Tech memorial where President Bush suggested that, “It’s impossible to make sense of such violence and suffering.” Keehn and Boyles go on to argue that “sentiments are even stronger in cases of school gun violence, where the unquestionable innocence and vulnerability of the victims, as well as the sanctity of the spaces in which such violence takes place, add yet another layer of unfathomability to an already baffling act.”¹⁰ According to Keehn and Boyles, the story of the unfathomable school shooting is a myth and claim school shootings are, in fact, a natural outgrowth of the current climate in public education. To render school shootings intelligible, Keehn and Boyles argue that we must appreciate a number of factors that make possible and likely this kind of violence.

Like Keehn and Boyles, I, too, am claiming that rampage school gun violence is entirely *fathomable* insofar as one is capable of taking together a number of factors. Whereas Keehn and Boyles substantiate their claim by turning to a Levinasian ethical framework to address the “ethical vacuum” created by “hypercorporate” schools, I think it is imperative to begin with liberal democratic civic education that dissuades citizens from “taking together a number of factors” in the first place.¹¹ That is, I argue liberal democratic citizens have been taught to locate

¹⁰ Keehn and Boyles, “Sense, Nonsense, and Violence,” 441–42.

¹¹ Keehn and Boyles, 442.

intentional rational agency exclusively with individuals and to see one actor, the bad actor, as solely responsible for his or her actions. To understand one's peer as a person to whom one must relate and cooperate in order to respond ethically to a situation, I argue, one must first understand the nature of relationships, of causal networks, and of associated living.

This dissertation will make the case that one's civic education contributes to one's capacity and willingness to make sense of a nexus of factors that lead to rampage school gun violence, and it will add to the philosophy of education literature on rampage school gun violence by focusing on the ways in which democratic civic education affects one's ability to address and understand the complex factors that contribute to rampage school gun violence. I am concerned with a student's ability to make sense of shared agency, norms, and tools, all of which intermingle to make possible the shooting event. Hence, I explore the ways in which democratic education enables or impairs a young person's capacity to make sense of causal networks and, thus, to become a democratic citizen. Toward this end, I build on Shapiro's provocation in "When the Exception is the Rule: School Shootings, Bare Life, and the Sovereign Self." He states, "the pedagogical challenge, then, is to expose and depose the language of nonresponsibility and exceptionality when it comes to school gun violence and violence's other forms and contexts."¹² Hence, I aim to work out the ways in which civic education ought to enable young people to take responsibility for the renewal of their democratic society and for the perpetuation of rampage school gun violence.

From the outset, I assume education in a democratic society ought to be aimed at the renewal of a robust democratic society wherein citizens learn to make sense of the deep and ever-present associations that make possible associative life. On my view, this means citizens

¹² Shapiro, "When the Exception Is the Rule," 439.

must learn to make sense of the ways in which agency is shared as well as the actors that make possible and contribute to particular actions and associations. This project, therefore, focuses on the kind of civic education that sustains or perpetuates gun violence, on the one hand, and the kind of civic education that energizes peaceful social progress, on the other. In what follows, I contend that even robust theories of liberal democratic education, that confront neoliberalism and takes seriously real-world problems, have blind spots which limit their ability to deal with the complexity of educating democratic citizens amid rampant gun violence. Liberal democracy aims to educate the citizen to think of oneself as an ontologically unique and autonomous agent, which on my view hinders a citizen's ability to make sense of the way in which human associations, power, and nonhuman material act on him and his environment. Following political theorist Benjamin Barber, I refer to this conception of democracy as foundational and liberal.¹³ In place of a foundational democratic education that prepares young people to be rational, autonomous, and solitary individuals, I argue that democratic education ought to more closely follow John Dewey's conception of democratic education, which readies persons to live in associations of shared agency. On my view, teaching young people to build thinking habits, to communicate, and to cooperate with different — and not always reasonable — peers, teaches people to take responsibility for the community to which they belong.

A significant portion of my argument for an antifoundational and Deweyan democratic education rest on an alternative conception of agency that takes into account the “thingy” power of guns and the social power of gendered norms. This aspect of my argument extends a number of insights Amy Shuffelon puts forth in “Consider Your Man Card Reissued: Masculine Honor

¹³ Benjamin Barber, *Strong Democracy: Participatory Politics for a New Age* by Benjamin Barber, First Edition, Twentieth-Anniversary Edition, With a New Preface edition (University of California Press, 2004).

and Gun Violence.” Drawing from two different accounts of contemporary gun culture, developed by Douglas Kellner and Adam Winkler, Amy Shuffelton argues that we must re-issue honor, and in so doing address our understanding of honor seeking behaviors and norms to make sense of the vast middle ground between the hyper-masculine “gun nuts” and the gender-egalitarian progressives.¹⁴ Shuffelton tells her readers that social norms, like gender, and positional conventions, like honor, must be interrogated and revised to better suit a diverse and egalitarian society. As I understand it, Shuffelton’s proposal demands a particular kind of civic education—one that supports and extends a young person’s capacity to make sense of an associative and shared middle ground wherein social conventions, positions, and norms are interrogated as causal actors. Moreover, I agree with Shuffelton’s analysis of Douglas Kellner’s *Guys and Guns Amok: Domestic Terrorism and School Shootings from the Oklahoma City Bombing to the Virginia Tech Massacre*. Shuffelton states that Kellner maintains “an esteem/competitive sense of masculine honor” which further obfuscates the middle ground made up of men with various attachments to masculinity and guns such as Adam Winkler. (I take up Winkler’s text below.) Here, it is worth noting Kellner’s text because it is a useful analysis of hyper-masculinity, masculine entitlement, a harried gun culture, and the media spectacle that links acts of domestic terrorism to school shootings. Additionally, Kellner insightfully turns to the critical pedagogy of Paulo Freire, John Dewey, and Ivan Illich to claim that we must teach young people about the connections between education, technology, and democracy if our aim is to make explicit the complex factors that contribute to school gun violence.¹⁵ Hence, even though Kellner dichotomizes masculinity and fails to explain exactly what learning about the

¹⁴ Shuffelton, “Consider Your Man Card Reissued,” August 1, 2015, 399.

¹⁵ Douglas Kellner, *Guys and Guns Amok: Domestic Terrorism and School Shootings from the Oklahoma City Bombing to the Virginia Tech Massacre*, 1 edition (Boulder, CO: Routledge, 2008), 162.

connections between technology, democracy and education will solve, he does introduce a number of issues that foreground this dissertation.

Before commencing this analysis, I want to begin with a bit of history. First, about rampage school gun violence itself. The questions here are: when did rampage school gun violence become a phenomenon, and what distinguishes a rampage from a regular act of gun violence? Second, I focus on contemporary interpretations of the Second Amendment. As I see it, America's gun problem is a part of this story insofar as it too revolves around notions of intentional rational agents who have a constitutional right to own a gun. In fact, in later pages I will argue that foundational democratic education supports the individual in thinking of himself as the exclusive agentic actor. If my argument holds, then an additional implication of this project is that how we go about educating American children about democracy ought to be a part of our conversations about our gun problem. This chapter will conclude by delineating my modest intention for this project: to see what the problem of rampage school gun violence can help us understand about the limitations of liberal democratic education and to discern antifoundational democratic educational practices that might stop the rampaging. In this final section, I briefly establish the structure of the chapters that follow.

Rampage School Gun Violence

Steven Mintz's book on the history of American childhood ends at the dawn of the 21st century. Beneath an image of the Columbine shooters he writes, "The century of the child ended with a bang, not a whimper...Not only was school violence not a new phenomenon; it had actually peaked during the 1992-93 school year... Yet what made these school shootings especially shocking was that the violence had spread from urban to rural and suburban areas and

involved multiple victims.”¹⁶ As Mintz notes, violence in schools was not new. Rather, what was novel about the outbreak of rampage school gun violence was the type of violence, the location of the act, targets of the violence, and the perpetrators of the violence. Between 1974 and 1990, only two incidents could be called rampage school shootings. This stands in stark contrast to the 7-year stretch between 1992 and 1999, when at least 11 mass school shootings occurred. Prior to 1992, such shootings were anomalies, so infrequent and random that they did not warrant special interrogation as a distinct or especially interesting problem.

A fully fleshed out definition of the phenomena that I have been calling rampage school gun violence includes three parts. The ensuing subsections are dedicated to these: the place, the shooter, and the victims. These key features are not the only similarities instances of rampage school gun violence share, but they are essential elements of a complex and complicated situation. Sociologists, like Katherine Newman, define a rampage school shooting as: a shooting with multiple and often symbolic victims chosen at random, a shooting that takes place on a public stage at or within the school, and a shooting that involve either students or former students of school.¹⁷ I am less interested in definitional categories that demarcate the rampage at Sandy Hook Elementary School from the rampage at Columbine High School. Instead, I am interested in the ways in which the key dimensions of the phenomena which include, the place, the shooter and the victims, highlight the complexity of rampage school gun violence.¹⁸

¹⁶ Steven Mintz, *Huck's Raft: A History of American Childhood*, First Harvard University Press paperback ed., 2006 edition (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 2006), 376.

¹⁷ Katherine S. Newman, “Roots of a Rampage,” *The Nation*, December 19, 2012, <https://www.thenation.com/article/roots-rampage/>.

¹⁸ Nils Bockler et al., eds., *School Shootings: International Research, Case Studies, and Concepts for Prevention* (New York: Springer, 2013), [//www.springer.com/us/book/9781461455257](https://www.springer.com/us/book/9781461455257).

Place

Place is the essential part of the phenomena. In the case of rampage school gun violence, place includes both the site of the shooting and the location of the school. As of 2018, mass shootings happen at various public locations—malls, concerts, and movie theaters are notable site of rampages.¹⁹ Nonetheless, there has not been an explosion of movie theatre or mall shootings; although, these kind of mass shootings are happening with greater frequency. Schools appear to be significant sites that, beginning in the 1990s, invite or incite this particular kind of violence. Moreover, not all schools have experienced a rampage. Rampages tend to take place at schools in rural and suburban communities and not in urban areas. Thus, two aspects are at play when we talk about the place of a rampage school shooting. One aspect is the institution, the school, and the other is the location of the school.

A rampage school shooting is not just a mass shooting that happens on a school campus; it is a mass shooting that happens at school, because the school and its social architecture are a part of the target. In this way, rampage school shootings are like workplace shootings. On Newman's view, "Two similarities between workplace attacks and school shootings are noteworthy. First, like school shooters, workplace shooters are arguably attacking not just individuals but the institution itself. School shooters may be angry at the entire social system of the school and the community."²⁰ The second similarity is that school shooters, like workplace shooters, often feel the institution has played a part in their marginalization and misfortune.

¹⁹ Louis Klarevas and Christopher Price, *Rampage Nation: Securing America from Mass Shootings*, Unabridged edition (Audible Studios on Brilliance Audio, 2016).

²⁰ Katherine S. Newman et al., eds., *Rampage: The Social Roots of School Shootings* (New York: Basic Books, 2004), 58.

Schools, in particular American high schools, are places laden with expectations—they are places where children build an identity, become adults, make friends, and experience many of the firsts that define adult life. In “Gun Violence and The Meaning of American Schools,” Bryan Warnick and his colleagues parse out at least three reasons why schools might be interpreted as appropriate sites of gun violence.²¹ First, schools are sites of coercion and force where students experience continuous “microaggressions.” For instance, teachers force students to sit and raise their hand; some peers might force other peers to do something against their will; and school policies often dictate what students can wear, say, and bring to school. Given the amount of coercion in the school environment, it is not surprising some youth get angry at the institution itself. The second reason schools might have become the site of rampage gun violence is the expectation that at school one will find “romance, friendship, progress, and refuge,” say Warnick and his coauthors. Developing young people expect to find like-minded peers, “their people,” and when that expectation is met with ridicule their sense of self suffers. The third reason, which is intricately related to the second, is that popular culture (movies like *The Breakfast Club*, *Ferris Bueller’s Day Off*, and *Ten Things I Hate About You* among many others) tells young people that they will discover and get to express their unique identity to a group of accepting peers. When any or all of these expectations are thwarted—when a student does not find a peer group, has trouble finding love, friendship, or refuge, *and* experiences the everyday coercion of the school environment—extreme violence against the school, like rampage gun violence, does not seem as shocking.

Further compounding the emphasis on place in rural and suburban settings, where all but one rampage school shootings has taken place since 1970, the school is often the *only* public

²¹ Warnick, Kim, and Robinson, “Gun Violence and the Meaning of American Schools.”

stage for students.²² For these young people, the school is the single public place students can call their own. It is where they get to demonstrate and receive validation of their identity; it is their *stage*. By way of contrast, urban settings generally feature more public places, some with greater significance, note Newman and her colleagues.²³ In Chicago, for instance, students have their school, but also public parks, their block, public transportation, and student centers. This does not mean there is less violence in urban environments, but that gun violence perpetrated by young people is diffused among public stages that hold stronger significance for urban youth.²⁴

The fact that rampage school shootings tend to take place in places without a history of everyday gun violence, the likes of which one finds in urban cities like Chicago or New York, is noteworthy. The dissonance of the event is part of what makes an outbreak of rampage school gun violence so troublesome. Newman and her coauthors say the very things that make small towns and suburban neighborhoods “safe”—friendly neighbors, close knit communities, strong families, and vibrant religious life—contribute to mental health issues, notably depression, in teen boys. Newman and colleagues put it this way, “these Edens of social capital are not so exempt from the familiar adolescent rights of bullying and social exclusion.”²⁵ Rather, they are places that *imagine* themselves as immune to these adolescent rights and to the drama of the American teen.

If the American school is the only public stage for suburban and rural youth, then there is nothing spontaneous or especially noteworthy about the shooter’s choice of target. The school is

²² Newman, “Roots of a Rampage.”

²³ Newman et al., *Rampage: The Social Roots of School Shootings*.

²⁴ Cornell, *School Violence*. Joy D. Osofsky, ed., *Children in a Violent Society* (Guilford Press, 1998).

²⁵ Newman et al., *Rampage: The Social Roots of School Shootings*, 116.

where the shooters have learned what it means to be a member of a community. It is the space where they have been invited to become and then denied the space to be.

The Shooter

A few traits link rampage school shooters: they tend to be male, they are often bullied, some severely, and the bullying generally has something to do with the shooters' performance of heteronormative gender identities. Beyond these descriptors, many school shooters share individual vulnerabilities toward mental illness, have unhealthy family lives, and play violent video games.²⁶ Following a rampage, some of these traits become explanatory rationalizations for the event. Some will say video games are the cause; while, others will blame mental illness or the shooter's home life.²⁷ Yet, any attempt to blame one factor, is an attempt to oversimplify the complexity of our associative behaviors. Given the variability of youth development and human experience, this section is an attempt to highlight some of the experiences that shooters share. It is composed with the recognition that it is impossible to single out potential shooters via their shared traits and that individual humans are actors in complex causal networks.

All but one rampage school shooter has been male. As one *Times* commentator puts it, "What do these shooting have in common? Guns, yes. But also, boys. Girls aren't pulling the triggers. It's boys. It's almost always boys."²⁸ Brenda Spencer, the only female school shooter, was 16 in 1979 when she took aim at the elementary school across the street from her home. Although accounts agree that Brenda's home life was unhealthy and neglectful, her stated

²⁶ Newman et al., *Rampage: The Social Roots of School Shootings*.

²⁷ Cornell, *School Violence*.

²⁸ Michael Ian Black, "Opinion | The Boys Are Not All Right," *The New York Times*, February 21, 2018, sec. Opinion, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/21/opinion/boys-violence-shootings-guns.html>.

reasons for shooting members of the school community remain contradictory. She claimed she was on drugs the morning of the shooting, but reports said otherwise. She claimed abuse at the hand of her father, but not until 2001. The only sure evidence that remains is what she told reporters on the morning of the shooting, “I just don’t like Monday’s.”²⁹ Since Brenda was one of the first school shooters, and remains the only girl, her story is interesting but frustratingly opaque. What are we to make of the reports that she was a “tomboy” who took after her father, that she fantasized about becoming a sniper, that her home life was unhealthy and possibly abusive?³⁰ Even though we cannot draw causal links from Brenda’s testimony to the shooting, her story is noteworthy for two reasons. One, she is the only girl. Two, in most respects her story parallels the boys who will follow in her footsteps.

In the social economy of the American high school, heteronormative gender identities tend to ensure popularity and status. Like Brenda, many male shooters do not adequately perform their heteronormative gender identity in the eyes of their peers. As Newman and colleagues put it, “Masculinity is central to what makes a popular boy the king of the mountain” and he becomes king by physically dominating on the football field or basketball court.³¹ The popular, masculine, and *powerful* also tend to “get the girls.” Of the 11 rampage school shooters between 1992 and 1999, all but one boy was either dumped by a girl, harassed for his un-manly appearance, sexually abused, or called gay. In the case of rampage school shooters, male-on-

²⁹ Caitlin Lovinger, “The Nation: After the Madness; Violence, Even Before the Internet,” *The New York Times*, April 25, 1999, sec. Week In Review, <https://www.nytimes.com/1999/04/25/weekinreview/the-nation-after-the-madness-violence-even-before-the-internet.html>.

³⁰ “Tomboy and Gun Enthusiast - The New York Times,” accessed March 13, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/1979/01/30/archives/tomboy-and-gun-enthusiast-ammunition-for-small-army.html>.

³¹ Newman et al., *Rampage: The Social Roots of School Shootings*, 144.

male gendered harassment, which generally goes by the name of bullying is an important precursor to the violence of the rampage school shooting.³²

Like all young people, school shooters are deeply involved in the process of figuring out who they are and who they want to be. Unlike the majority of the peers, school shooters often lack a healthy group of likeminded peers with whom they can share their anxieties. To this end, Newman and her colleagues report that, “a quarter of students who committed suicide on school campus were described as popular, preppies, jocks or athletes, compared with only 5 percent of shooters in multiple victim fatalities.”³³ These numbers come from the Center for Disease Control and are based on a small population; nevertheless, the distinction is apt. Those who lash out against their peers are those who do not feel they have peers. Moreover, the marginal or excluded often suffer the most abuse. Newman reports that a young man from California, who killed two peers, faced bullying so severe that “it bordered on torture.” Similarly, the Columbine shooters had chairs kicked out from under them, food pelted at them across the cafeteria, were beaten up, and were forced to push pennies along the ground with their noses.³⁴

Insofar as rampage school gun shootings need a shooter, the shooter must be captured in the dimensions of how we talk about the violence. That said, each shooter is a unique individual whose compound experiences lead him to rampage. The impossibility of prediction does not mean there is nothing to say about the shooters’ shared experience, as this brief section highlights. All shooters experienced extreme difficulty developing an identity that adheres to the heteronormative standards of the high school social economy, the result of which is gendered

³² Fast, *Ceremonial Violence*.

³³ Newman et al., *Rampage: The Social Roots of School Shootings*, 241.

³⁴ Fast, *Ceremonial Violence*, 184.

harassment and the perception of marginalization by the peers who matter to one's sense of self.³⁵

The Victims

The final element of the definition of rampage school gun violence regards the victims. While I have made it clear that the school is one target, rampage school shootings extinguish more than the life of the school. The loss of human life is what distinguishes a rampage school shooting from an everyday instance of gun violence on a school campus. To distinguish regular school gun violence from a rampage school shooting, Jonathan Fast says the victims must number at least two, not to include the shooter(s) who often commit suicide.³⁶ For Newman, there must be multiple victims and some of the victims must be chosen at random and for what they represent. In other words, most rampage school shooters do not seek out specific human targets. Instead, they shoot at random hoping to kill representatives of the social hierarchy of which they are marginal members.

Although rampages are distinguished from regular school shootings by the number of dead, the victims include those who were present and injured during the shooting, those who were present and psychologically affected, as well as the parents, friends, and family of the slain children and shooter(s). Of note, many survivors have become champions for stronger gun laws and safer schools. Organization like the Million Mom's March and Everytown for Gun Safety are the direct result of school gun violence. Moreover, following the Sandy Hook rampage Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America began organizing marches, protests, and

³⁵ Newman et al., *Rampage: The Social Roots of School Shootings*. Shuffelton, "Consider Your Man Card Reissued," August 1, 2015.

³⁶ Fast, *Ceremonial Violence*, 14–15.

gathering members and money. In 2018 Mom's Demand Action had 200,000 members and is backed by millions of dollars in funding.³⁷ Lest one think adults are doing all of the work, following the February 2018 rampage at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, students staged walk outs, have taken to social media to enact stronger gun laws in Florida and take on politicians, and have encouraged companies to divest from the National Rifle Association (NRA).³⁸ This is to say, although rampage school gun violence has continued to wreak havoc on American society and education, the survivors are working to change the shape of the future.

Guns and Rampage School Shootings

Newman and her coauthors argue that a constellation of necessary, but not sufficient conditions, contribute to the explosion of rampage school gun violence. The five conditions are: the shooter's perception of self as marginal, the shooter's individual vulnerabilities such as abuse or a family history of mental illness, the nature of schools' organizational structure, the availability of violent cultural scripts, and access to guns. That said, there is more to "access to guns" than simply the ability to find a rifle when one goes looking. Ready access to guns is a symptom of a culture, politics, and education wedded to studying war.

Americans have a complex historical relationship with guns, and it is a relationship that is often simplified in contemporary gun debates. In his study of democracy in an armed society, philosopher Firmin DeBrabander puts Americans' relationship with guns this way:

"Guns are engrained in our national identity and have a privileged place in the country's founding narrative. The War for Independence was sparked by Minutemen, ordinary gun-

³⁷ Mark Follman, "These Women Are the NRA's Worst Nightmare," *Mother Jones* (blog), accessed March 13, 2018, <https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2014/09/moms-demand-action-guns-madd-shannon-watts-nra/>.

³⁸ Dahlia Lithwick, "Why Are the Parkland Teens So Good at This? Their Public School Prepared Them For It.," *Slate Magazine*, February 28, 2018, <https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2018/02/the-student-activists-of-marjory-stoneman-douglas-high-demonstrate-the-power-of-a-full-education.html>.

owning citizens, intent on securing their liberty. Their actions were sanctioned by the Founding Fathers, who inscribed the right to bear arms in the Constitution. For Thomas Jefferson and his contemporaries, the Second Amendment was deemed a critical measure for protecting democratic freedoms and the sovereignty going forward... Perhaps it is our intimate relationship with guns—if not in our everyday lives, then in our cultural imagination and national identity—that inclines the voting public to delay action on gun control, or at least, not to object too strenuously to the positions of the gun rights movement.”³⁹

As DeBrabander notes, guns are an integral part of American’s democratic imagination and history even for those of who do not own a gun.

Adam Winkler tells us that one of the reasons Americans have such a difficult time appreciating our gun problem is because the right to bear arms is one of the “oldest and most firmly established rights in America.”⁴⁰ That is, even though the constitutional right to bear arms, the one to which many refer, was nearly left off the Bill of Rights, forty-three state constitutions enshrine the right to bear arms and many of these provisions date back to the America’s founding.⁴¹ Yet, the parallel history of strong gun regulation, the likes of which existed for much of America’s history, is met with skepticism and outright denial by contemporary gun advocates, says Winkler. Moreover, the primary reason contemporary debates about gun rights in America are framed as an either/or situation resides with rise of the modern NRA.

Prior to the 1960s the NRA’s signature publication, the *National Rifleman*, says little to nothing about the Second Amendment.⁴² This is unsurprising given the decades of court

³⁹ Firmin DeBrabander, *Do Guns Make Us Free?: Democracy and the Armed Society* (New Haven, CT : London: Yale University Press, 2015), x–xi.

⁴⁰ Adam Winkler, *Gunfight: The Battle Over the Right to Bear Arms in America*, 1 edition (New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, 2013), 12. See Haag for more on lengths to which gun manufactures went to craft the gun market.

⁴¹ Winkler, 33.

⁴² Winkler, 65.

precedent that upheld a militia interpretation of the amendment, which reads: “a well regulated militia, being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms, shall not be infringed.”⁴³ The militia theory holds that individuals do not have the right to keep and bear arms. Rather, the right is collective and intended to ensure the state’s ability to defend itself through the maintenance of an armed militia. Following sweeping federal gun control legislation in the form of the NRA-supported National Firearm Act of 1934, the Federal Firearm Act of 1938, and local legislation such as the Revolver Act of 1923 and Sullivan Act of 1911, the 1939 Supreme Court upheld the militia theory and ruled that the Second Amendment applied to “the people of the states as a collective body” of the state. All weapons protected by the amendment were those the state deemed necessary for its own defense, said the court. Since sawed-off shotguns had no relationship with service in the militia they were not protected.⁴⁴ The court did not offer an opinion on whether the amendment applied to individuals or states, yet decade after decade of subsequent rulings took the decision to mean the Second Amendment applied only to states and that it guaranteed a collective state right to arm or disarm citizens. The scholarship that would help win the 2008 *District of Columbia v. Heller* case, the case that would overturn seventy years of militia theory precedent, emerged in the late 1960.

The individual rights view of the Second Amendment found a voice in a self-proclaimed “John F. Kennedy liberal,” litigator, and law professor, Don Kates. Interested in protecting the targets of the Ku Klux Klan by making sure black Americans had the right to defend themselves with a gun, Kates studied the strange wording of the Second Amendment and found evidence

⁴³ “Bill of Rights,” *Bill of Rights Institute* (blog), accessed March 22, 2018, <http://www.billofrightsinstitute.org/founding-documents/bill-of-rights/>.

⁴⁴ Winkler, *Gunfight*, 24.

that “the people” meant individual citizens. Whereas the militia theory read “the people” as a collective state right to regulate a militia, Kates said “the people” pointed to individuals and that, if it pointed to individuals, then black Americans could not be banned from owning a gun. Kates’ evidence was the Bill of Rights itself. He examined other uses of the phrase in the First, Fourth, and Tenth Amendments and found that in all other instances “the people” had been interpreted as a signifier for individual rights. Why should the Second Amendment be any different?⁴⁵

Ironically, the individual rights approach gained popularity in tandem with the racial and civil unrest of the 1960s. The specter of armed, radical black men (like the Black Panthers) inspired both the NRA-backed 1968 Gun Control Act, an effort to take guns away from black persons and coup within the NRA by gun rights advocates who advocated for an individual right to own a gun.⁴⁶ By the mid-1970s, on the advice of Congressman John Dingell, the NRA set up a full-time professional lobbying arm, the leadership of the NRA fell to advocates of the individual rights view, and the NRA updated the engraving on their headquarters to emphasize “the right of the people to keep and bear arms.”⁴⁷ This modern NRA espoused the idea that guns were essential for personal defense and that all efforts by the government to grab guns was the expression of a tyrannical government. The new NRA inspired nine states to add gun rights to their constitution and sponsored a federal law to expand gun rights in the Firearm Owners Protection Act of 1986.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Winkler, 105–9.

⁴⁶ Winkler, 223–62.

⁴⁷ Winkler, *Gunfight*.

⁴⁸ Winkler, 257.

In 2008, when a substantial challenge to the militia theory came to the Supreme Court, the NRA did everything they could to oppose the case. Fearing the court would hand down an unassailable defense of the militia theory which would undercut the profits of gun manufactures and bankrupt the NRA, the NRA tried to keep the case off of the docket. And, if, against the odds, the court did uphold an individual rights interpretation, the NRA worried its reason for existence would disappear. The 2008 *DC v. Heller* decision did, in fact, transform “gun rights.” In a 5-4 ruling the court held that the Second Amendment, “protected the right of individuals to own guns for self-defense.”⁴⁹ In the majority opinion, penned by Antonin Scalia, the court argued governmental objectives such as public safety do not justify placing limits on rights enshrined in the Constitution. Yet, as Scalia saw it, the Second Amendment gave individuals the right to possess and use a gun in self-defense only. It did not give individuals the right to own any gun they wanted, did not guarantee the right to use private guns in public, and did not nullify previous gun control legislation. Guns should still be kept out of the hands of criminals and the mentally-ill, said Scalia.

Although the individual rights view of the Second Amendment was substantiated in the 2008 *Heller* ruling, the majority opinion also revealed that the court viewed most gun control legislation as constitutional. In the wake of *Heller*, lower courts have continued to uphold laws that require permits for concealed carry, laws that keep guns away from fathers who don't pay child support, and laws that ban machine guns.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, the NRA and proponents of the individual right to own a gun did come out ahead. In an attempt to avoid another trip to the Supreme Court, where stronger support for the individual rights view could further jeopardize

⁴⁹ Winkler, 278.

⁵⁰ Winkler, *Gunfight*.

attempts to limit guns in society, nearly all gun control legislation since 2008 has been weak and ineffective. Some local lawmakers have even revised legislation in a preemptive concession to gun rights.⁵¹

Fortunately for the NRA, profits have continued to roll in thanks in large part to gun control panics that follow mass shootings. The NRA still thrives off of the trumped-up fear that given the opportunity liberals will grab their guns. Gun rights advocates continue to argue for the liberalization of guns, what I call the “more guns” approach. As they see it, more guns in more places, on more hips, and in more hands will result in a society where no one will dare shoot. They advocate for “stand-your-ground” laws which absolve a shooter who shoots when he feels that his life is in danger, “campus carry” laws that gives college students and professors the right to bring guns to class, and the fortification of soft targets, like schools.⁵²

Post Rampage Schooling

Guns pose a real danger for democratic life. Insofar as democracy is learning to live with differently situated others, it demands conversation, compromise, and accommodation. Imagine attending a school where all the teachers were armed. In educational terms we might ask: are the qualities or habits one needs to become a happy democratic citizen encumbered or misdirected when common education is infected by the more guns approach to solving social problems? And, when common education happens at the barrel of the gun, what does the student learn about his or her place in the renewal of society?

⁵¹ Winkler.

⁵² DeBrabander, *Do Guns Make Us Free?*, 75. Andrew Clark, “The American School Where Teachers Carry a Pen, a Ruler and ... a Gun,” the Guardian, August 17, 2008, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/aug/18/texas.school>.

Schools and the education therein have changed following the outbreak of rampage school gun violence. Many K-12 schools in the United States have instituted preparedness measures for active shooter situations and some are considering new proposals. These include: active shooter drills, lockdown drills, hiring school resource officers, and arming teachers and staff. All of these measures take place in schools that, if targeted by a rampage school shooter, would also be in the process of educating the shooter. After all, rampage school shooters rampage at their school or former school. Hence, students practice blockading their classroom and countering a shooter's advance alongside potential shooters/classmates. Despite the varied scope and scale of these physical measures, nearly all American schools have implemented some kind of rampage preparation.⁵³

The “more guns” approach has inspired calls to hire more police to protect schools and authorized lawmakers to make the case that schools need more guns at the ready. “If only the teachers at Columbine High and the students at Virginia Tech had been armed, the casualties could have been avoided they say. The problem wasn't the loopholes in the background check system. It was the school policy that banned guns on campus,” say the “more guns” advocates.⁵⁴ The Gun Free Schools Act of 1994 mandated a one-year suspension for any student who brought a firearm to school and resulted in a hardening of schools via the zero-tolerance policies. Automatic punishments for any violation of a rule, what is referred to as zero-tolerance, offered a

⁵³ The National Association of School Psychologists and the National Association of School Resource Officers, “Best Practice Considerations for Schools in Active Shooter and Other Armed Assailant Drills,” December 10, 2014, https://www.alicetraining.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/BP_Armed_Assailant_Drills_Final-2nd-Revision.pdf; Evie Blad, “Do Schools’ ‘Active-Shooter’ Drills Prepare or Frighten? - Education Week,” *Education Week*, September 20, 2017, <https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2017/09/20/do-schools-active-shooter-drills-prepare-or-frighten.html>; Cornell, *School Violence*.

⁵⁴ Winkler, *Gunfight*, 76.

quick “get-tough” solution to the mounting explosion of rampage school gun violence. The hope was that students would be deterred from bringing guns to school, and thus school shooters would reconsider their action, and if not their action, then at least the target. In reality, school districts across the country began suspending students for using firearm facsimiles, like toy guns and laser pointers, and for pointing finger-guns at each other. Unsurprisingly to the “more guns” camp, rampage school shootings continued. To their mind, the Gun Free School Act punished good kids, some of whom may have had guns, and broadcast the weak or soft security of most American schools to would be predators. In place of the Gun Free School Act, which was reauthorized in No Child Left Behind, the “more guns” camp might pass something like an “armed schools act.”⁵⁵

Some school districts have altogether ignored the Gun Free School Act. In 2008, the same year the *Heller* decision was handed down, the town of Harrold, Texas announced that, “carefully selected and trained teachers” would be allowed to bring loaded weapons to school. Harrold’s superintendent explained his rationale, “we’ve had a very disturbing trend of school shootings in the US. It is my belief that it is caused by making schools gun-free zones.”⁵⁶ Campus carry bills, concealed carry on college campuses, follow the same kind of logic. If college students and professors are allowed to carry guns around campus, then they can stave off the shooter until the police arrive, the story goes. Ten states currently allow campus carry and twenty-three leave the campus carry policies up to individual colleges and universities. One

⁵⁵ “Report on the Implementation of the Gun-Free Schools Act in the States and Outlying Areas,” Executive Summary for U.S. Department of Education, November 2009, <https://www2.ed.gov/about/reports/annual/gfsa/gfsafinalrpt200567.pdf>.

⁵⁶ Clark, “The American School Where Teachers Carry a Pen, a Ruler and ... a Gun.”

state, Tennessee, allows professors, but not students, with licenses to carry their firearms on campus.⁵⁷

Taken together, zero tolerance policies, active shooter drills, and changes in the physical use of the school building, represent the hardening of schools to suit post-rampage schooling. Fittingly, DeBrabander puts it this way, “Schools that are armed and fortified teach children that the world is a dangerous place—they teach students to see manifold defensive gestures as second nature.”⁵⁸ I would add post rampage schools educate students as much as they do teachers. Both teachers and students practice school shooter drills. Both imagine what it might be like to see someone they know aiming an automatic rifle at them. Although few have spoken about arming K-12 students, the NRA and pro-gun advocates often speak about arming teachers and many states have allowed college students to arm themselves.

My Modest Intention

Often debates about rampage school gun violence are knee-jerk, ill informed, and impulsive. Although rampages catalyze the issue of gun violence in schools, the challenge of addressing rampage school gun violence has resulted in stop-gap policies rather than changes that would stop the rampaging. My aim is to think about the prolonged presence of rampage school gun violence, and to do so by putting the problem in educational terms. As such, the following chapters will explore how the ways in which we teach young people about what it means to be a democratic citizen affect the continuation of rampage school gun violence and America’s overarching gun problem. My primary argument is that the mistake of teaching citizens to locate agency exclusively in the individual leaves us with a bunch of individuals

⁵⁷ Ben Boggs, “Guns on Campus: Overview” (National Conference of State Legislators, March 5, 2017), <http://www.ncsl.org/research/education/guns-on-campus-overview.aspx>.

⁵⁸ DeBrabander, *Do Guns Make Us Free?*, 171.

pointing guns at each other and no resources to build a society. On my view, the solution is to begin with a conception of shared agency that is built on the fact of association and baked into an alternative conception of democracy, which builds democratic and social habits within citizens.

In Chapter 2, I explore liberal democratic civic education and claim that civic education of this sort hinders one's ability to address school gun violence. I argue that civic education situated in liberal democracy teaches citizens to be rational, autonomous, tolerant agents and that, in so doing, it teaches the individual to view oneself as a unique center of internal rational agency. The result of which, I argue, is a collection of liberal citizens who might support freedom and equality, but who are ill equipped to make and renew democracy from the associative behaviors that constitute human life. To support this contention, I explore Eamonn Callan's vision of liberal democratic education as it is one of the best articulations of its kind.⁵⁹ Callan deals with contemporary neoliberalism and thinks carefully about differently situated persons who must contribute to the foundations of liberal democratic society.

Chapter 3 is devoted to building an alternative conception of agency in which humans, nonhuman things, and social power act within, and on, the environment. Drawing from the work of the new materialist Bruno Latour, I argue that things have the power to become agents in an actor network. Then, turning to Michel Foucault, I explore the ways in which we can say the same about social power. Drawing from Foucault's analysis of disciplinary and productive power, I argue social gender norms produce and discipline individual bodies and are, therefore, actors. This chapter brings to light the complex causal process that unfolds in any experience and argues that an explication of this process aids the growth of one's ability to purposefully affect one's environment. That is, for an individual to form purposes, create habits, and develop a

⁵⁹ Eamonn Callan, *Creating Citizens: Political Education and Liberal Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

personality, he or she must be able to address the powerful actors that mediate his or her experience. The liberal individual's belief in intentional rational agency not only obscures the agency of other actors, it reduces his capacity to form purposes, make plans, and act based on his associative experiences as an actor in a network of distributed agency.

Chapter 4 argues that a notion of shared agency is baked into antifoundational democracy. In this chapter, my intent is to problematize the materialist pretheoretical assumptions on which liberal democracy rests. In so doing, I argue the new materialist, alternative conception of agency, explicated in Chapter 3, is both a rejection of, and an alternative to, the materialist frame. Drawing this conversation into the political, I then turn to Benjamin Barber and John Dewey and claim that an antifoundational theory of democracy relies on an alternative conception agency. The final step in this chapter is to situate the Deweyan notion of "flexible habits" as the practice by which individuals acquire an understanding of, and ability to impact, their environment. Finally, in Chapter 5, I build an alternative vision of democratic education based on the theory of antifoundational democracy. Thinking alongside John Dewey, I articulate a vision of education for antifoundational democratic citizenship where children learn to be citizens by practicing democracy; where democracy works because growth mediates educational outcomes; and where the environment reflects the means and ends of an antifoundational democratic education.

The final chapter ends with a few policy recommendations for contemporary post rampage schooling. These policy recommendation proffer ways to put the philosophical vision of antifoundational democratic education to work in schools. My modest hope is that these suggestions will give educators the tools to dismantle and rethink the post rampage education, which has transformed schools into bunkers and children in citizen solider of foundational democracy.

CHAPTER TWO

FOUNDATIONAL DEMOCRATIC EDUCATION

The question for this chapter is, what kind of citizen does foundational democratic education aim to raise? To answer this question, I turn to Eamonn Callan's plea for the political education of virtuous, liberal democratic citizens in *Creating Citizens: Political Education and Liberal Democracy*.⁶⁰ Callan is rightly worried about neoliberalism. He frames his account of virtuous, liberal democratic citizenship as a response to the contemporary challenge of neoliberal social change. Callan's concern for real-world problems and his attempt to deal with one, neoliberalism, makes Callan's articulation of foundational liberal citizenship a sound example of liberal democratic education. His account draws inspiration from the tradition of liberal perfectionism, an idea which challenges notions of thin liberal neutrality, and focuses on the government's role in liberal "soul-craft."⁶¹ As a liberal perfectionist, Callan argues that the perpetuation of liberal democracy requires an education in particular liberal values, values which will dissolve the nightmarish social reorganization that results from neoliberalism's ascendance. Callan's account is a robust argument for liberal democratic citizenship and its corollary educational structure. In my opinion, it is the best case that can be made for civic education in foundational democracy.

⁶⁰ Callan.

⁶¹ Kwame Appiah, *The Ethics of Identity*, First Edition (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007). See Appiah for a good discussion of liberal perfectionism

Although Callan makes a strong case for liberal democratic education that teaches young people to be reasonable, agentic, and tolerant, there are blind spots in this educational vision that make it nearly impossible for civic education rooted in this frame to deal with gun violence. The blind spots come from liberal democracy's focus on the ontologically unique and autonomous agent, which limits the theory's ability to make sense of shared agency. That said because Callan take seriously the demands of human relationships and the complexity of crafting a life in a world that rightly values pluralism, it's important to spell out civic education for liberal democracy. Only then can we see the limitations of the frame the inspires this vision of citizenship education.

Foundational democratic citizenship is the kind of citizenship most Americans are accustomed to thinking about when they regard democracy. Anywhere that democracy is equated with individual rights and liberties to do as one pleases and with making choices about what to buy, where to live, or who to vote for, notions of foundational democracy are evident. Yet, even the best conceptualization of education for foundational democratic citizenship—a conceptualization that supports individuals and communities, looks to extend freedom and equality, and is appropriately wary of the marketization of political relations—raises citizens who value freedom, but who are unaccustomed to interdependent living and “making democracy.” My point is this, foundational democratic education, as Callan imagines it, does educate the liberal soul to value freedom and equality; however, without education in the antifoundational habits of communication and cooperation, the liberal has little experience making democracy while encumbered by non-ideal and complex real-world situations. To make and sustain democracy, children must learn to make sense of their *interdependence* and the associative behaviors that enable them to craft communities. On my view, democratic education that focuses exclusively on foundational, liberal virtues perpetuates gun violence because it

teaches individual citizens to see themselves as autonomous and ontologically unique agentic individuals who must emancipate oneself from one another and society.

In this chapter, I will argue that Callan presents an ideal picture of education for foundational liberal citizenship, but not of for democratic citizenship. This chapter will proceed in three sections. First, I will situate Callan's dystopian vision of a liberal democracy weakened by a neoliberal haunting, a haunting which replaces liberal values with market ones, because Callan's account of liberal citizenship education is intended to dispel this unsavory turn of events. Second, I will think alongside Callan and make a case for liberal democracy built on foundations of rational thought, autonomy, and tolerance. I will trace Callan's argument and the social contract tradition on which he draws. In so doing, I will engage Callan's primary inspiration, John Rawls, and other standard bearers of the liberal tradition.⁶² In section three, I will situate the educational vision that accompanies Callan's proposal, and in section four, I will raise some concerns about whether Callan's proposal is suited for democratic citizenship. In the end, Callan's goal is to argue public education in liberal democratic societies should be aimed at teaching all children how to craft liberal souls. Liberals like Callan are of the opinion that the institutions of liberal democracy are in the business of making our lives better by making us better citizens. That is liberal democratic education is aimed at crafting individual souls. The question is, can foundational democracy teaching citizens to be both autonomous and interdependent? Put in the context of rampage school gun violence, does an education suffuse with liberal soul-craft and its ideal of ethical self-authorship help young citizens make sense of the complex causal networks and actors contribute to the situation?

⁶² John Rawls, *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement* (Harvard University Press, 2001). Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, Reprint edition (New York: Basic Books, 2013).

Neoliberalism the Nightmare

Callan begins *Creating Citizens* by asking his readers to imagine a society where wealth is distributed according to whatever version of justice the reader favors, the formal rights and requirements of a liberal democracy exist, and peace reigns. In this same society it is also the case that people don't bother to vote, mass media ignores what consumers do not care about, political elites rule, and citizens believe the point of their lives is to satisfy their desires. As a result, most citizens become overly committed to one way of life and shun contact with differently situated others.⁶³ In this formally just and peaceful "Brave New World," as Callan calls it, "the institutions [of liberal democracy] seems poised for collapse ...because the shared public morality that once enlivened them has vanished, and therefore they survive only as a pointless system of taboo or *modus vivendi* among antagonistic groups..."⁶⁴ The nightmare of the "Brave New World" is the political rationality that eats away at that which makes liberal soul-craft possible—a shared reverence for the foundations of liberal democracy.

Callan does not name the thing that inspires his nightmarish construction of the "Brave New World," yet his nightmare is reminiscent of contemporary critiques of neoliberalism. Neoliberalism is the moniker for a form of liberalism that favors the market. When *liberal* modifies democracy, it generally signifies the expansion of freedom and rights. When *neo* modifies liberal, it signifies the expansion of market rationality to the realm of free and equal citizenship. And when neoliberalism modifies democracy, market ideology repurposes democratic practices. In this way, neoliberalism is not merely a new iteration of the market-based

⁶³ Callan, *Creating Citizens*, 1–2.

⁶⁴ Callan, 2.

liberalism as it is described by Adam Smith.⁶⁵ Rather, neoliberalism is a contemporary political ideology that applies the principles of a market economy to all facets of social organization. In fact, according to contemporary political theorist Wendy Brown, the hollowing out of democracy rests on the global ascendancy of neoliberal rationality and the subsequent marketization of political relationships.⁶⁶ In other words, the neoliberal values, such as accountability, transparency, and choice, reorganize liberal democratic practices. Hence, when neoliberalism becomes a governing idea, choosing anything from a president, to the good life, to your child's public school comes to be treated as democracy. In Brown's words, the "the 'neo' in neoliberalism...carries a social analysis that, when deployed as a form of governmentality, reaches from the soul of the citizen-subject to education policy to practices of empire."⁶⁷ She goes on, "neoliberal rationality, while foregrounding the market, is not only or even primarily focused on the economy; it involves extending and disseminating market values to all institutions and social action, even as the market itself remains a distinctive player."⁶⁸ Thus, Callan bemoans the effect of an economic rationality, what Brown calls neoliberalism, on citizens' participation in political activity. Specifically, he worries neoliberalism will engender the erosion of democratic foundations as citizens become lazy, passive, and incapable of protecting the foundations of liberal democracy from dissolution.

⁶⁵ Adam Smith and Alan B. Krueger, *The Wealth of Nations*, First Thus edition (New York, N.Y: Bantam Classics, 2003).

⁶⁶ Wendy Brown, "Neoliberalism and the End of Liberal Democracy," in *Edgework Critical Essays on Knowledge and Politics* (Berlin, Boston: Princeton University Press, 2009), 37–59, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400826872.37>.

⁶⁷ Brown, 39.

⁶⁸ Brown, 40.

Neoliberalism's political rationality replaces liberal soul-craft with the drive to consume everything from news to education. To stave off the nightmarish fall of liberal democratic institutions that are equipped to shepherd liberal soul-craft, Callan proposes a distinctive political education that puts the foundations of political liberalism over and above the premise of democracy. To save liberal democracy from neoliberalism, Callan suggests doubling down on classical liberal education. As Callan sees it, "liberal politics is a politics of virtue" that promotes the ethical flourishing of its citizens and the state. As a proponent of liberal perfectionism, Callan is in the company of scholars like Amy Gutmann, Meira Levinson, and Harry Brighouse, all of whom argue liberalism proffers a robust ethics; it too is a fighting creed, they say. On the other side of liberal perfectionism is liberal neutrality. On this conception, the government ought to be agnostic in determining the content of citizens' souls because the role of the government is to protect individuals' negative liberties to be left alone. Liberal perfectionists agree that a liberal political education ought to instill specific ideals of character, such as rational thought, autonomy, tolerance of difference, and reciprocity. Jointly these traits of character make up the liberal agent who has exclusive domain over his actions.

Philosophers of Education on Liberal Perfectionism

The next section focuses exclusively on Callan's argument because he places explicit emphasis on the ways in which liberal citizenship education might solve problems related to democratic participation given neoliberalism's social reorganization. Yet, before I move to analyze Callan, it's worth noting the philosophers of education who have devoted serious attention to liberal democracy and its educational virtues. The significant voices I will briefly explicate here include Amy Gutmann, Harry Brighouse, Meira Levinson, as well as Diana Hess and Paula McAvoy.

First, in *Democratic Education*, Amy Gutmann aims to construct a floating theory of democratic education that does not rest upon any theories about human nature. Like Rawls and Callan, she too believes the “...most politically significant features of human nature are products of our education.”⁶⁹ Gutmann argues that most normative theories of education that allow human nature to set the boundaries of educational purpose fall into three categories. First, is what Gutmann calls “the family state.” The “family state” is characterized by Plato’s Kallipolis and it gives exclusive educational authority to the state as a means to establish harmony. The second normative theory is “the state of families.” In the “state of families,” educational authority is located exclusively with parents whose rights include the right to pass along their vision of the good life to their children. Finally, Gutmann calls the third normative theory “the state of individuals.” In the “state of individuals” children are treated as citizens and education maximizes choices without prejudicing children toward one life or another. Hence, the dual goals of opportunity and neutrality guide education in this frame. None of these normative theories is sufficient according to Gutmann. The “family state” defines the good life for individuals. The “state of families” replaces the state with parents and violates the state and children’s rights to have a hand in the direction of education, and the “state of individuals” ushers in the problem of neutrality. Hence, Gutmann argues that states, educators, and parents have a role to play in shaping the education of the young, that cultivating the character of citizens is a legitimate function of education, and that nonrepression and nondiscrimination must guide democratic education.⁷⁰ Gutmann’s theory of democratic education adequately addresses the education of individuals and the creation of communities. She also deals with a capitalistic economic

⁶⁹ Amy Gutmann, *Democratic Education: Revised Edition* (Princeton University Press, 1999), 22.

⁷⁰ Gutmann, 41–42.

rationality, *a la* Milton Friedman, when she takes on the “state of families.”⁷¹ However, Gutmann does not delineate the specific virtues or traits of character that her theory of democratic education ought to instill. Therefore, it is not clear what habits citizens educated in this manner might demonstrate.

In *The Demands of Liberal Education*, Meria Levinson, unlike Gutmann, does in fact detail the traits a liberal education ought to instill. Arguing for weak liberal perfectionism, Levinson states that, when autonomy is defined in the right way, it can justify cotemporary liberalism and ground educational aims within liberal democracy.⁷² Defining autonomy in the right way entails understanding people as fundamentally and principally autarchic, says Levinson. To be autarchic is to see one’s self as an “intentional source of cause-and-effect relationships.”⁷³ Hence, a person is autarchic to the extent that he or she recognizes his or her causative role in events and is autonomous to the extent that the person exercises the “capacity to form a conception of the good, to evaluate ones values and ends with the genuine possibility for revising them should they be found wanting, and then to realize one’s revised ends....”⁷⁴ As Levinson sees it, the autonomous and agentic person must move beyond the capacity to recognize their agentic capacity and must actively exercise critical thinking and reasoning skills as a member of a culture or set of cultures. Hence, Levinson’s autonomous agent is not the atomistic individual with no point of reference or socialization who merely has the capacity to

⁷¹ Milton Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom: Fortieth Anniversary Edition*, First edition edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

⁷² Meira Levinson, *The Demands of Liberal Education* (Oxford, UNITED KINGDOM: Oxford University Press USA - OSO, 1999), 22.

⁷³ Levinson, 24.

⁷⁴ Levinson, 15.

make rational or intentional choices. Levison, thus, states that “a coherent, attractive conception of autonomy must incorporate not just the traditionally recognized conditions for specifically *autonomous* action (critical thinking skills, self-knowledge, etc.) but the conditions for agency or *personality* itself (and therefore also for autonomous agency).”⁷⁵

Levison’s proposition is different from Callan’s in a couple of ways. First, she does not begin with a particular crisis—as does Callan and as do I. Second, Levinson argues that, because the exercise of autonomy is a good for the liberal state, the development of autonomy in children is a legitimate paternalistic action of the liberal state such that “autonomy-promoting liberal education is superior on both normative and empirical grounds to political liberal education.”⁷⁶ On Levinson’s view, the state ought to make available a very limited market in education in which children learn the habits of liberal democracy. Unlike Callan, Levinson rightly, I think, makes a strong case for schooling that teaches children what it means to be an agent and how to act autonomously. Moreover, Levinson argues that political liberals who disregard the embeddedness of identity construction are mistaken. Although Callan positions himself as a comprehensive liberal, like political liberals he does underestimate the power of cultural and social groups over an individual’s ability to become an agent and exercise his autonomy. As Levinson says, “civic identity is thick.”⁷⁷ Nevertheless, Levinson places the same emphasis on the exclusive autonomy of the individual as Callan does. Like Callan’s theory of civic education, the aim of Levinson’s autonomy-developing education is the fostering of a socially and psychologically independent individual. Hence, she accepts that some individuals in

⁷⁵ Levinson, 35. emphasis original.

⁷⁶ Levinson, 22.

⁷⁷ Levinson, 133.

exceptionally needy circumstances or those who are dependent upon others to produce effects, cannot exercise autonomy, at least when they are in circumstances of need or dependence.⁷⁸

Although Levinson aims to provide a weakly perfectionist liberalism in which a culturally embedded autonomy is the central aim of civic education, she too begins with a conception of autonomy that starts us on the wrong foot. I take up Callan's account and not Levinson's in the sections below because he both starts with a crisis to which liberal civic education is designed to respond and because his argument is characteristic of a liberal perfectionist stance that views the education of particular citizens as a necessary and legitimate endeavor.

The two other texts that give serious consideration to a liberal political education are Harry Brighouse's *On Education* and Diana Hess and Paula McAvoy's *The Political Classroom: Evidence and Ethics in Democratic Education*. Like Levinson, Brighouse makes a strong case for a liberal democratic education centered on autonomy. In fact, because Brighouse does not add much to the conversation that is not already taken up by Gutmann or Levinson, I do not think it important to detail his claims here. Hess and McAvoy's text presents a concerted effort to deal with political education, given the crisis of political polarization. Their text is an examination of how civic education ought to be taught and how classrooms should be managed to facilitate such learning. Hess and McAvoy argue that classrooms are, and ought to be, politically nonneutral spaces in which young people learn the particular values of a liberally democratic society.⁷⁹ These values include: political equality, tolerance, autonomy, fairness, as well as political engagement and literacy. Furthermore, they argue these values should be taught in civics classrooms through discussion, debate, and deliberation with peers. While I agree with

⁷⁸ Levinson, 32.

⁷⁹ Diana E. Hess and Paula McAvoy, *The Political Classroom: Evidence and Ethics in Democratic Education*, 1 edition (New York: Routledge, 2014), 5.

what Hess and McAvoy have to say about how political classrooms ought to be constructed and dialogue facilitated therein, they, too, place autonomy, or simply self-government, as an end of democratic education. Yet, since their text does not seriously consider the political theory that supports their understanding of deliberative democracy their text is not an adequate conversational partner regarding the ends and aims of liberal democratic education.

Callan's text is especially interesting for my investigation because he begins with a significant crisis, what I named the "neoliberal nightmare." This is important because I too am beginning with a crisis, albeit a different one. I am interested in different approaches to democratic education and how these approaches to civic education can help us solve specific problems that threaten our democratic future. For Callan this problem is a corrosive economic rationality and for me the problem is rampage school gun violence. Moreover, Callan carefully interrogates the theoretical demands of liberal democratic education. He actively engages the theoretical frame, foundationalism, that support liberal democratic education, and in so doing attempts to deal with the blind spots that I have attributed to the theory—exclusive attribution of agency to the ontologically unique individual.

Foundational Democracy and The Social Contract Tradition

Callan's account of liberal education is a part of the foundationalist theoretical frame and it draws upon social contract thinking. Callan partakes in the tradition by turning to John Rawls to discern the apolitical grounds for human political interactions. While early foundationalists such as Thomas Hobbes and John Locke create a state of nature to justify key features of the human political condition, Callan and Rawls forgo worrying about a hypothetical time when humans were not emmeshed in political interactions and begin with core or essential features all humans share. Even later accounts, like those of Rawls and Callan, which do away with state of nature rationalizations, participate in the tradition, insofar as they begin with essential features of

human existence. In this section, I describe the foundational theoretical frame that leads Callan to argue that three specific ideals of citizenship, autonomy, critical rationality, and tolerance, constitute the soul of the liberal, autonomous agent.

Foundationalism relies on theories of the political that are derived from apolitical considerations of humans. It is the attempt to “justify political institutions without presupposing any political considerations.”⁸⁰ Humans in a state of nature, according to early iterations of the theory, are unattached to any particular form of human interaction or history, and, thus, present a vignette of natural social arrangements. Based on this unadulterated picture of human nature, early foundationalists construct normative claims about the government’s role in human life. Political theorist Arthur Ripstein puts it this way, “in foundationalist theory some set of considerations is held to support a particular form of political order, without itself depending on any substantive assumptions about the legitimacy of particular forms of human interaction.”⁸¹ Foundational accounts of liberal democracy are, therefore, inclined to measure human political capacity and propensity against a vision of natural, free, and apolitical beings; despite the fact that there is little evidence apolitical humans ever existed.

The social contract tradition is the primary mode of discerning the apolitical features of human life. The appeal of state of nature thinking comes from the idea that if we construct our conceptions of political life on visions of a time when all was fair and equal, if not hospitable, then the political principles that emerge will be just and justifiable. The basic components of a social contract are: a state of nature, or a time before institutions, government, and civil society; scarcity and limited goods; an assumption that the survival of men and women mandates some

⁸⁰ Arthur Ripstein, “Foundationalism in Political Theory,” *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 16, no. 2 (1987): 117.

⁸¹ Ripstein, 117.

kind of agreement between individual persons; and a belief in the natural equality of humans.

Martha Nussbaum, a thoughtful critic of the social contract tradition, puts it this way, “through a procedure that assumes no antecedent advantages on the part of any individual, we extract a set of rules that duly protect the interests of all.”⁸² The idea that political principles can arise out of an imaginative state of nature, where hypothetical humans agree on the principles of society, is one of the most significant contributions of the tradition.

Callan looks to the social contract tradition to ground his argument for strengthening foundational democracy. He legitimizes the teaching of psychological traits that will engender public virtue and sustain liberal democracy, such as an interest in questions about the good life, a willingness to engage in deliberative conversations, competence and confidence of judgment, and respect for fellow citizens, by turning to apolitical considerations of human beings. On Callan’s interpretation, these various psychological traits boil down to three foundational and universal competencies: *rational thought, autonomy, and tolerance*. Liberal democracy, places emphasis on the psychological development of the individual person, who in Callan’s phrasing crafts a soul, because it rests on the assumption that humans are fundamentally independent from other another as well as the idea that the malformed or extreme individual who does not cohere with these psychological traits resides outside the political community. I will say more about this inertial frame in Chapter Four. For now, what’s important is the recognition that Callan’s vision of liberal democratic education is situated on assumptions about psychologically independent persons.

The theoretical frame, or foundation, that supports Callan’s interpretation of the interrelated nature of the competencies for foundational liberal citizenship, rational thought,

⁸² Martha C. Nussbaum, *Frontiers of Justice: Disability, Nationality, Species Membership* (Cambridge, Massachusetts London, England: Belknap Press: An Imprint of Harvard University Press, 2007), 10.

autonomy, and tolerance, make sense if one thinks about the way a foundation works to support a building. When erecting a building one must assess the environment, dig deep into the ground, and construct a complex foundation to support the whole structure. The bigger the structure or the softer the ground, the more complex and overlapping the supports must be. Like a Chicago high-rise that is built on massive pillars of reinforced concrete, liberal democracy rests on a thick layer of intermingled assumptions that arise from a premise that goes like this: because we cannot know for sure which form of government is legitimate, we ought to discern the foundations of human political life from universal, shared, and apolitical traits.

Callan's conceptualization of political education for liberal democracy begins with John Rawls' take on the social contract tradition. Building on Rawls thinking, but disagreeing with Rawls' own assessment of his political liberalism, Callan argues that Rawls' political liberalism is actually quite comprehensive and that Rawls' theory of political liberalism puts powerful constraints on how we should think about political life. Rawls calls these constraints the burdens of judgment. For his part, Callan places the burdens of judgment at the center of his vision of liberal political education. In fact, Callan's theory of political education is decidedly Rawlsian.

Rawls replaces the state of nature with the "original position," a thought experiment designed to facilitate "public and self-clarification."⁸³ In the "original position" people are imagined to shed the trappings of race, class, gender, ability status, and religious affiliation, to become unencumbered and neutral reasoners.⁸⁴ Placed behind what Rawls calls the "veil of ignorance" members of the original position are left with only the capabilities that are natural to

⁸³ Rawls, *Justice as Fairness*, 17.

⁸⁴ Callan, *Creating Citizens*. To see more about Callan's interpretation of the original position see pages 230-231, endnote to Chapter 4 number 2. Callan's states that the theory he lays out in *Creating Citizens* draw from Rawls' pre-original position work (8). That said, Callan's views of reason and the reasonable citizens are clearly linked to Rawls' thinking about establishing a well ordered society, of which the original position is an integral part.

all members of their species—rational thought and the ability to communicate through language. Their job is to define the rules that will govern a just society. Drawing from the Kantian tradition, Rawls argues that these deontological subjects, who have been stripped of social and cultural identifiers, are equipped to establish a society based on the principles of justice because they must reason based on their knowledge of the universal features that humans share. For Rawls and Callan, the original position illuminates a political conception of the person who has two moral powers. The first moral power is a sense of justice and the second is a conception of the good. Coupled with the ability to reason, which comes with species membership, these moral powers imbue citizens with dignity, constitute the basis of their formal equality, and help citizens deal with the facts of pluralism.⁸⁵ On Callan's view, the burdens of judgment, that is the moral responsibility to make judgments about the good and the just even though our powers of reason can be swayed by historical circumstance, mandate a conception of citizenship as reasonableness.

In Rawls' thought experiment there is no environment to shape human nature; instead, reasonableness stands in for human nature. In fact, the two moral powers which substantiate the idea that persons are free and equal are found in our ability to reason. The first moral power, a capacity for justice, is described by Rawls this way, "it is the capacity to understand, to apply, and to act from the principles of political justice."⁸⁶ The capacity for a conception of the good, the second power, is "a capacity to have, to revise, and rationally to pursue a conception of the good."⁸⁷ Rawls is careful to differentiate reason from rationality. While it might be rational for

⁸⁵ John Rawls, *Political Liberalism: Expanded Edition* (Columbia University Press, 2011), 19; Callan, *Creating Citizens*, 24.

⁸⁶ Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 18–19.

⁸⁷ Michael J. Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice* (Cambridge University Press, 1998), 19.

one to pursue his self-interest, if the pursuit of his interest harms another, it might not be reasonable. In other words, rationality is a core attribute of human beings and reasonableness is a feature of the social contract; it is the fence that imposes constraints on rational parties, says Rawls. Reasonable people are individuals who have accepted the social contract and who agree to craft a political situation based on the burdens of judgment.⁸⁸

Rawls is not alone in placing the capacity to reason at the center of human propensity in an apolitical situation. In fact, Rawls draws on John Locke. Locke's state of nature is a thought experiment with an environment. As Locke sees it, humans are born with natural liberty into a world governed by laws of nature, "the state of Nature has a law of Nature to govern it, which obliges everyone, and reason, which is that law, teaches all mankind who will but consult it, that being all equal and independent, no one ought to harm another in his life, health, liberty or possessions..."⁸⁹ Locke is careful to clarify that the state of nature is one of liberty and not license insofar as it is ruled by reason. Despite the laws of nature, which induce men to act upon their freedom reasonably, the "inconveniences" of the environment are many. Not everyone respects the rights of others; justice is arbitrary; war with each other and outsiders is harsh and unorganized, and resources are scarce. As Locke understands it, the state of nature is not absolute war, but it does hold the possibility of war and the promise of arbitrary invasion of one's property. Thus, the social contract legislates the creation of a commonwealth to protect persons natural rights to liberty, life, and property.⁹⁰ In Locke's imagination, the state of nature is a land

⁸⁸ Rawls, *Justice as Fairness*, 35–36.

⁸⁹ John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, ed. C. B. Macpherson (Indianapolis, Ind: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1980), II.6.

⁹⁰ Locke, IX.

ruled by reason where men are content to pursue their own ends. The social contract merely codifies one's right to pursue his vision of the good life in one's corner of the world.

Foundational Liberal Citizenship

Three important ideals of citizenship come out of the social contract tradition: reason, autonomy, and tolerance. In fact, Rawls, Locke, and Callan agree; the ability of humans to reason is a psychological trait that grounds the emergence of liberal democracy. In the Rawlsian interpretation, apolitical people not only have moral powers, but they are also capable of discerning the just structures of a political society because they are rational and can be reasonable. In the Lockean construction, the law of nature imbues all humans with rationality, and thereby the ability to agree to a contract that works to make good neighbors out of good fences. Rationality is both pre-political and universally distributed. The social contract not only formalizes the principles that will govern when some irrationally seek to dominate others, it also facilitates the forgetting of the thought experiment altogether. The theoretical frame disappears, and reason becomes a pillar of liberal democracy.

First, let's consider reason, or as Callan calls for *critical* reason. Callan makes the case for an education built upon a Rawlsian *critical* reasonableness. What gives reason its critical tendency in Callan's sense is reason's embeddedness. While Callan appreciates and makes conceptual use of Rawls' original position, an example of reasoning from nowhere, he recognizes the practical necessity of reasoning from somewhere. Plus, Rawls already worked out the necessary conditions of a just political society; so, there is no need for a young liberal patriot to do the same. What the young patriot needs to be able to do is reason while engaged in conversation with contextually situated people. Once again drawing from Rawls, Callan states that, "a political education that meets the challenge will teach the young the virtues and ability they need in order to participate competently in reciprocity-governed political dialogue and to

abide by the deliverances of such dialogue in their conduct as citizens.”⁹¹ In other words, young people ought to learn that reason entails dialogic conversation with others who are capable of reasoning, but who think and reason based on their particular history. The critical reasoner accepts the burdens of judgment and aims to use reciprocally agreeable evidence, which is to say, the evidence ought to be such that someone educated in another comprehensive framework can understand it. The critical reasoner, therefore, knows that she does not occupy the original position, but does use methods of abstraction to converse with others.

Eschewing the sort of reason that is a view from nowhere and favoring historically contingent political thought, Callan strengthens his notion of foundational democratic citizenship. The critical reasoner is someone who carefully approaches the dialogical conversation after a thoughtful assessment of her own affiliations and affections as well as those of her interlocutor’s. Callan says the young patriot must learn “historically embedded patterns of political thought” by practicing a “way of looking at the past, a way that is both emotionally generous and imaginative.”⁹² The critical question the liberal patriot must be able to answer is, “what is the best of this tradition?”⁹³ The patriot’s rootedness shapes, but does not preclude or undermine, her efforts at critical scrutiny. Rather, the patriot reasons from her particular position and endeavors to find the good. She reads for the gaps between what is best in a tradition and what she knows of the historical reality. As a practitioner of critical reason, the liberal patriot accepts the supposition that the human ability to reason bequeaths all members of the species

⁹¹ Callan, *Creating Citizens*, 28.

⁹² Callan, 116–18.

⁹³ Callan, 119.

equality and dignity. She looks for evidence that celebrates this supposition while noting the practices and policies that could be better.

That is critical reason as Callan presents it. Critical reason is the ability to engage in reasonable conversation with others about living the good life. Callan states, “now the exercise of reasonableness presupposes deliberative settings in which citizens with conflicting beliefs and ends can join together to ask how they might live together on terms all might endorse on due reflection.”⁹⁴ By definition, critical reason involves others in the dialogic task of constructing a liberal community. Additionally, because critical reason asks the reasoner to emotionally identify with liberal democracy, it necessitates education for autonomous self-authorship. Each citizen of foundational democracy must be able to articulate, in reasonable terms, their life choices. Autonomy is, therefore, the competency to which I now turn.

The second ideal of citizenship is autonomy. Autonomy is the bedrock of liberal politics, insofar as it names the process by which individuals make choices about the kind of life they would like to live. Achieving autonomy requires that one be treated as an individual capable of making reasonable choices between alternative visions of the good life as well as a belief that multiple visions of the good life are legitimate. Autonomy, in Callan’s consideration, is not merely choosing, it is also the ability to make choices *and* the inclination to reason for oneself.⁹⁵ As a capacity, autonomy entails more than being left alone to choose; it requires one know how and why she ought to be interested in making decisions about the ethical direction of her life.

Choice is not equivalent to autonomy, in Callan’s scheme. The liberal patriot does not choose from just any kind of life. Instead, controlling for reasonable pluralism, or for a “morally

⁹⁴ Callan, 177.

⁹⁵ Callan, *Creating Citizens*, 66.

selective deference to diversity,” the liberal chooses only from the diversity that is worth having.⁹⁶ In practice, this would mean any vision of life that is based on illiberal values would be rejected out of hand. The question is, how would the reasonable liberal, who believes each individual has the right and duty to determine how they would like to live, establish grounds for inclusion and exclusion? Kwame Anthony Appiah, a thoughtful liberal, puts it this way, “In soft, or liberal, pluralism, the individual remains both the *terminus a quo* and the *terminus ad quem*: its concern for identity groups is not only motivated by but ultimately subordinated to the well-being of the individual and the bundle of rights and protections that traditional liberalism would accord her.”⁹⁷ The flourishing of autonomous individuals requires both the perpetuation of meaningful cultural groups and the right of individuals to choose a different way of life. This notion also requires the state to remain neutral among conceptions of the good life, while providing protection for individuals as individuals, and in Callan’s estimation, the value of autonomy leads to robust educational demands. The educational aim is to teach young citizens both how to define a good liberal life that resonates with their idea of who they want to become, and how to accept others’ visions as equally worthy of living. Toleration is the name for this final capacity, according to the Callan.

In fact, autonomy is a rather empty concept without the corollary call for toleration. If the education we should want for our children is one that asks the young person to evaluate his or her self, his or her family’s conception of the good life, and the life he or she wants to build, then it must also teach him or her to tolerate different conceptions of the good life and moral disagreements therein. After all, teaching children to accept the burdens of judgment teaches children that the process of forming one’s best judgment about how to live requires careful

⁹⁶ Callan, 21.

⁹⁷ Appiah, *The Ethics of Identity*, 79.

assessment of the reasons one provides to others. The dialogic task of education is to prepare children to think carefully, or critically reason, about the difference between acceptable and unacceptable pluralism, says Callan.⁹⁸ If unaccompanied with some sense that diversity is a welcome fact of communal life, the requirement that children become self-reflective choosers of the good life could lead to the education of moral tyrants who demand that their way of life is the only way.

The third ideal of liberal citizenship is toleration. Toleration teaches the liberal patriot how to live with conflict and skepticism about the best life; it is an attitude every liberal patriot learns in the process of becoming an ethical chooser of his or her good life. Callan puts it this way, “the bare idea of reasonable pluralism does not license an aggressive moralism on the part of the liberal state; it merely signals the need for thoughtful moral discrimination in the way we respond politically to the fact of diversity.”⁹⁹ The tolerable and the virtuous are different, and liberal democracies are liberal only insofar as they continue to care about the difference. Although the education Callan proposes aims to instill laudable political virtues in each citizen, exclusion and domination are likely to remain a feature of a diverse and free society. Hence, the hope is that an inculcation of toleration will lessen the severity by which some are excluded.

As we see then, critical reason is the willingness to accept the burdens of judgment and to be reasonable in situated conversations about the good life with different others. Autonomy is the value of self-authorship, and it encourages young people to build lives with which they identify. Finally, toleration is the capacity to accept, reasonable as well as unreasonable, differences in opinion on what constitutes the good life. The sense here is that there is less harm in allowing people to go their own way, than in forcing them to choose a particular kind of life. As capacities

⁹⁸ Callan, *Creating Citizens*, 215.

⁹⁹ Callan, 24.

that bring about public virtue, reason, autonomy, and tolerance are built upon the idea that, when stripped of its historical trappings, society is composed of rational and ontologically unique individuals. Ideally, citizens educated in foundational democracy would be experts at engaging in Rawlsian thought experiments, would be equipped to make liberal choices about the shape of their life, and would tolerate people with differences of opinion. In the end, foundational democratic citizens ought to be virtuous individuals who know how to tolerate others enough to build a community based on freedom and equality.

The Educational Demand

Consider an instance in which these virtues — autonomy, critical reason, and tolerance — might come into play. Imagine the child of socially conservative parents who are intolerant of gender diversity living in America. The child's parents reason with the child from within the comprehensive framework they favor. Their vision of justice presumes homosexuality is a sin and that heterosexual norms of marriage constitute the fabric of a moral society. When the child asks why his parents will not allow him to be friends with a member of the LGBTQ community, they imply or explicitly say it is because this friend is not fully human or is a corrupting influence. When this child asks why he cannot join the cheerleading squad or take a dance class, his parents tell him boys and girls have different roles in society. Boys are expected to play with balls and guns to learn how to dominate and control, while girls are expected to dance in order to learn how to be flexible and accommodating, they say. Since he and his parents reside in a liberal democracy that allows its citizens to pass their most cherished beliefs on to their children, the state has limited ability to mitigate the perpetuation of illiberal beliefs. If the parents decide to send this child to his local public school, he will presumably encounter peers and teachers who hold different beliefs.

In the robust liberal democracy of Callan's vision, while attending a public school this child would learn to accept the burdens of judgment and begin to converse with his classmates using only the evidence that is publicly available. This is to say, recognizing that he couldn't explain why he wasn't allowed to have a gay friend using his parent's reasons, he would have to explain why he couldn't play with his friend in terms that his friend could understand and accept as valid. In adolescence this same kid would learn to weigh different ethical perspectives and the effect of social contingencies on one's social position, at which time he would come to develop a sense of justice, powers of reason, and a conception of the good. As a teenager, this young person would then become a member of society and a citizen for himself insofar as he comes to accept the burdens of judgement. On Callan's view, if this young person *truly* comes to consider the reasonableness of his convictions, he will necessarily reconsider the framework in which he was raised. It is, of course, possible that one could experience this kind of education and choose to reaffirm the commitments that were instilled within the family. Callan, however, argues that anyone who undergoes this sort of education does not merely accept the *same* conception of the good as before because they now understand the burdens of judgment.¹⁰⁰ Having achieved independent reflection on the moral import of their life, the young person becomes an ethically autonomous chooser.

We see through this example how education in the virtues of liberal citizenship could lead to a positive outcome. This young man who was raised with certain illiberal beliefs crafted a liberal soul when he encountered diverse others in a public institution that set about teaching all of its students to accept the burdens of judgement. While it is evident that education for foundational democratic citizenship, as Callan conceives it, ought to instill psychologically

¹⁰⁰ Callan, 34–36.

rigorous methods to evaluate one's self in relation to others, it is unclear whether the young person who does not achieve *ethical* autonomy, because he chooses to affirm the gender intolerant framework within which he was raised, should be included in a politically liberal society. Given Callan's interest in an ethical liberalism, which aims to make citizens' lives better by making them better authors of ethical and reasonable selves, it stands to reason that the liberally educated gender intolerant citizen presents a failed case. Callan answers that in cases where a person does not come to see justice as fairness – “reasonable agreement on fair terms of cooperation”- they must be tolerated.¹⁰¹ The gender intolerant, sexist, racist, and illiberal proponent of unreasonable pluralism poses a problem best handled with toleration. Hence, their views should not be met with coercive political responses. For example, they should not be put in jail or fined solely for their views because such a response would be both illiberal insofar as it would restrict one's freedom to believe as they see fit and actively violate the state's neutrality on citizens' right to self-authorship. Unreasonable pluralism ought to be excluded from public deliberation because the reasons proffered by folks who are intolerant of gender diversity do not meet the burdens of judgment. However, the people who espouse these beliefs must be tolerated in principle.¹⁰²

Ultimately, Callan's project is an educative one. Schooling not only spans much of a child's life, it is the one liberal democratic institution that touches nearly everyone as they transition from “membership in the family, to membership in the polity.”¹⁰³ Callan argues that the appropriate institutional design of public schooling within a liberal democracy “pose[s]

¹⁰¹ Callan, 27.

¹⁰² Callan, 23.

¹⁰³ Callan, *Creating Citizens*.

increasingly taxing intellectual demands with regard to the art of perceiving the person and the understanding of social complexities. At the same time, it nourish[es] an ever widening web of relations of trust, reciprocal good will, and associative loyalty.”¹⁰⁴ Public education, as Callan sees it, is the process and place that schools young people in the art of becoming ethical liberal patriots.

For Callan, without public education, children are liable to become who their parents, the state, a political organization, or religious institution wish them to be. To become both free and ethical members of a society where others are imbued with the symmetrical freedom, a liberal patriot must attend public school and learn to perceive herself as an individual who has the capacity to reason and deliberate with differently situated and sometimes illiberal members of society. Importantly, Callan places emphasis on the years immediately preceding a young person’s rise to complete citizenship. Hence, the educational value of public schooling for young children is that they are exposed to other ways of life and the practice of reasoning. For teenagers, the educational value of public schooling is that they are invited to engage in ethical self-authorship.¹⁰⁵

Due to their public nature, public schools are vital institutions in the structural maintenance of foundational democracy. A public school is common if it not only admits all but is also hospitable to all. Ideally, then, common schools would mirror the differences that are present in the wider society. Practically, Callan concedes the best we may hope for, given the range of pluralism present in local communities, is quasi-public schools that reflect at least some of the issues facing society and are committed to pluralism. Moreover, schools that are, in fact,

¹⁰⁴ Callan, 176.

¹⁰⁵ Callan, 176–77.

common would not treat education as cultural conquest. They would, however, assimilate all new members of society into the ethical life of liberal democracy. In fact, to educate liberal democrats who patriotically uphold the institutions of liberal democracy, common schools would be required to produce young people who are literate, capable of self-reliance, can reason with a critical eye, and know that justice is expressed in reciprocal reasonableness.

Civic education in Callan's foundationally democratic scheme is rationalized and supported based on the extent to which it prepares young people for their *future* roles as citizens. Drawing from the Aristotelian thesis, which says virtues are learned through practice, Callan argues that adequate preparation for liberal democratic citizenship requires the young to exercise the liberal virtues they will need when they reach the age of majority.¹⁰⁶ Accordingly, then, common schooling in foundational democracy encourages children to practice respecting their classmates' different social positions through the public structure of schooling in common. As children get older and near the age of majority, they are urged to practice conversing with one another about the moral issues that will shape their ethical soul-craft. In so doing, children learn to tolerate different convictions, practice extending goodwill to their interlocutors, and experience developing relations of trust. The ideal end result is the maturation of an autonomous, critical reasoner, who can tolerate the opinions of others.¹⁰⁷

To put the theory in the context of contemporary rampage school shootings, which are rare but unacceptable at any point, where gender-based bullying too often leads boys to rampage, foundational democratic education ought to teach young people to tolerate one another to the extent that this sort of bullying withers away. In fact, to deal with rampage school gun violence

¹⁰⁶ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Terence Irwin, 2nd edition (Indianapolis, Ind: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1999).

¹⁰⁷ Callan, *Creating Citizens*, 162–96.

foundational democratic education would simply follow the prescriptions outlined above. Starting in the early grades children would learn to express their sense of self in terms others could understand. The kid from the gender intolerant family would learn to express his worldview without relying on religious reasoning or other exclusionary evidence. His peers would do the same and collectively the class would learn about one another and the people who make up the community. As these young people move from simple reasonableness in the early grades to critical reason in the later grades, they would learn to deploy critical reasoning skills to articulate how their views fit within a liberal democratic society. Once again, thinking about the kid from the gender intolerant family, he might learn to speak about his right to craft a life that doesn't infringe on the rights of freedoms of someone else. Perhaps, he would say something like, "to each, his own." Presumably, this utterance would also indicate his tolerance of other people's views. Insofar as rampage school gun violence is a problem of unreasonable teenagers who lack a level of acceptance for one another, foundational democratic education would solve the problem.

As a skill-based education in the art of crafting an ethical self, foundational civic education prepares potential school shooters and school bullies to articulate an identity in terms that suit the ideals of free and equal citizenship. Shooters and bullies alike would be taught to carefully assess cultural scripts that legitimize violence and to choose actions and experiences that add up to a life plan that suits their goals. What's more, given the way the school social economy, the hierarchy that ranges from jocks to outcasts, defines an American teenager's sense of self, an ethical re-valuation of the kinds of identities students can choose should lead to more egalitarian and harmonious relations between students. In best case scenario, these students would learn to appreciate their classmates' difference and to tolerate one another when a difference in life choices leads to conflict.

Concerns About the Education of the Liberal Citizen

In this chapter, I described the theoretical foundations of liberal democracy and the political education that accompanies Callan's account of liberal democracy. My intent was to situate a robust account of foundational civic education. Foundations, like the metaphor from which the phrase is drawn, support a structure without any other aid. In political philosophy, foundations are usually drawn from imagined, pre-political core features of the human experience to support political institutions. The legitimacy of the foundation is rarely questioned because its very existence is pushed out of the frame. To build a high-rise one does not simply pour concrete on topsoil or cleared ground. Rather, one must dig down into the bowels of the earth, insert support structure, test the soil, check for water, see about the likelihood of natural disasters, and secure the appropriate material. Eventually, the foundation is poured and all that remains visible is the structure above. Indeed, the foundation becomes the thing that supports the structure; meanwhile, the notion that the foundation has a contextual, ecological, and material history is all but forgotten. Foundations are more than unexamined starting points, they are starting points that one cannot help but accept.

Rational thought, autonomy, and tolerance are the foundational psychological traits that affect the structural health of liberal democracy, as Callan conceives it. If foundational liberal democracy stands for free and equal citizenship, and humans are equal because they are rational, then they will remain free from the whims of others insofar as they are able to reasonably participate in public governance. Plus, a reasonable citizen is better than an unreasonable one. A reasonable teenager who gets angry at the way his classmates have treated him or who feels his identity has been misrecognized by his peers would not seek out a gun, take that gun to school, and embark upon a rampage. A reasonable teenager who understands that he and his peers can

interact on terms of equality since they all share the ability to be rational would appeal to his peers' sense of reasonableness and capacity for toleration to address a conflict.

Callan's account succeeds at establishing the grounds for creating liberal citizens. As we see with the example, public schools that admit and welcome all young people introduce students to diversity and train them to accept the burdens of judgement. As they age, these young people practice using the burdens of judgment to talk with one another about what it means to live the good life. In so doing, they develop a sense of self and an inclination about the kind of life they would like to author; they become individuals.

Callan's account is valuable and important, but it is not enough. Autonomy, critical reason, and toleration are key pieces of the liberal democratic tradition that have expanded opportunity to previously marginalized people and continue to inspire the global advancement of freedom and equality. The ideal of autonomy has influenced important protections for individuals and led to educational aims wherein each person learns to define, author, and live a life that resonates with their sense of self. Critical reason is a vital aim for any democracy that hopes to maintain diversity and create a shared political morality. In a democracy, where political decisions are made by the people, it is important that people who believe or live differently know how to engage in dialogue about how they interpret situations. The ideal of critical reason has resulted in education that teaches the young to converse with different others. Toleration mandates the acceptance of diversity. In teaching young citizens to tolerate peers who hold different beliefs, liberal citizenship education dissuades moral tyranny and sustains autonomy. This too is a vital feature of a free society.

Nevertheless, I have some concerns about the sufficiency of these aims given the foundation on which they sit. As I see it the ideals of liberal citizenship are premised on a theoretical frame that limits our ability to see agency as shared, conflict as necessary, and

violence as complex. Just as a building can collapse on top of foundations, messy human experience can mitigate the very best foundational civic education. Callan's account leads to the education of liberal citizens that know something of getting along with one another, of defining a good life, and reasoning with individuals who are different. These same citizens do not, however, know anything of making community, speaking with different others while angry, gendered, or wielding a gun, or crafting provisional decisions even though they are uncertain of another's stance, beliefs, reasonableness, or willingness to tolerate difference. In short, Callan's citizens are prepared to uphold liberal institutions, but are ill-prepared to make democracy work. Here, I will raise three concerns, all of which pivot around the idea that foundational democracy falsely locates agency exclusively in the individual. In the following chapters, I will adumbrate an alternative conception of agency—one that is shared among humans, nonhuman matter, and social power. For now, let me raise three interrelated concerns.

My first concern is about the human body and its absence from the conversation thus far. I am not so sure that there is a way to be certain something resembling a rational and ontologically unique person is hiding beneath emotion, gender, sex, race, class, ability status, and history. We, after all, are beings made of body and mind. The best foundational democratic education in reasonableness, autonomy development, and toleration will not divorce a person from his or her emotional, particular, and bodily experience of the world. The hurt or marginalized young person is unlikely to set aside his emotional responses to his experiences in the world because he recognizes that he ought to be reasonable. More importantly, it is not politically necessary that he learn to do so. Gendered norms act on and through this teenager. His emotions and sense of self are constituted through the disciplining forces of social power and in his associative interactions. As a democratic citizen he needs to know how to make decisions and act while emotional, while living in a marked and coded body, and while in association with

people, social power, and nonhuman things. Hence, the problem with the rational idea is that it leads to the conception of an ontologically discrete individual who acts based solely on the operation of his reasoning mind.¹⁰⁸

My second concern is that, although thought experiments which ask citizens to imagine life as another or without a certain defining feature of their identity can be illuminating and educative, they do not aid in the construction of habits for making community. I'm not convinced that accepting the burdens of judgement or thinking about the state of nature will help citizens construct habits and practices that will enable them to take action in the present, or to engage in public governance alongside a celebration of their particularities because associative and conjoint behavior is a fact of existence in this world. Humans are never solitary or exclusive individuals; rather, we exist within a network of actors and relationships. Democratic citizens need to be able to learn from living alongside one another and must be able to take action in full recognition of the ways in which social power and things are acting upon and through humans.

My third concern is that an education in the liberal virtues ignores all of the ways in which our environment shapes what we are able to imagine, do, and become. Guns are objects which affect how we think about what we are able to accomplish. I'm concerned that the liberal citizen who has no practice interacting with the environment as a mind/body, lacks the ability to appreciate and address all the ways in which the environment and things can shape the person. This is to say, I fear Callan's narrow focus on creating liberal citizens, who have virtuous souls, obscures the influence of environment, community, public, and assemblage of actors on the content and character of our society.

¹⁰⁸ Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice*; Barbara Applebaum, "In the Name of Morality: Moral Responsibility, Whiteness and Social Justice Education," *Journal of Moral Education* 34, no. 3 (2005): 277-290.

The alternative to Callan's vision of foundational civic education is not unreasonable, scripted, and intolerant citizenship. In fact, the alternative is an extension of Callan's vision into the messy non-ideal circumstances of early 21st-century democracy, wherein the drive to ground democratic life in foundations is replaced with experimentation and conversation about the kind of things imperfect humans and powerful nonhumans might accomplish together. Callan's vision of civic education prepares young people to engage in an orderly public life that is not marred by emotion, embodied humans, social power, and deadly weapons. In addition, because Callan's vision of liberal democratic education is situated with the liberal frame, it is blind to complex networks and entangled human interdependence.

The fact is people make decisions while emotional and they decide to act because a particular associative experience has driven them to do so. School shooters are often dealing with intense emotions related to acceptance, recognition, and gender. They should not be expected to shed their embodied experiences to reason with the classmates about the trouble they are having performing heteronormative gender roles. On the liberal view, these young people are not shooting because they lack the ability to reason or because they have not learned to provide publicly acceptable evidence or because they do not feel tolerated or have not learned to tolerate. They are shooting because something is wrong, psychologically, with the individual. They are simply failed students of liberal democratic education. Hence, liberal democratic education is only sufficient for a world in which guns and school shootings do not exist.

This is the limit of liberal democratic education. It cannot account for students who choose the extreme, and because it cannot make sense of these young people and their choices liberal democratic education cannot address the continued presence of rampage school gun violence. Shooters are waging war because they are not a part of the community and because the young people educated under the banner of foundational democratic education do not know that

making community is an integral part of being human and enacting democracy. Shooters and non-shooters alike are bereft of the practices and habits that would enable them to organize their embodied experience with the world of things and people and to learn by and from living alongside their peers.

Democracy is learning to live alongside one another. Callan's liberal patriotism encourages young people to become loyal liberal democrats on the grounds that they have found the good in the tradition and have become an individual, rational agent. They participate because they have been taught to love liberalism and are virtuous liberal citizens. Foundational democratic education does not, however, teach them what to do when they encounter the bad, ugly, and incomprehensible. It does not teach young people to reason while emotional, embodied, and while equipped with tools designed to kill, or how to compromise, transform, and recognize the actor that affect one's actions. It does not give young people the resources to see themselves as anything but ontologically unique individuals with exclusive domain over one's individual agency who are in a competition to gather resources, whether those resources are for identity construction or material well-being.

Conclusion

In sum, on Callan's view, political education for liberal democracy is grounded in reasonable citizenship that cultivates autonomous individuals. Its charge is to adequately prepare the next generation of the voting public to lead virtuous, self-authored lives while making reasonable decisions about government. In an ideal world, the child from an illiberal background would learn about liberalism when he attends a school with students from different backgrounds. In elementary school, he would learn to engage with different students, to appreciate the foundations of liberalism which make the framework within which he was raised wrong but assures him he too has dignity, and he would practice giving publicly justifiable reasons to his

peers. As he ages, he would prepare to craft an ethical life by accepting the burdens of judgment that require he tolerate others. When he reaches the age of maturity, he would become a liberal citizen. However, I am not convinced that he has the tools to become a democratic one when something goes wrong and the complex real-world demands that he act.

Callan's vision of political education for liberal democracy prepares the young to be liberal, but not democratic citizens. As it stands, nothing in Callan's conception of liberal education tells a young person why they should participate in public governance, let alone how to participate alongside folks who have guns, who do not see the value in toleration, or who begin from radically divergent starting points. What is the child from an illiberal family to do with his parents who do not value toleration? What is society to do when foundational political education fails to teach children how to work together and how to make sense of complex and pressing problems? What of compromise and halting conversations? Of public will and public action? Insofar as foundational democracy is beneficial for grounding notions of free and equal citizenship, it is a valuable political ideology for developing liberal democracies. But political theory and practice must move beyond foundationalism if it hopes to adequately deal with complex contemporary issues. Progressive, antifoundational iterations of democracy do just this. Children ought to learn how to value freedom and equality *while acting as* democratic citizens who can affect their environment. On my view, the capacity to affect the environment, to become an agent, requires a sense that agency is shared and that anyone who acts is a part of the political community, including the school shooter.

In the next chapter, I will explore an alternative conception of agency; one that addresses the things and social power that constitute the environment and support individuals in forming purposes and affecting the environment. My contention is that conceptions of foundational democracy, even strong ones like Callan's, reinforce a positive orientation to gun violence,

because they educate citizens to see themselves as exclusive owners of intentional rational agency. This mistake places the rational individual in the untenable position of having to master tools and social power. As an intentional rational agent, the individual is bereft of the conceptual resources and habits one needs to make sense of, and act upon, her conjoint experiences. Hence, the foundationally liberal citizen is left in the terrible position of having to wrest her rational, autonomous self from the trappings of being an embodied human in a world of things and social power.

CHAPTER THREE

THE POWER OF GUNS AND THE SOCIAL CONCEPTION OF GENDER: AN ALTERNATIVE CONCEPTION OF AGENCY

In this chapter, I argue that it is a mistake to see agency as located exclusively in the individual. I contend that agency is shared and that it is best understood as dispersed among a reciprocal network of humans, nonhuman things, and social power. When agency is understood as exclusively located in the individual, the individual is solely responsible for his actions. This view is equivalent to the saying, “guns don’t kill people, people kill people.” Not only is the agent/person held solely responsible for his actions, he is taught to see himself and individual others as intentional rational agents. Hence, a more descriptive slogan for this stance might read, “guns don’t kill people, a singular and discrete person within whom all agentic capacity resides kills people.” On my account, this conception of agency obscures the ways in which human action, intentionality, emotion, and the body, are influenced and shaped by social power and nonhuman things. This chapter grapples with the complexity of the causal process by identifying nodes along a network of distributed agency. In describing an alternative conception of agency wherein agency is expanded across a network, I focus on the nodes which contribute to America’s rampage school gun violence problem as my dissertation’s central argument is that a foundational/liberal conception of individual agency has blind spots that exacerbate our gun violence problem.

When we expand our sense of who and what acts when a rampage school shooter attacks his school we find at a minimum teenage boys, guns, and gendered social norms. Thinking about the ways in which a teenage boy is an agent poses minimal, if any, conceptual stretch from the foundational liberal conception. Insofar as the liberal conception of agency posits the arrival of agency with the ability to make rational decisions, the maturity of a teenager might cause the liberal to pause, if only briefly. As a singular person, the teenage boy's ontologically unique agency is only called into question to where his actions and decision cannot be attributed solely to *his* reasoning mind and not that of his parents, for instance. Most foundational liberals would hesitate to accord agency to anything outside of the thinking and reasoning human mind. Things nor gendered social norms have minds and thus they cannot act independent of human users. Neither can be agents in the foundational sense, where agency is the result of an individual and rational choice. Thus, to describe the *kind of agency* things and gendered social norms do have, I will turn to two bodies of work, new materialist work on the status and power of things and Foucauldian analyses of social power. New materialists, such as Bruno Latour, provide an account of "thingy power" that aims to capture the ways in which things act; thus giving us conceptual tools to characterize the agency of a thing. Meanwhile, through a Foucauldian analysis of power, I will detail the ways in which social norms of gender produce and discipline individual bodies. In other words, power and things are nodes in the causal network that form, produce, and shape humans.

As a democratic theorist interested in an antifoundational and radically democratic future, I believe it is imperative that expand our sense of agency and what it means to act and impact the environment. An alternative conception of agency helps us accounts for the material things and social power that affects what we do as well as who or what we might hold culpable for which actions. The image of the intentional rational mind that uses things like guns and

passively accepts social norms of gender rests on the belief that things do not have the power to shape and gendered social norms discipline but are not productive. This image obscures the agentic power and constitutive affect that things and social norms hold as actors in complex causal networks. In fact, I will argue that when guns, social gender norms, and teenage boys come together in the American high school, guns and social gender norms are actors in the causal network. Ignoring the distinctive and productive effects of these agentic nodes heralds more gun violence and less democracy. Moreover, American society bears responsibility for the continued presence of mass shooting events, including school shootings, insofar as we refuse to expand our conception of agency to hold responsible the nonhuman actors that share our environment and co-constitute our very sense of what it means to be a human.¹⁰⁹

New Materialist Agency

In the new materialist conception, things have a certain kind of agency.¹¹⁰ However, to make sense of what new materialists mean by agency, it is important to understand how new materialists define agency in comparison to the liberal view. Agency, as Callan and other foundational liberals understand it, is the result of rational decision making. To be an agent in this sense is to be a chooser, a decider, and a thinker. And to be a thinker is to be a person with a

¹⁰⁹ While completing this dissertation the Connecticut Supreme Court has ruled that gun makers, including Remington, can be sued for wrongful marketing. In particular Remington marketed the gun used by the shooter of Sandy Hook Elementary School with the slogan “Consider your man card reissued.” This is a significant State level acknowledgment that nonhumans can be held liable for gun violence and will have ramifications for further thinking on this project. For more on this case see Rick Rojas and Kristin Hussey, “Sandy Hook Massacre: Remington and Other Gun Companies Lose Major Ruling Over Liability,” *The New York Times*, March 15, 2019, sec. New York, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/14/nyregion/sandy-hook-supreme-court.html>. and for further analysis of Remington’s marketing see Amy Shuffelton, “Consider Your Man Card Reissued: Masculine Honor and Gun Violence,” *Educational Theory* 65, no. 4 (August 2015): 387–403, <https://doi.org/10.1111/edth.12123>.

¹¹⁰ Samantha Frost, “The Implications of the New Materialisms for Feminist Epistemology,” in *Feminist Epistemology and Philosophy of Science*, ed. Heidi E. Grasswick (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 2011), 69–83, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4020-6835-5_4.

mind who engages in rational intellectual activity. Hence, the agent not only makes choices, he can be held responsible for these choices insofar as the agent is a reasonable individual. Building on the work of feminist scholars, new materialists argue that humans are equal in terms of their irrationality, not their reasonableness, and in so doing call attention to the way in which emotion and experience operate as sites of knowledge construction. As Samantha Frost puts it, “for the new materialist, however, it is not enough to assert the rationality of modernity’s others ... they also seek to challenge the very notion that matter is passive and unthinking... and to question the distinction between the self and world that positions individuals as separate from yet in relation to the contexts of their actions.”¹¹¹ In other words, it is not enough to say women and people of color, modernity’s irrational or unreasonable others, are intentional rational agents, too. Extending agency to groups of people who were previously perceived to be “lacking the wherewithal to distance themselves from the body’s operations and to steer a rationally defined course of their behavior and actions” does not address the ways in which human behavior, action, and thought is constructed by and enmeshed within nonhuman things.¹¹² *On the new materialist view, agency is the reciprocal production of effects.* Humans and things jointly make up the contexts in which events unfold, and a new materialist agent is anything that produces effects, that shapes, constrains, or enhances the possibility for knowledge or action.¹¹³

A worry arises with this new materialist definition of agency. Do new materialists, in the attempt to make sense of the agency of things, place particular historical cultural and political

¹¹¹ Frost, 72.

¹¹² Frost, 72.

¹¹³ Karen Barad, “Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter,” *Signs* 28, no. 3 (2003): 801–31, <https://doi.org/10.1086/345321>; Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2010).

“facts” onto material? Put another way, the concern is that new materialists misrepresent and perhaps even reconstruct as agency that which is constructed by humans. Given that humans physically make things, like guns, and then construct the language and culture that names and delineates the thing’s use and value, it would appear that humans are in fact the source of all effect production. In response to this valid challenge, new materialists argue that we ought to pay attention to the ways in which culture and language affect human constructions and analyses of things. In so doing we ought to carefully weigh the evolving and productive social and political history of things. A thing, like a gun, might have been created by a particular human, but guns in America have evolved alongside their makers, human and machine, and in that evolution have become powerful things, which produce effects independent of the human makers and codependent with human users.

New materialism aims to decenter our thinking about human intentionality and to refocus our attention on how we, as humans, understand our relationships to and with nonhuman things. Insofar as humans intended to make our society more inclusive, peaceful, and just, then we must attend to the ways in which guns, masculinity, civics education, and schools, to name a few actors, contribute to the problems that affect us as well as the extent to which each might contribute to the solution. What I am interested in here is the complexity of the causal process.¹¹⁴ To say matter/things have agency is to say matter can produce effects on us and in the material world. In the landscape of post rampage America, this position seems right to me.

¹¹⁴ Frost, “The Implications of the New Materialisms for Feminist Epistemology.”

The Thingy Power of Guns

To address the power that things have, I will turn to Bruno Latour's thinking about the thingy power of guns.¹¹⁵ Latour identifies as a science studies scholar and does not refer to himself as a new materialist—although, other new materialists like Jane Bennett claim Latour as one of their own.¹¹⁶ Latour's aim to demystify the social and political history of nonhuman actors, and I turn to him in an effort to make sense of agentic things. For the purposes of piecing together an alternative conception of agency, Latour helps distill and define the ways in which we might say things act.

Latour turns to the slogan "Guns kill people" and the oft-heard reply, "Guns don't kill people, *people* kill people."¹¹⁷ Latour parses the phrases as follows. The first slogan implies that guns, alone, cause human death. Latour calls this position materialist because the view implies that the gun comes with a script that transforms the carrier. In the case of a rampage school shooter, this would be tantamount to the idea that when a vulnerable teenage boy acquires a gun, he is imbued with a course of action that he cannot change and that he could not have imagined prior to acquiring the gun. It is as if picking up a gun causes one to shoot and kill. Hence, "guns kill people." Latour calls the second slogan, "people kill people," sociological since the material presence of the gun has no bearing on the moral make-up of the person who decides to use a gun

¹¹⁵ Bruno Latour, *Pandora's Hope: Essays on the Reality of Science Studies*, 1 edition (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1999).

¹¹⁶ Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*.

¹¹⁷ Latour, 176. The phrase "Guns don't kill people, people kill people" was a popular bumper sticker in through the late 1990's and is a riff on the NRA's opinion that a bad-guy with a gun is best addressed by a good guy with a gun. Variations of the slogan also appear in American films like *Happy Gilmore*. This sentiment is suffuse in DeBrabander's analysis of the NRA and Kohn's study of shooters. DeBrabander, *Do Guns Make Us Free?*; Abigail A. Kohn, *Shooters: Myths and Realities of America's Gun Cultures* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); Dennis A. Henigan, "The 3 Worst Arguments Against Gun Control," *The Daily Beast*, July 30, 2016, sec. us-news, <https://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2016/07/30/the-3-worst-arguments-against-gun-control>.

for evil. The gun is a neutral carrier of human will; it is merely a tool. Latour puts it this way, while the materialists' claim, "we are what we hold in our hands" the "NRA sociologist makes the troubling suggestion that we can master techniques [guns], that techniques are nothing more than pliable and diligent slaves."¹¹⁸ As is so often the case in dichotomous, either/or propositions, neither the materialist nor the sociologist has it quite right.

Latour offers four increasingly complex definitions of mediation to make sense of the gun's thingy power. Mediation is a key feature of the realm of engineers and craftsmen. As Latour sees it, once men began building, crafting, and using tools to achieve the desired result, no unmediated action was possible. To put it another way, when the first human picked up a stick to extend her reach, she entered the realm of engineers and mediated action. After using the tool, the extent to which she subsequently thinks about the ways in which the tool helped her achieve her end modulates the ways in which she distinguishes herself from thing and her reflection comes to mediate the human/thing interaction. Reflection, like thinking, is a practice that demarcates the being who resides inside from that which is outside.¹¹⁹ Hence, the human reflects, while the thing mediates. In both cases reflection/mediation is a complex and complicated space of interruption and neither is prior to, or more important than, the other within the unfolding of an event. What is of interest is the direction, magnitude, and semiotic ramifications of the interruption, there are the characteristics to what I now turn.

Latour's first definition of thingy mediation is characterized by interference. Imagine a young boy. He wakes up, stumbles through his morning routine, gets to school, gets pushed into the lockers, goes to classes, and during lunch finds a gun in the garbage bin. In relation to the

¹¹⁸ Latour, *Pandora's Hope*, 177–78.

¹¹⁹ Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*, 31.

gun's interruption at least three options obtain. He can pick up the gun, turn it over, examine its construction, and then place it back in the garbage bin. In this case he carries on with his intended goal, presumably throwing away his garbage and is unphased by the gun's proposed interruption. In the second scenario, the boy sees the gun, picks it up, and begins to shoot indiscriminately simply because he found a gun. In other words, by picking up the gun, the boy inherited the gun's script and acted upon the gun's intentions. The first scenario is reminiscent of the what Latour terms sociologist's utterance "people kill people." The boy, on a foundational liberal's reading ignores the gun because he has a sufficient and strong moral center. The gun cannot mediate, that which it cannot affect. The second instance is akin to the materialist's utterance "guns kill people." As if imbued with magical powers, the gun's mere appearance causes the boy to pick it up and shoot. The first and second scenario are both fictionalized characterizations that do not take seriously the power of things to affect human action.

Thus, in the third scenario the boy's goals are translated. The gun in the garbage bin presents new possibilities. Let's say the boy walked over to the garbage bin to throw his trash away—this was his goal. The presence of the gun translates his goal. The gun creates a "link that did not exist before."¹²⁰ Now the boy can pick up or leave the gun, throw his garbage away, and return to his afternoon classes. In either case, he is no longer just a boy. He is a boy with a gun or a boy who saw a gun in the garbage bin at school. In Latour's words, "You are different with a gun in your hand; the gun is different with you holding it. You are another subject because you hold the gun; the gun is another object because it has entered into a relationship with you."¹²¹ In this scenario, neither the boy nor the gun has an unchangeable essence; rather, the boy and the

¹²⁰ Latour, *Pandora's Hope*, 179.

¹²¹ Latour, 179.

gun modify each other and become a “hybrid actor.”¹²² The boy-gun or gun-boy are now defined by their association. If and when the boy goes back to pick up the gun, perhaps the next time he gets pushed into the lockers, or when a teacher finds the gun in his backpack, the gun’s presence will modify the boy’s interactions.

The point is not only that the gun modifies; rather both the gun and the boy become actants in a situation. An actant is simply an actor within a network; it is the new materialist way of describing the kind of action traditionally done exclusively by an agentic person. For Latour, and the new materialists, anything can be an actor. Actants are, however, an assemblage of actors that enter into relations and become a new distinct agent, e.g. the boy-with-the-gun. The key dictum is to follow, trace, and describe all of the actors that come together to constitute any one event and, here is the key, to recognize that the actant is merely a “semiotic distinction.” As a semiotic distinction the word actant calls our attention to the hybrid and ontological plural nature of actors. In other words, the actors in a network are actants when they are in relation to other actors. Alone the boy is a boy and the gun a gun. The gun has a function and the boy a goal. Collectively the boy-gun and gun-boy make possible a new goal. The gun-in-the-trash-can is now the gun-in-the-boy’s-hand and together the boy and the gun act. Materialists and sociologists make the same mistake, they begin with immutable essences. When things and people comingle, the thing becomes an actor as it co-constitutes the emergence of the actant. Jointly, humans and guns make the killing of people possible. In Latour’s lingo, “It is neither people nor guns that kill. Responsibility for action must be shared among various actants.”¹²³

¹²² Latour, 180.

¹²³ Latour, 180.

Yet, it is not only the physical and immediate comingling of actants that makes things powerful agents. If it was merely the case that guns only become actors in a network when a human decides to pick the gun up, then there would be no grounds for an alternative conception of agency. The human would still be the center for action. It is the sociopolitical, historical, and imaginative comingling of actants that foregrounds the agency of things. To this end, in his second and third definitions of mediation Latour expands on the construction of the network and the historical location of possible actants. Latour calls the second meaning “composition” and the third the “folding of time and space.”¹²⁴ On composition, the actor network is composed of an indefinite number of possible actors. Sticking with the scenario above, perhaps the boy who happened upon the gun in the garbage bin knew the gun would be in the garbage bin because he made arrangements for it to be there. Perhaps he also had a plan to use the gun during the passing period following lunch, but when he picks up the gun, he learns that he forgot to acquire ammunition. He promptly skips school, goes to the gun store, and purchases ammunition. He looks at the time and realizes school will be letting out in an hour and races back to campus. He gets to campus in time for school to let out and begins to shoot as students exit the building. His actions, in this case, were made possible by an association of actants. The person who left the gun, the garbage bin that held the gun, the gun, ammunition, the salesclerk who sold him ammunition, and the prompt dismissal of students, etc., all made the rampage possible.

The third meaning of mediation, the folding of time and space, calls attention to the material and social history of tools, techniques, and people. Latour uses the example of a projector, but a gun will also work. Let’s say the boy who set about to rampage picks up the gun and discovers the firing mechanism is broken such that he cannot commence his rampage.

¹²⁴ Latour, 183.

Assuming this boy does not have other working guns, the gun's malfunction might inspire the boy to look up the gun's manufacturer. Let's say the gun was made by Winchester and the boy finds information about Winchester's marketing plan called, aptly I think, the "boy plan."¹²⁵ He reads about the early 20th century direct marketing of guns to 14-year-old boys. He thinks, "I, too, am 14." He deduces something about the construction of the narrative which links the gun to becoming a man and thinks about what the gun means to him. These discoveries might help him edit his goal or they might reaffirm his project. The point Latour makes is that this assembly of actants is hidden by our relationship to modern technology wherein each agent perceives the thing/matter/technology as devoid of a context and history. When a thing's "time and space" are apparent one can see how an innumerable series of past things, people, and networks make the thing more than a passive object to be used. The thing is emerging as a powerful producer of effects.

Recognizing the third mediation has the effect of un-folding time and space, to play with Latour's designation. Put another way, the social and political history of the thing becomes apparent when we consider the temporal composition of actants, and in so doing helps us account for the effect of the intended function of particular thing on its power as a contemporary actant. Guns, for example, were designed to help humans kill other beings quickly and at a distance. As the making of guns evolved from the craftsman's shops to the industrial titan's factory, gun markets were carefully sculpted with meticulous marketing plans that created customers and played into social gendered norms.¹²⁶ Guns that were made for war were sold and marketed to

¹²⁵ Pamela Haag, *The Gunning of America: Business and the Making of American Gun Culture*, 1 edition (New York: Basic Books, 2016), 324–25.

¹²⁶ Haag, *The Gunning of America*.

male civilians as toys and tools for enjoyment and security. Shortly thereafter semi-automatic war-guns found their way into civilian markets and the hands of teenage boys who were facing gendered based harassment in schools, which were supposed to be safe and supportive spaces, and rampage school gun violence began.¹²⁷ This very abbreviated sociopolitical history is engraved in invisible ink on every gun.

On the history of use, historian of American gun capitalists, Pamela Hagg, puts it this way, “In this post-frontier economy and society, the Winchester had to make a transition from being considered a tool to being seen as something with richer qualitative value in order to attract what a Winchester historian called the average, prospective shooter”¹²⁸ In the frontier economy, the gun served pragmatic needs related to war and the conquest of Native Americans. In the post-frontier economy, guns served psychological needs. In apt phrasing, this is what Hagg refers to as the “gun heart prevailing over the gun head.”¹²⁹ More to the point, when gun marketers sought to create consumer markets where martial markets had once stood via emotionally resonant marketing, multiple types of gun owners emerged. Those who had always owned guns, the hunters, trappers, or “mountain-men” earned the moniker “market hunters.” Meanwhile, men who worked office jobs and sought the “emotional asylum of recreational hunting” derided the market hunters who made a business of what they felt should be a sport.¹³⁰ What Hagg gets

¹²⁷ Haag; Elizabeth C. Hirschman, “Social Contract Theory and the Semiotics of Guns in America,” *Social Semiotics* 24, no. 5 (October 20, 2014): 541–60, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10350330.2014.937077>; Amy Shuffelton and Samantha Deane, “Study War No More: Trigger Warnings and Guns in the Classroom,” in *International Handbook of Philosophy of Education*, Springer International Handbooks of Education (Springer, Cham, 2018), 1363–74, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-72761-5_94; DeBrabander, *Do Guns Make Us Free?*

¹²⁸ Hagg, Pamela, *The Gunning of America*, 250.

¹²⁹ Hagg, *The Gunning of America*, 25.

¹³⁰ Haag, *The Gunning of America*, 258.

wrong is the notion of time when a tool was merely a tool. Tools are always and already shaping hearts, minds, and narratives. As such, it is not merely human narrative construction, e.g. marketing, that created a desire for guns. Powerful things like guns have elicited responses, produced effects, and mediated human interaction because they are actants in a network of distributed agency.

Finally, the fourth definition of mediation, what Latour calls “crossing the boundary between signs and things,” introduces human language and semiotics into the actor network. Insofar as an actant is merely a semiotic distinction that signals the ways in which two or more actors have entered into relationship and become a new hybrid actor in a network relative to other actants, an actant which crosses over the boundary demarcating sign from thing becomes something else entirely. Latour calls these boundary-crossing actants technical delegates. In Latour’s words, things and “techniques modify the matter of our expression, not only its form.”¹³¹ In other words, when we aim to represent actants via signs, these actants mediate the form and matter of the resulting semiotic construction. For example, lumps of concrete on the roadway discipline drivers to slow down and change the matter of expression— now “make drivers slow down” is articulated in speed bumps.¹³² Latour describes the process of becoming a technical delegate this way, “An object *stands in* for an actor and creates an asymmetry between absent makers and occasional users. Without this detour, this shifting down, we would not understand how an enunciator can be absent: either it is there, we would say, or it does not exist... In delegation it is not, as in fiction, that I am here and elsewhere, that I am myself and someone else, but that an action, long past, of an actor, long disappeared, is still active here

¹³¹ Latour, *Pandora’s Hope*, 186.

¹³² Latour, 188–89.

today, on me. I live in the midst of technical *delegates*; I am folded into nonhumans.”¹³³

Technical delegates are actants composed of human desires, linguistic phrases, and nonhuman matter. A speed bump is a technical delegate of the human phrase “get drivers to slow down.” A metal detector at the entrance of a school is a technical delegate of the Gun Free Schools Act and the phrase “make sure a school shooting never happens here,” and the sign with a gun crossed out is a technical delegate of the phrase “no guns allowed in here, even though guns are allowed out there.” As technical, or thingy delegates, these boundary crossing actants bring to life linguistic desires to affect the environment based on the effect of past actants. This final actant is formed by language and matter. It is, therefore, neither human nor thing, but entirely thing-human or human-thing that engages in the network of distributed agency.

To summarize, the power of things comes from four mediations wherein an actant network appears, and in which agency is dispersed among the actants. In the first mediation, things interrupt human aims. In the second, multiple nonhuman things and humans come together to form an association of actants. Third, things carry with them a social, material, and political history and these histories also act within the network. In fact, these histories make apparent the ways in which things are more than passive technical objects for human use. Fourth, nonhuman things and human language comes together to form new actants which Latour calls “technical delegates.” Thingy power is, therefore, the power to elicit responses from human users. Things produce effects in the material world, and things are complex constructions of human intentions, interpretations, and histories. This is not to say that guns and other powerful things have agency, in the foundational sense. Guns cannot verbalize their wants and make choices among alternatives. This is to say, however, that nonhuman things are actors in a

¹³³ Latour, 189.

complex causal process wherein agency, that is a being's feeling of power or control over his or her actions, is the result of hybrid actants comingling to impact the environment.

On this view, it is impossible to say that humans act alone. Likewise, it is impossible to say that things simply imbue human agents with scripts. The materialist and sociologist are both wrong because at no time in human history has an immutable subject met a fixed object. Instead, humans and objects constitute the "body corporate." "The body corporate is what we and our artifacts have become. We are an object-institution," says Latour.¹³⁴ The point, however, is symmetrical. Latour continues, "There is no sense in which humans may be said to exist as humans without entering into commerce with what authorizes and enables them to exist (that is, to act)."¹³⁵ Humans and nonhuman things permit and make possible one another's existence and as such it seems quite sensible to weigh the ways in which things can be said to act.

Agency, from the new materialist standpoint, is the result of the causal process wherein humans and nonhuman things interact. Yet, it is difficult for humans, who are accustomed to thinking about their unique status in the world as being dependent upon an unquestionable subject/object distinction, to appreciate the full impact of according power to things. To say things are actants in a causal network is to say humans make both conscious and unconscious as well as rational and irrational decisions to act based upon the kind of things they encounter and happen upon. Moreover, things mediate human intention and action in a myriad of surprising and unpredictable ways.¹³⁶ In fact, it is a thing's ability to surprise us and to produce unplanned effects that characterizes a thing's power. Nevertheless, up to this point, one could say that in

¹³⁴ Latour, 192.

¹³⁵ Latour, 192.

¹³⁶ Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*.

following Latour I have made an argument for the interplay of things and consciousness. To be sure, Latour has no intention of splitting the consciousness from its bodily trappings, yet he does not speak to the ways in which human bodies come to matter in the actor network. Nonhuman things, like guns, have power over the way humans think and the kinds of actions they choose to complete. Yet, aesthetically speaking, guns are an extension of the human body. The gun quite literally edits what the human body can accomplish. As an editing object, the gun manages, checks, and presides over a human's desire to use the gun. The gun is not neutral and nor is it powerless. What's more, when we look to the gun's varied sociopolitical history it is apparent that guns have been extensions of particular human bodies.

In the next section, I turn to the making of these particular male bodies in an effort to make explicit two important actants within the network of distributed of agency that contribute to rampage school gun violence. In so doing, I do not intend to discern and adumbrate every possible actor within this network. Rather, I hope to illuminate the ways in which agency is shared by highlighting the ways in which two necessary, but not sufficient actors—guns and gendered social norms—act. Another key player here is the human shooter. To round out this chapter, I will turn to the shooter to explore the ways in which an alternative conception of agency might help us make sense of and his/our actions.

Gender and Guns

In speaking of bodies, I do not mean to call attention to the human body as distinct from the mind. There is no splitting of the mind from body or subject from object in new materialism. To borrow Latour's phrasing "once there is no longer a mind-in-a-vat looking through the gaze at an outside world, the search for absolute certainty becomes less urgent, and thus there is no great difficulty in reconnecting with the relativism, the relations, the relativity on which the

sciences have always thrived.”¹³⁷ The intentional rational subject is not the primary locus of individual agency in the new materialist construction. Rather, new materialism asks us to consider the agentic contributions of nonhuman matter and human constructs as “purposeful action and intentionality” are properties of “institutions and apparatuses, of what Foucault called *dispositifs*” and not of humans or objects. In other words, new materialism eschews any sort of mind/body dualism; thus, a human’s experience, emotion, cognition and body are all wrapped up in the human as actant which is shaped, as are things, by social power.

To follow the Foucauldian line of thinking, the bodies, we embody along with the selves we claim to know, are produced and disciplined by the institutions, and knowledge structures that maintain the exercise of social power. Gender, for instance, is a concept that inscribes and describes how sexed bodies ought to function in a collective and as individuals. When comingled, the thingy power of guns and the social power of gender introduces the gendered body *and* social gender norms into the actor network. For the purposes of this analysis, I set aside questions about what exactly gender is and about what theories of gender and gender justice are best for a particular vision of society. Instead, I am interested in the ways in which social gender norms operate. In other words, I want to talk about the social power that works within and through our conceptions of gender. Hence, I assume gender is a concept that inscribes and describes how sexed bodies ought to function in a collective, such as society, and as individuals. Following Michel Foucault’s theorization of the types of social power that produce and discipline human life, I will outline the ways in which social power shapes social gender norms and gendered bodies as both become actants in complex causal processes.

¹³⁷ Latour, *Pandora’s Hope*, 16–17.

Power for Michel Foucault comes in two forms—that which disciplines and that which produces. Power is not a possession; power is an act. Power is exercised. In Foucault’s words, “To analyze the political investment of the body and the microphysics of power presupposes, therefore, that one abandons where power is concerned – the violence-ideology opposition, the metaphor of property, the model of contract and conquest; that – where knowledge is concerned – one abandons the opposition between what is ‘interested’ and what is ‘disinterested,’ the model of knowledge and the primary subject.”¹³⁸ He goes on, “One would be concerned with the ‘body politic,’ as a set of material elements and techniques that serve as weapons, relays, communication routes and supports for the power and knowledge relations that invest human bodies and subjugate them by turning them into objects of knowledge.”¹³⁹ To analyze the ways in which power affects humans, Foucault says we must first revise our understanding of how power works, how power is enacted, and the ways in which power creates knowledge.¹⁴⁰ In modern society, says Foucault, power is exercised to shape, coerce, and form; hence, it is more than the power to punish the physical bodies of law breakers. Moreover, knowledge is constructed in the soft workings of this new kind of power and, as such, we must account for the ways in which knowledge is embodied and enmeshed in human experiences of the world. Modern society is thus constituted by humans, nonhuman things, and social power where social power can harm, create, and produce all manner of relations, beings, and knowledges.

Insofar as social power is an actor in this network of distributed agency, we can say social power bears some responsibility for our actions. Speaking directly to culpability and the

¹³⁸ Michel Foucault, *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 28.

¹³⁹ Foucault, 28.

¹⁴⁰ Foucault, 27.

punishment of criminals, Foucault describes the emergence of a microphysics, or anatomy of power, which produces the soul and identifies the mind. For Foucault, the soul “exists, it has a reality, it is produced permanently around, on, within the body by the functioning of power that is exercised on those punished...” supervised, corrected, and trained.¹⁴¹ Therefore, social power generates the idea that an individual person is a trainable, correctable, rational person who has a soul/mind. Moreover, through the subjugation of the body this individual can be trained to strive for what newly established disciplines and new accumulations of knowledge determine to be normal functioning.¹⁴²

Social power, in Foucault’s view, is both disciplinary and productive. As a disciplinary force, power can be taken up by “specialized institutions,” like prisons, “institutions that use it as an essential element for a particular end,” like schools, by “pre-existing authorities,” like the family, and by state apparatuses, like the police.¹⁴³ Yet in all cases, disciplinary power aims to control and make useful individuals by instilling a “society of surveillance” and the means to conduct examinations.¹⁴⁴ Whereas examinations are conducted by professionals in disciplines of accumulated knowledge who intend to classify and qualify individuals for various roles in society — police officer, military personnel, dysfunctional, and normal are but a few qualifications and classifications — surveillance is democratized and internalized through the omnipresent gaze of indefinite others. In the disciplinary scheme, power descends through individuals. In other words, disciplinary power becomes more anonymous as it becomes

¹⁴¹ Foucault, 29.

¹⁴² Foucault, 224.

¹⁴³ Foucault, 215.

¹⁴⁴ Foucault, 191–217.

functional and individualized.¹⁴⁵ What we are talking about here is the power of normalization as well as the corollary power to make norms. The power of normalization implies a standard and “imposes homogeneity,” but it also makes it possible to weigh and measure individuals who fail to achieve the norm. It is, thus, tempting to read Foucault’s theory of disciplinary power as productive insofar as it describes a breaking down of the body in an effort to inscribe new habits, ways of being, and modes of thinking. This, however, is not what Foucault means when he says power is productive.

Power is productive insofar as power forms subjects in the biological sense.¹⁴⁶ Hence, what Foucault calls biopower, is related to biological processes, like birth, propagation, health, and death.¹⁴⁷ Daniel Just calls this a shift in power from “man-as-body” to “man-as-species.”¹⁴⁸ Biopower, therefore, is power aimed at controlling the global mass of humans and works to regulate the population as a whole. Sam Binkley characterizes the shift this way, “by invoking this biological norm on the level both of biopolitics and biopower, as both a problem of this body, the body you embody, but also of these bodies around you that compose the nation or community, biopower encourages us to re-experience individual modes of embodiment through the lens of the defense of popular health.”¹⁴⁹ In other words, bodies are vulnerable to abnormal and pathological developments (as are souls). But when bodies become pathologically abnormal

¹⁴⁵ Foucault, 193.

¹⁴⁶ Sam Binkley, “Biopolitical Metaphor: Habitualized Embodiment between Discourse and Affect,” *Body & Society* 24, no. 3 (September 1, 2018): 100, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1357034X18767390>.

¹⁴⁷ Daniel Just, “A Biopolitics of Immaterial Labor,” *Political Studies* 64, no. 2 (June 2016): 401–16, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9248.12185>.

¹⁴⁸ Just, 402.

¹⁴⁹ Binkley, “Biopolitical Metaphor,” 99.

and come into contact with other bodies, they risk public health. Importantly, though, biopower disciplines each individual to experience their body through the surveilling frame of public health. A paradigmatic example here would be the case of child vaccinations. Public health agencies, schools, and the military urge, and in many cases mandate, certain vaccinations on the basis of public health. Yet when a group of people who question or reject vaccinations gain the public stage, individual persons start to identify as “vacciners” and “anti-vacciners.” Both a subjectivity and an actual body is produced in the exercise of biopower.

To the extent that social power affects an individual’s decisions, actions, and physical propagation, social power — specifically the norms it produces — must be accounted for in an alternative conception of agency, which aims to address the complexity of the causal network. As Foucault accurately argues, techniques and technologies of power work directly on our bodies, reach into our souls, and shape the lives we produce. Thus, one is the individual he claims to be because he has been disciplined and taught to view himself as that particular individual. What’s more, in the move to locate an educatable soul, the microphysics of power instills within the individual the sense that he is full of agentic potential, has unique ideas, and is solely responsible for his actions. One might even say the foundational conception of agency is an outcome of disciplinary social power. What matters here are the ways in which the power of normalization, a technique of disciplinary power and a product of biopower affect how we embody our bodies, the actions we undertake, and the power of material objects.

One particularly powerful set of normative assumptions revolves around the social conception of gender. Building from an analysis of power, Donna Haraway situates gender-based social norms this way, “Gender is at the heart of constructions and classifications of systems of difference. Complex differentiation and merging of terms for ‘sex’ and ‘gender’ are part of the political history of words...the shared categorical racial and sexual meaning of gender point to

the interwoven modern histories of colonial, racist, and sexual oppression in systems of bodily production and inscription and their consequent laboratory and oppositions discourses.”¹⁵⁰ As Haraway points out, gender is a concept that seeks to discipline and categorize human sexual difference. As a technology of disciplinary power, the concept of gender — the disciplinary and “scientific” knowledge about sexual difference — works to break down the human body and inscribe new habits based on normative sexual difference. As a technique of biopower, gender, quite literally, regulates the normative propagation of new humans. Hence, gender affects a human’s subjective understanding of the self, their soul and body, as well as the organization of society. Yet, unlike other less visible “subjectivities” or “pathologies,” such as political orientation or one’s mental health status, gender is inscribed and encoded on the body for all to see and surveil.

The normalizing social power of gender defines a standard of sexual difference, determines the homogenous sexual categories that humans ought to embody, and orders and organizes the sexed humans who move about society. Importantly, there is a difference between one’s sexual orientation and one’s gender. One’s sexual orientation is based on the sex of the people with whom one engages in sexual activities, while one’s gender is a social category defined by disciplinary and biopower relations.¹⁵¹ Thus, gender is often assessed based on visible characteristics and comportments, whereas sexuality can be concealed. Despite the analytic difference in the theoretical literature on gender and sexuality, popular American discourse tends

¹⁵⁰ Donna Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*, 1 edition (New York: Routledge, 1990), 130.

¹⁵¹ Trenton D. Mize and Bianca Manago, “Precarious Sexuality: How Men and Women Are Differentially Categorized for Similar Sexual Behavior,” *American Sociological Review* 83, no. 2 (April 2018): 305–30, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0003122418759544>.

to conflate the two. This conflation is endemic of the fact that gender is a constructed social category based on a particular, binary construction of human sexuality.¹⁵² The norm toward which gender tends is a binary construction of female and male. In this binary construction, males who typify the norm presume a dominate social position; they are strong, assertive, and are sexually attracted to, and perceived as attractive, by women. Meanwhile, women who typify the feminine occupy the opposite pole; they are submissive relative to men, weak in physique and will, but attractive to men.¹⁵³ Insofar as social gender norms act, they do so through surveillance by individuals who ascribe to and identify with the norms and through internalized, that is, individualized, examination of the self. Social gender norms create the subjectivities and the bodies we embody through careful regulation of human sexuality.

Extending the example of the boy who finds the gun in the trash can, an inclusion of the social power of gender norms would require that we begin with the boy and not the gun. Instead of starting our investigation of the causal network with the boy finding a gun on the school yard, we would begin with a young person who identifies as male and whose body is male, but who is not perceived as typically male by his peers and who attempts to preform heteronormative male gender roles.¹⁵⁴ The first interrupting actor is not the thingy gun, it is gender. This rather typical story of a boy negotiating the exercise of social power in the form of social gender norms and as such highlights the ways in which gendered social norms can act. In fact, if we grant social

¹⁵² R. W. Connell and Raewyn Connell, *Masculinities* (University of California Press, 1995), 3–45; Kristin A. Broussard, Ruth H. Warner, and Anna R. D. Pope, “Too Many Boxes, or Not Enough? Preferences for How We Ask About Gender in Cisgender, LGB, and Gender-Diverse Samples,” *Sex Roles* 78, no. 9–10 (May 2018): 606–24, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-017-0823-2>.

¹⁵³ Connell and Connell, *Masculinities*; Mize and Manago, “Precarious Sexuality.”

¹⁵⁴ *Visible Identities: Race, Gender, and the Self*, Studies in Feminist Philosophy (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); Colleen Martell, “Speaking Bodies: Listening for Mary Gove Nichols (1810-84),” *Feminist Formations; Baltimore* 27, no. 2 (Summer 2015): 146–64.

gender norms status as an actor, then the person-attempting-to-be-masculine-boy is already in one relationship with a powerful linguistic category and approaches the gun as an actant. Gendered social norms encourage the young boy to perform his gender in accordance with the norm. Thus, he literally tries to demonstrate his dominance and strength as well as his attractiveness to the opposite sex. In the case of the boy in this scenario, whose gender performance is challenged by his peers, the normative and productive power of gender leads the boys and girls in the school to police the boundaries of gender role homogeneity. Moreover, because masculinity is a privileged social category, which is to say, the social power of masculine gendered norms creates a form of rule, it is always precarious and needs continual policing. Without the constant re-inscription of this fundamental relationship, masculine/feminine, the power of gender would no longer be a worthwhile technique to discipline and produce individuals.¹⁵⁵ The boy who finds the gun is not just trying to prove that he is masculine enough to his peers, he is trying to prove it to himself. He is involved in the process of becoming a gendered person who thinks of himself as a masculine individual.

The normalizing social power of gender works to discipline individual subjectivities. The social power of gender is framed as a normative concept and as such shapes our basic conception of what it means to be human, but so to do things. As I stated at the end of the last section, guns edit the human. In other words, when humans and nonhumans enter into relationship with one another, each as the ability to manage or modify the existence of the other. Donna Haraway might call the result of the new being — a being made up of social power, human, and things — a cyborg. As a cyborg, the socially gendered human recognizes its monstrous and illegitimate

¹⁵⁵ Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*, Reprint edition (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2005), 13.

origins and finds nothing troubling about the recognition. The cyborg's utterance proceeds, "I find no shame...in acknowledging my egalitarian relationship with non-human material Beings; everything emerges from the same matrix of possibility."¹⁵⁶ In this utterance the cyborg acknowledges the horizontal actor network wherein social gender norms, humans, and guns interact and constitute the resulting being in a myriad of ways. The benefit of Haraway's description is that it brings to the imagination the image of a being/body that is inherently mediated by things and social power. If we begin from this conception, there is no theoretical space for notions of unmediated rationality, unmediated human beings, or unmediated democracy to emerge. Instead, Haraway offers the term "sympoiesis" or making-with to envision multispecies companionship wherein our hybrid nature generates practices to account for our entanglement and entangled actions.

An alternative conception of agency takes seriously the complexity of the causal process, which is to say it presupposes enmeshed, mediated, and varied human-cyborgs. It rejects the idea that agency is the exclusive property of the discrete individual, who on the new materialist's rendering is a fiction, and the notion that individuals are ontologically unique subjects. This is for two primary reasons. One, an analysis of nonhuman things demonstrates the fundamentally mediated nature of human interaction with nonhuman things. Two, an analysis of social power reveals the disciplinary and productive powers that co-construct and normalize social gender norms and gendered subjectivities.

¹⁵⁶ Susan Stryker, "My Words to Victor Frankenstein Above the Village of Chamounix: Performing Transgender Rage," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 1, no. 3 (June 1, 1994): 237–54, <https://doi.org/10.1215/10642684-1-3-237>.

Shooters & School Shooters

A serious consideration of the causal network reveals a complex network of actors among which agency is shared. To say that agency is shared is to say that an individual is not exclusively to blame for his or her actions. In the case of a rampage school shooting, the most immediate reaction to such a proposition is liable to be shock or horror. After all, one or two teenage boys tends to plan and execute these horrific shootings. However, I am not claiming the shooters are innocent or blameless. Rather, insofar as agency is shared, blame is shared. To explicate this point, let's take a quick look at Columbine school shooters. The rampage school shooting at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado was well documented by the shooters themselves. Plus, additional analyses of the shooters are available due to the length of time which has passed since the shooting. On April 20, 1999, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold stormed the school shooting and shouting, "All the jocks stand up!"¹⁵⁷ In all, they took 15 lives, including their own, injured nearly two- dozen more, some severely, and psychologically scarred an entire community.¹⁵⁸

As is the case with the Columbine shooters, school shooters tend to be male, but more than that they are usually boys whose performance of heteronormative male gender roles is questioned by peers who exemplify these roles. This means the boys who exemplify teenage masculinity, generally the athletes or "jocks," protect the boundaries of male gender identification through a performance of their masculinity. Given what we know about the microphysics of social gender norms, it is unsurprising that two boys who were not accepted as masculine enough call out the most representatively masculine as they begin their rampage.

¹⁵⁷ Newman et al., *Rampage: The Social Roots of School Shootings*.

¹⁵⁸ Fast, *Ceremonial Violence*.

In the Foucauldian sense, the “jocks,” but also the culture which supported the veneration of the athletes and jocks at Columbine, was an anatomy of power that inscribed and habituated binary social gender norms wherein males were the perpetrators of violence and protectors of the weak. Evidence of this is found in a film the boys produced during their junior year. Called “Hit Men for Hire,” in the film, “they roam the hallways of the high school corridors in black dusters, cool sunglasses, and ferocious attitudes, pretending to execute school athletes with toy guns,” while dialogue runs, “We’ll protect you on school (sic). Take away any bullies that are pickin’ on you.”¹⁵⁹ Moreover, in their taped basement interviews of one another, the boys often talk about the concept of natural selection, which they understand to be a culling of the weak. During the shooting, Eric wore a t-shirt that had the words “Natural Selection” printed across the front.¹⁶⁰ The boys’ reference to natural selection is explicitly connected to the social power of masculine gendered norms. Eric and Dylan wanted to be the kind of men who exemplified the masculine ideal, but because they were excluded from the traditional way of performing this subjectivity they sought out a way to edit their current mode of being in the world and entered into relationship with guns.

For people in male bodies who struggle to perform masculine gender roles, the gun can serve as a masculine cloak. This is one of Amy Shuffelton’s main points in “Consider Your Man Card Reissued.”¹⁶¹ Shuffelton states that, “masculinity is never an identity a man can establish permanently: it needs to be ‘reissued’ by those in a position to judge a man’s masculinity.”¹⁶²

¹⁵⁹ Fast, 191.

¹⁶⁰ Fast, *Ceremonial Violence*.

¹⁶¹ Shuffelton, “Consider Your Man Card Reissued,” August 2015.

¹⁶² Shuffelton, 388.

Similarly, Douglas Kellner argues that American history bequeaths to us a violent and entrenched gun culture which, coupled with male rage about perceived power shifts, has led to the explosion of rampage gun violence.¹⁶³ Building on these ideas, my argument is that the gun is powerful thing/actant that acts on and through humans. The extent to which the power of gender encourages men to conform to “typical” or “natural” masculine gender roles wherein they must dominate, where they ought to be the arbitrator of “natural selection,” and where being harassed for one’s inability to perform these roles constitutes an unparalleled failure to become a certain kind of self, the thingy power of the gun will remain as seductive as a siren calling to Odysseus. And here is the crux: Odysseus, who was able to avoid the siren’s call by literally tying his body to the ship’s mast. Most teenage boys are able to restrain any desire to stick it to their rivals, harassers, and bullies by shooting up the school without binding their physical bodies. And according to the individualistic premise of liberal democracy, those who survive the siren call do so because their “reason” wins out. Put another way, the boys who do not turn to gun violence to enact their masculinity at school are functional liberal individuals who get to grow up to become the agentic rational-male-gun-owning-protectors of society. The trouble with this analogy, of course, is that Odysseus tied his literal body down; he was keenly aware of reason’s failings and agency’s entangled workings.

The narrative of an intentional rational agent who can use a gun to protect his family or to ensure the stability of society disciplines men through the power of social gender social norms to divorce the body from the mind and to demonstrate their masculinity through their singular and exclusive agentic capacity to reason and to use material tools. While masculinity for American teenagers is often organized around physical dominance, masculinity for American adults

¹⁶³ Kellner, *Guys and Guns Amok*, Chapter 1.

articulates its ideals through control and dominance physically *and* cognitively.¹⁶⁴ In other words, for adults, ideal masculinity is an expression of one's ability to reasonably and rationally affect one's environment, and for teenagers masculinity's ideal expression is expressed in one's physical ability to affect the environment. The construction of this binary space, in which one is either masculine or one is not, is detrimental for the developing teenage boy who is transitioning from boy to man, and thus liable to experience, and fail to adequately appropriate, the social power of both organizing ideals. Put another way, because teenagers move between adult and not-yet-adult norms, the social expectation is that they will appropriate both — that they can be both rational and physically powerful. The binary construction of social norm of masculinity along with liberal democracy's insistence on the agency of the singular and intentional rational agent is, therefore, disastrous for any conception of democracy which aims to make possible life in association. Furthermore, in the foundational liberal scenario, where unchecked and unacknowledged social power constructs binary social gender norms and thingy power is ignored, women, people of color, children, and any other group of people which does not appropriate the liberal and masculine ideal, have no claim to reason and thus no claim to agency. On the foundational liberal view, things are tools to be used by those who reason and those who approximate the capacity to be rational. Hence, tools, like guns, which require the "user" to be exceptionally "rational" because of their power to control human life, are masculinized by the same social power which disciplines individual subjectivities. Agency, here, is the exclusive property of singular individuals who can be held responsible for his or her actions.

On the new materialist view, there is no sense in which our effect on the social world and natural environment, our agency, is exclusively our own. Educating teenagers, boys and girls, to

¹⁶⁴ Connell and Connell, *Masculinities*, 165.

believe otherwise, as foundational liberal democratic education would have us do, will only perpetuate rampage school gun violence, specifically, and the violent organization of society, in general. As we have seen thingy power changes who we are. The boy with the gun is different from the boy without the gun. And social power constructs individuals who think of themselves as individuals in gendered terms and individuals who apply these constructs to material things. Together thing power and social power act on teenage boys and bear some responsibility for the evolution of school shooter.

Conclusion

The notion of a singular and intentional rational agent who masters and puts to use material things to enact his ontologically unique goals is upended when we take seriously the thingy power of material and the workings of social power. Yet, contemporary teenage boys and girls are educated in theories of democracy, and, therefore, the self which instruct them to identify, locate, and cultivate a rational and reasonable agentic self who resides in the mind/soul and who is unaffected by nonhuman material things or the body. In the search for “a true self,” foundational civic education teaches young people to say things like “guns kill people” and “guns don’t kill people, people kill people,” even though both utterances are absurd. The absurdity of this utterance lies in the notion that things are magic, and people are rational bulwarks of self-making mojo. Neither is true. Things are powerful because of the responses they elicit from humans and nonhumans, alike, and the impact they have on our environment. Guns affect not just humans but our entire social and natural world. Guns have changed human interpersonal relations in countries like America, the shape of war and hunting, manufacturing and — insofar as metal was extracted from the earth to create guns — the natural world. Humans and things constitute one another. As humans, our thoughts, intentions, and actions have been, and continue to be, shaped by the things we hold dear, the things we fear, and the things that

make possible our way of life. In addition to things, social power concentrated in disciplines, knowledges, and objective conditions is always working on humans as individuals and on the social collective.

School shooters, like everyone else, are embodied people who are disciplined via gendered norms to appropriate individual subjectivities. Male school shooters perform heteronormative masculine roles and, when they encounter guns, do so as developing young people who occupy and try out specific masculinized subjectivities. For the harassed teenage boy, who faces daily harassment based on the performance of his social gender, the thingy power of the gun presents an opportunity to gain enough masculinized power to establish his masculinity amongst his peers. When the harassed not-masculine-enough-boy finds the gun-in-the-garbage-bin, he finds the thingy power to kill in a masculine totem/thing that has acted on schools through other boys like him in the not too distant past. Jointly, thing and norms, along with their histories, act on and through us in ways that we cannot always see, but which we must attempt to understand if we hope to build peaceful associative communities. The trying-to-be-masculine-teenage-school-shooter-with-a-gun is a “cyborg” operating in a world constituted by technical delegates of guns and the normalizing social power of gender, but the point is recursive. Things, too, are Harrawayian cyborgs. Insofar as things are made of human, social, and political histories, nonhuman material is an entangled assemblage with which we must make and remake the world . Cyborgs, by definition, share agency with things and social power. They are not singular, unique, or fundamentally individualized. As such, to hold a cyborg responsible is to hold the constitutive elements/parts of the being responsible. In the case of the cyborg-school-shooter, we might demand that liberal democratic education, traditional conceptions of agency, social gender norms, guns, and the shooter should be held accountable for the ways in which each comingles to perpetuate rampage school gun violence. Humans never have been, and

are not now, singular and agentic beings who can make use of things and social power without being affected by the very things we use and create.

An alternative conception of agency is, therefore, needed to address the ways in which associations of humans, things, and social power co-constitute one another and make up the associations with which we interact and out of which we make democracy. Taking new materialism seriously allows us to begin the work of decentering the human subject in this project. That said, the new materialists invoked here, Latour, Bennett, and Haraway, do not assume that we, humans, can ever fully escape our lived experience. Rather they urge us to think carefully about our entanglements and to respond with care to the associations that construct the self and the world. In this dissertation, I am interested in the developing further the ways in which humans as thinking beings who are already and always cyborgs might develop the capacity to make sense of their associative behaviors in the political sphere so as to hold responsible all of the actors that affect our society. I am not concerned with the ethical account one gives of the self, although this seems to be a related project.¹⁶⁵ Moving forward, I will work to explain how an antifoundational democratic theory of the likes theorized by John Dewey and Benjamin Barber begins with a conception of shared agency and that is, in fact, situated in the political.¹⁶⁶ Although neither of these men were particularly interested in new materialism or worried about the human as cyborg, their pragmatic theories of democracy are flexible enough to encompass this development. As Barb Stengel points out there is more that connects critical

¹⁶⁵ Judith P. Butler, *Giving an Account of Oneself*, 1 edition (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005); Keehn and Boyles, "Sense, Nonsense, and Violence."

¹⁶⁶ John Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems*, 1 edition (Athens: Swallow Press, 1954); Barber, *Strong Democracy*.

pragmatism and new materialism than that which separates the disciplines.¹⁶⁷ In the next chapter, I will lay out an antifoundational theory of democracy, which rests on the alternative conception of agency that I have laid out in this chapter.

¹⁶⁷ Barbara S. Stengel, "Com-Posting Experimental Futures: Pragmatists Making (Odd)Kin with New Materialists," *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 38, no. 1 (February 1, 2019): 7–29, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11217-018-9627-2>.

CHAPTER FOUR

TOWARD AN ANTIFOUNDATIONAL DEMOCRATIC THEORY OF AGENCY

The disciplinary exercise of social power *vis a vis* social gender norms produces the bodies we embody and disciplines individual subjectivities; meanwhile, the thingy power of material objects, like guns, affects the kind of selves and associations we co-create. Each — social gender norms and guns — is an actant in a rampage school shooter’s network of distributed agency. An alternative conception of agency, one that does not see agency as the exclusive property of the singular and liberal individual, is derived from an acknowledgement of the primary “swapping of properties among inert, animal, symbolic, concrete, and human materials,”¹⁶⁸ and an understanding of the ways in which technologies of power are exercised over individual bodies and collectives of bodies to produce and control individuals.¹⁶⁹ As I see it, if the aim is to teach citizens how they might construct peaceful futures wherein each person is equipped to participate in society’s renewal, then a sufficient theory of democratic education must account for this alternative and expanded conception of agency. A person who is taught that his actions and decisions are, at least in part, the result of a complicated mix of social power as well as the power of things, in essence that one is a cyborg, is better equipped to critically engage with different others and with the complex causal networks that characterize public action in a shared world. Moreover, when democratic education begins with shared, expanded, and

¹⁶⁸ Latour, *Pandora’s Hope*, 122–23.

¹⁶⁹ Foucault, *Discipline & Punish*.

distributed agency, the action, impact, and agentic contribution of everyone else— gun manufactures and advertisers, the NRA, masculine cultural norms, liberal democrats—is revealed. Thus, when our notion of agency is expanded to account for the actants as well as the cyborg beings that constitute our world, agency is both more diffuse and limited.¹⁷⁰ Agency is shared among actants because human-cyborg action is always (inter) and (trans)action; hence it is more diffuse. And agency is more limited insofar as we as human persons do not have complete control over our actions. Thinking about agency in this way allows us to more clearly see, to pinpoint, the ways in which the interactive and constitutive elements of the cyborg impact the political and social actions one might take. As a pragmatic philosopher of education, I will spend the remaining pages of this dissertation fleshing a theory of democracy and democratic education suited for a human-cyborg. In so doing, I am interested in articulating the ways in which the human-cyborg might make use of the limited, but vital agency, they do have. As such I look to the kind of education the human element of the cyborg ought to receive such that the human can think and act in ways that acknowledge interdependence and shared agency.

In this chapter, I argue that in order to address violence, specifically rampage school gun violence, we need an alternative theory of democracy, which sufficiently accounts for the interplay of non-rational humans, nonhuman things, and gendered social norms in the making of the communities to which we belong. Without an alternative theory of democracy within which to situate an alternative conception of agency, we cannot expect young people to create peaceful democratic communities and we should expect rampage school gun violence to persist. This chapter claims that antifoundational democratic theory teaches citizens to think of their agency as necessarily shared across a network of actants. Antifoundational democracy, therefore, helps

¹⁷⁰ Stengel, “Com-Posting Experimental Futures.”

citizens make sense of violence by highlighting the dynamic causal networks that contribute to the making of shooters and school shootings. Rather than allocating blame in the singular individual, antifoundational democracy teaches citizens how to share the blame, take responsibility for unacceptable violence, and participate in the renewal of a democratic society.

Whereas foundational democracy begins with the exclusive individuality and separateness of human beings, antifoundational democracy begins with the fundamental interdependence of humans. As a way of being in the world, antifoundational democracy has little use for foundations derived from a distant pre-political vignette of human relations; it is an orientation to living in common based on the present. Following American pragmatists, specifically, John Dewey and Benjamin Barber, I argue that antifoundational democracy is well suited to provide solutions to our gun problem because antifoundational democracy is constituted in our non ideal interactions with other humans and nonhuman things.¹⁷¹

Specifically, I contend that antifoundational democratic education distributes responsibility for rampage school gun violence to various human and nonhuman actors and teaches individuals how to make sense of each agent's actions. In so doing, antifoundational democracy readies individuals and communities to leverage their understanding of the complex causal network to enact changes to stop the rampaging via the revision of old habits, thoughtful engagement with complex associative actors and Latourian actants, and collaborative social

¹⁷¹ For more on non-ideal theorizing and democracy see: Samantha Deane, "Prefacing as Educating: Building Educational Utopias and Barber's Strong Democracy," *Philosophy of Education Archive* 0, no. 0 (February 23, 2018): 118–27; Michele S. Moses, "Nonideal Theory and Philosophy of Education: Considering What Is While Working Toward What Ought to Be," *Educational Theory* 65, no. 2 (April 2015): 107–10, <https://doi.org/10.1111/edth.12101>; Terri S. Wilson and Matthew A. Ryg, "Becoming Autonomous: Nonideal Theory and Educational Autonomy," *Educational Theory* 65, no. 2 (2015): 127–50, <https://doi.org/10.1111/edth.12103>; Terri S. Wilson and Matthew Ryg, "Non-Ideal Autonomy: Dewey and Reframing Educational Authority," *Philosophy of Education Archive* 0, no. 0 (March 17, 2017): 247–255–255.

endeavors. The chapter begins by returning to the conversation about materialism to suggest that the new materialist, alternative conception of agency, which I proposed in Chapter 3 and link to antifoundational democracy here, is a rejection of, and an alternative to, the conceptual frame that grounds liberal democracy's emergence. In the second section of the chapter, I turn to John Dewey's understanding of associative behaviors to situate this alternative conception of agency in the political. Finally, in the third section, I argue that John Dewey's notion of habit helps us see how one exercise this alternative agency to affect his or her environment.

From Materialism to New Materialism's Alternative

Up to this point, I have not explicitly adumbrated the ways in which new materialism is connected to the political, and yet, my argument revolves around the necessity of an alternative conception of agency for peaceful democratic social progress. In this section, I will, therefore, connect the premise upon which new materialist agency is constructed to a rejection of the materialist frame of liberal democracy. Following Benjamin Barber, I claim that liberal democracy is constructed upon an appropriation of materialism to the political and, therefore, that new materialism is a rejection of both materialism and materialism's political premise. Yet, new materialism is more than just a rejection, it proposes an alternative to the materialist premise and supports an alternative construction of political theory.

Benjamin Barber links liberal democracy's contemporary dispositions to a materialist pretheoretical premise. As Barber sees it, liberal democracy is a set of political responses to conflict where, "Autonomous individuals occupying private and separate spaces are the players in the game of liberal politics."¹⁷² In Barber's taxonomy, foundational democracy's responses to conflict solicits three dispositions: the anarchist, realist, and minimalist. In very succinct terms,

¹⁷² Barber, *Strong Democracy*, 5.

the anarchist is “conflict denying,” which is to say conflict is created only by political interaction.¹⁷³ The realist is “conflict repressing;” for the realist politics becomes the “art of power.”¹⁷⁴ Finally, the minimalist is “conflict tolerating.”¹⁷⁵ In this last disposition, politics is the art of toleration because it seeks to accept conflict and dissensus. These dispositions are not evolutionary; rather, they coexist in American politics and even within the same individual. They are all a part of the same “inertial frame of reference” or constellation of starting premises that constitute foundational liberal democracy.¹⁷⁶ I will explicate the inertial frame on which the traditional conception of human nature and dispositions of liberal democracy rest in an effort to clear the way for a pragmatic conception of habit as human nature.¹⁷⁷ In so doing, my goal is to argue that antifoundational democracy emerges from an acceptance of our associative nature and that democratic society is continuously constructed upon habits that make sense of our shared agency and personal actions.

In Barber’s parlance, an “inertial frame of reference” is the embodiment of all the “pretheoretical material of a particular world view.”¹⁷⁸ An inertial frame is a “starting or rest position from which a theorist launches his argument and to which he can safely return when a given philosophical voyage of discovery fails or is aborted.”¹⁷⁹ The important point is that one

¹⁷³ Barber, 6.

¹⁷⁴ Barber, 6;11.

¹⁷⁵ Barber, 6.

¹⁷⁶ Deane, “Prefacing as Educating.”

¹⁷⁷ “For an increased knowledge of human nature would directly and in unpredictable ways modify the workings of human nature, and lead to the need of new methods of regulation, and so on without end.” Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems*, 197.

¹⁷⁸ Barber, *Strong Democracy*, 26.

¹⁷⁹ Barber, 26–27.

cannot get behind an inertial frame of reference. It is prior to the articulation of theory.¹⁸⁰

Inertial frames are, therefore, backward looking attempts to find starting points for theory. In Barber's estimation, liberal democracy's inertial frame rests on the 16th century discovery of materialism. As Barber puts it, "The most striking feature of the liberal inertial frame is the physicality of its language and imagery. There was a 'thingness' about Hobbesian and post-Hobbesian liberal thought that seems to have been both new and extraordinary in the history of political discourse. Mimicking the newly revealed physical cosmos of the scientists, political theorists suddenly began to depict the human world as inhabited by units, particles, and atoms, things with solidity and externality quite at odds with the traditional teleological, psychic, and spiritual understandings of the human essence."¹⁸¹ Barber's point is this: the shift to language and metaphors drawn from physics and the science, which are deeply connected to laws of time and space, changed how political theorists spoke about human nature. Prior to the arrival of this "thingness," humans were characterized as beings bound by time and space but also beings with timeless or transcendental souls. Thus, when political theorists applied materialism to "human nature," humans became individuals with discrete boundaries who, despite their uniqueness, are composed of the same matter. In one sense, this move created the grounds from which to say individual humans are equal and all positions are symmetrical. In another sense, the application of materialism to human nature divorced humans from their fundamental associations and replaced spiritual or teleological understandings of human nature with scientific and political ones.¹⁸²

¹⁸⁰ Barber, 28.

¹⁸¹ Barber, 34.

¹⁸² Materialism as I am talking about it here is broadly characterized as the arrival of thingness. Hence, I am not talking about historical materialism of the Marxist variety. Marx's notion of materiality is limited

Liberal democracy is, therefore, born of the idea that humans can be depicted in the language of physicality, that humans are alike in their material presence but different insofar as there exists something like a mind or an interior space where reasoning takes place, and that each human is a discrete being. These last two premises, that humans have minds and that humans are fundamentally alone, are supported by corollary premises. On the epistemological side is the idea that “there exists a knowable and independent ground,” what Barber call Cartesian politics. Barber’s characterization of Cartesian politics goes something like this: because we know the material world is made up of men, things, and nature, all of which are governed by physical necessity and laws of motion, political laws, which seek to describe normative human behaviors, ought to be similarly rooted in certainty, science, and reason.¹⁸³ Liberals, therefore, spend a great deal of time looking for and describing the unassailable and knowable ground upon which political norms can be built. Of course, for humans to be certain of something, there must be a knower and a mind that can mirror and make sense of what exists in the material world.¹⁸⁴ Hence, theorists from Hobbes to Locke to Rawls concern themselves with what it means to be a rational or reasonable person who can make rational (analytic) choices. The second premise rests on a psychological assumption which takes that man is singular and alone from the beginning and in the end. The psychology of individualism tells liberal individuals that “the dominant

to economic structures that provoke other events. Those who speak of Marxist materiality, therefore, usually limit the conversation to human structures that limit or constrain human action. For more on different materialism see Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: a political ecology of things*, Duke University Press, 2010.

¹⁸³ Barber, *Strong Democracy*, 50.

¹⁸⁴Rorty writes extensively about issue which arise when the mind though to mirror nature. For more see: Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, Reprint edition (Princeton, N. J: Princeton University Press, 1981).

reality of human life is the fact of our separate existences.”¹⁸⁵ The psychological frame thus reinforces the epistemological premise that humans are unique insofar as they have unique minds. While our physical bodies differ, bodily differences are insignificant for a materialist liberal theory because individuality is a hallmark of a mind that is able to reason. Liberal democratic education that revolves around an individual’s ability to become an intentional rational agent is, therefore, consistent with materialist liberal theory.

If materialism grounds liberal democracy’s foundational premises, then new materialism is a rejection of, and an alternative to, materialist liberal politics. New materialism, in other words, flips on its head the conclusion that liberal democracy draws from the appropriation of materialism. For new materialists, the insights of materialism highlight what humans and nonhumans *share*, and not what makes humans distinct from the made or natural environment. Natural things, like planets, along with human artifacts (things) and humans (body and mind) all affect the environment. Therefore, a recognition of material objects and their laws makes clear the multi-linear networks of causation, argue the new materialists. By relinquishing a unidirectional view of agency or causation, where “the agency of bodies and material objects is understood largely as an effect of power,” new materialists propose an alternative framework that embraces a “recursive and multi-linear” view of causation.¹⁸⁶ New materialists, therefore, reject the appropriation of thingness to human political relations but not the recognition of things. Hence, the new materialist, Jane Bennett, says her methodological aim is to “overemphasize the agentic contributions of nonhuman forces (operating in nature, in the human body, and in human artifacts) in an attempt to counter the narcissistic reflex of human language

¹⁸⁵ Barber, *Strong Democracy*, 68.

¹⁸⁶ Frost, “The Implications of the New Materialisms for Feminist Epistemology,” 71.

and thought.”¹⁸⁷ Bennett’s methodological point is a political one as well. If we accept the ways in which material objects and the idea of thingness has influenced human thought about science and politics, which is to say if we acknowledge the history of materialism as a discourse, then our contemporary political thought ought to take as its unit of analysis a heterogenous public of human and nonhuman things.¹⁸⁸

As an alternative to materialism, new materialism rejects all three positions posited by materialist liberal democracy. It rejects the idea that scientific notions about things can be unidirectionally appropriated by humans. The process is recursive. “Humans are involved in the making of scientific facts and the sciences are involved in the making of human history,” as Latour would say.¹⁸⁹ New materialists reject the idea that bodies are insignificant, that minds function independent of the body, and that certainty, or “independent grounds,” ought to guide political theory. Instead, new materialist’s wonder what it would mean to say the body thinks and seek to take seriously contingent starting points derived from embodied experience.¹⁹⁰ Finally, new materialism rejects the idea that humans are fundamentally solitary individuals. Once human bodies and minds are reintegrated, it is a short step to articulate the various associations that constitute human existence. In the next section, I explicitly detail the political implications of taking seriously new materialism by using as starting points the alternatives new materialism brings to the forefront.

¹⁸⁷ Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*, xvi.

¹⁸⁸ Bennett, 108.

¹⁸⁹ Latour, *Pandora’s Hope*, 10.

¹⁹⁰ Frost, “The Implications of the New Materialisms for Feminist Epistemology”; Latour, *Pandora’s Hope*.

Associative Behaviors and the Fundamental Interdependence of Humans

Methodologically, new materialism, Deweyan pragmatism, and antifoundational democracy are based on the idea that we ought to launch inquiry from lived experience. This presumption is evident in Barber's careful demystification of liberal democracy's "pretheoretical givens" and in new materialism's relentless pursuit of ways to characterize life in a world constituted by things, power, technologies, nature, and people. New materialism presumes that humans, nonhuman things, and nature are in close association and that each is capable of producing affects such that our inquiry ought to begin by tracing these associations. Similarly, the Deweyan stance argues that lived experience guides the generation of ideals, which can then guide subsequent experience. Hence, the marriage between new materialism and Deweyan pragmatism is generative. Adding Dewey's work to the mix highlights the political significance of new materialism's rejection of the materialist liberal frame and places the alternative conception of agency that I worked out in Chapter 3 squarely in the political.

In the *Public and Its Problems* Dewey contends that the relation of the individual to the social is "the first and last" problem in the search for the "the great community."¹⁹¹ The exact problem in Dewey's sense is our commitment to a binary construction where it is either a unique individual or a collective that acts. "The human being whom we fasten upon as individual *par excellence* is moved and regulated by his association with others; what he does and what the consequences of his behaviors are, what his experiences consists of, cannot even be described, much less accounted for, in isolation," states Dewey.¹⁹² In other words, all experience is shared and human behavior is fundamentally associative. Dewey expands, "A thing is one when it

¹⁹¹ Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems*, 186.

¹⁹² Dewey, 188.

stands, lies or moves as a unit independently of other things, whether it be a stone, tree, molecule or drop of water, or a human being... [Yet] The tree stands only when rooted in the soil; it lives or dies in the mode of its connections with sunlight, air and water. Then too the tree is a collection of interacting parts; is the tree more a single whole than its cells?"¹⁹³ Like the tree, the individual human is always comprised of interacting parts. Joint activity is a fact of existence—it is how the world, at present, can be observed to operate. Trees have and need roots. Humans are born from other humans, who have to interact with one other or scientific technologies to create a fetus, which once born as a human baby cannot thrive without significant human and nonhuman interactions.

The difficulty with making heads or tails of the political significance of interdependence is related to concerns about how to locate and hold responsible the individual. Dewey puts the problem this way, "because an individual can be disassociated from this, that and the other grouping... there grows up in the mind an image of a residual individual who is not member of any association at all. From this premise, and from this only, there develops the unreal question of how individuals come to be united in societies and groups: the individual and social are now opposed to each other, and there is a problem of reconciling them."¹⁹⁴ In this scenario, the individual must liberate himself from the collective so as to not be solely defined by the collective and in the effort must claim his status as an autonomous agent. This is the scenario on which materialist, liberal democracy and its corollary ideas about individual agency are constructed. Yet, as Dewey points out, it is an artificial construction. The fact that a human can move between contexts and remain a distinct person does not indicate that this person is either

¹⁹³ Dewey, 186.

¹⁹⁴ Dewey, 191.

consumed by contexts or entirely free of them. Humans are always engaged in different associations and groupings. Moreover, some contexts are consuming while others are less so, indicating that persons are in flux between moments of individuality and moments of collectivity. As such, the questions should be in what associations and causal networks do we find ourselves, what are the consequences of these associations, and in what way does the network or association need to be adjusted to secure more just or equitable circumstances? In other words, we ought to be searching for networks, actants, and cyborgs that ought to be held responsible for violence.

Although new materialists are quite keen to discuss agency, Dewey did not have much to say about agency, per se. He did, however, use the word autonomy sparingly across his various works.¹⁹⁵ To the extent that autonomy is something like the capacity to make and revise choices about one's life, which is how it has been defined throughout this work, and agency is the ability to affect or act on one's environment, then it is fair to say the terms are closely related for Dewey and liberal theorists alike. Like his liberal counterparts, Dewey agrees that agency is related to what it means to act on and within one's community. Nonetheless, Dewey diverges from the liberal conception of agency to the extent that agency, in his sense, is the associative and shared capacity to act and produce effects and is not the sum of an individual's solitary endeavors. For Dewey, what matters is the impact of associative behavior on society. Although the individual person acts, he always does so within an associative situation.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁵ Wilson and Ryg, "Becoming Autonomous," 138, n 51; Kurt Stenhagen, "Deweyan Democratic Agency and School Math: Beyond Constructivism and Critique," *Educational Theory* 66, no. 1–2 (April 1, 2016): 95–109, <https://doi.org/10.1111/edth.12156>.

¹⁹⁶ John Dewey, *Democracy and Education* (Simon & Brown, 2012), 314–15.

Yet, society is not implied in Dewey's notion of associated behavior; it takes active will and intelligent action to make the political communities to which we belong. We each participate in interactions where associations form, such as those that happen in the family, and we are each a part of small communities. For example, church, book groups, neighborhood associations, and organized labor are a few "small communities" to which individuals persons belong by virtue of their personal associations. Becoming a member of a public, on the other hand, requires particular actions. For Dewey, the public, which is to say political community, is made up an infinite number of local publics — what Sarah Stitzlein and Amy Rector-Aranda call "small publics." And where small publics are the result of local interaction, public is understood as a verb.¹⁹⁷ Small publics are the result of local, even neighborly, groups of people who come together to impact a shared problem. Through communication about the effects of their personal and communal associations these small publics, seek flexible and continuous social improvements. On Dewey's view, these small publics, when vibrant, effective and in their verb mode, form a worldwide scene in which democratic communities are generated. He states, "Unless local communal life can be restored, the public cannot adequately resolve its most urgent problem: to find and identify itself. But if it is reestablished.... It will not be isolated. Its larger relationships will provide an inexhaustible and flowing fund of meaning upon which to draw."¹⁹⁸ In other words, small democratic publics will become a large democratic public to the extent that the individual persons who make up the small publics share habits and attitudes.

¹⁹⁷ Sarah M. Stitzlein and Amy Rector-Aranda, "The Role of 'Small Publics' in Teacher Dissent," *Educational Theory* 66, no. 1–2 (n.d.): 165–80, <https://doi.org/10.1111/edth.12160>; Chris Higgins and Kathleen Knight Abowitz, "What Makes a Public School Public? A Framework for Evaluating the Civic Substance of Schooling," *Educational Theory* 61, no. 4 (August 1, 2011): 365–80, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-5446.2011.00409.x>.

¹⁹⁸ Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems*, 216–17.

Individual associations and memberships in small communities are a natural feature of human life as we find it; however, becoming a member of a public by communicating about the impact of our various experiences in an effort to affect some particular social change takes effort and requires the training of certain capacities. Like liberal democracy, antifoundational democracy is closely connected to a vision of education. Yet, unlike liberal democracy, antifoundational democracy does not look to instantiate or shore up an individual's exclusive agentic capacity. Rather, antifoundational democracy is the result of associative, or shared, agency, and in place of aiming to develop ontologically autonomous agents, looks to develop habits that will enable individual persons to expand their associations and impact an ever-widening network of people and things. Democracy, for Dewey, is more than "a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience."¹⁹⁹ Whereas Callan understands liberal democracy to be a balance between the freedom for individuals to craft meaningful lives and the demands of collective self-rule wherein "autonomy or reasoned self-rule is key to understanding what rightly holds together liberal and democratic principles," Dewey emphasizes the social and shared nature of human life and, therefore, of the political.²⁰⁰ For Dewey, democracy is a way of life made possible by the capacity to communicate about shared experiences, ideas, and common ends that are in view.²⁰¹

The democratic capacities demanded by an antifoundational vision of democracy are consistent with, and require, a notion of shared agency. In fact, I am claiming that in the antifoundational, pragmatic schema of democracy, the educative task of developing agentic

¹⁹⁹ Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 101.

²⁰⁰ Callan, *Creating Citizens*, 11.

²⁰¹ Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems*, 218.

capacity is the project of facilitating the growth of one's ability to make sense of complex causal networks in association with others as well as the capacity to formulate purposes that affect the world as a constitutive member. To this end, Terri Wilson and Matthew Ryg argue that a Deweyan view of autonomy is built on a broader account of Dewey's notion of the transactional self. They state that the Deweyan self "interacts with and is shaped by environments through the interstices of interest and habit...we do and act, undergo and are acted upon."²⁰² Additionally, the individual, or self, on Dewey's view is not set against the social. Rather, the transactional self who interacts is, "continually re-constituted in the world with and by persons interacting with environments."²⁰³ Although many liberal theorists, like Callan, would agree with this vision of autonomy where an encumbered self becomes capable of asking questions about the value of his various encumbrances, Dewey helps us see that one is never fully autonomous in the liberal sense. For Dewey, one is always in the process of have more of less impact on one's network depending upon one's ability see and make sense of all of the actors, including oneself, in a given situation.²⁰⁴

This is to say, even though individuals must learn to communicate, think, and make sense of causal networks, they are not the exclusive locus of agency. Agency, here, has little to do with a singular, intentional, and rational agent, but instead has everything do to with the networks and associations that evidence what "we will together, do together, and say together."²⁰⁵ Moreover, the antifoundational understanding of our fundamental interdependence

²⁰² Wilson and Ryg, "Becoming Autonomous," 140.

²⁰³ Wilson and Ryg, 140.

²⁰⁴ Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 15–16.

²⁰⁵ Barber, *Strong Democracy*.

does not preclude the introduction of nonhuman actors into our causal networks. In fact, although Dewey is not a new materialist and might have some serious concerns about thingy power, Dewey begins his discussion of associative behaviors and interdependence by talking about the association of trees and roots as well as that of rocks, humans, and hammers.²⁰⁶ Even though humans are, by and large, the “willers” and “talkers,” an alternative conception of agency contends that a variety of human and nonhuman things comingle to co-constitute the willing, talking and doing.²⁰⁷ It is, therefore, appropriate and methodologically consistent that Bennett, after considering the vitality, or power, of material and Dewey’s concept of the public, argues that “all kinds of bodies may be able to join forces, but a pragmatist would be quick to note that only *some* bodies can make this association into a *task* force. And yet there also remains a self-interested motivation for the presumption that all material bodies are potential members of the public into which one has been inducted. Such a presumption will enable me to discern more fully the extent of their power over me: How is this food or worm or aluminum contributing to a problem affecting me? How might these nonhumans contribute to the solution?”²⁰⁸ As Bennett points out, even though the pragmatist may be inclined to point out that only humans can discern and then act upon their knowledge, it is in our self-interest to take seriously the associative agency of material, if democratic social change is our goal.

On my view, Dewey’s theory of the public can encompass a new materialist conception of agency, and, perhaps, more importantly, Dewey shows us how individual persons can develop the capacity to treat material and nonhuman members of society as co-constitutive actors in the

²⁰⁶ See Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*, 100–103 for a discussion of the application of Deweyan ideas to vital materialism.

²⁰⁷ Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems*, 186–87.

²⁰⁸ Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*, 103.

public. For Dewey, an individual is always in relationships with and is conditioned by her environment, practices, and habits. However, the key to understanding and acting upon our associative agency rests on Dewey's notion of habit. On his view, habits are a way of responding to and acting upon our environment and, as such, the development of particular habits is the development of democracy. Taking seriously the generation of habits creates some space between the idea of action and the notion of human intentionality. In the next section, where I turn more fully to Dewey's concept of habit, I argue that flexible habits enable individual persons to become associative and agentic figures in networks of distributed agency. In other words, developing Dewey's notion of habit illuminates the specific agency of the human-cyborgs ought to develop to become response-able and thoughtful antifoundational democratic actors.

Habit and Agency

Habits are accumulated experiences that allow humans to function both cognitively and non-cognitively in the world. In colloquial understanding, a habit is something one does reflexively and without thought; it is mindless. Raising one's hand to answer a question is a habit that we inculcate in school children. The majority of us probably do not remember learning to raise our hand, nor do we recall the dispositions that were supposed to be on display when we extended our arm to answer a teacher's question. What's more, those of us who spent considerable amounts of time in school may find ourselves raising a hand in non-educational settings, further exemplifying the hold this habit has on us. On Dewey's view, the kind of habit characterized by the raising of one's hand demonstrates one's ability to adapt to his or her environment and is better described as habituation. Habituation, or accommodation, is what Dewey calls the acquisition of habits that evidence our ability to acquiesce to our environment. To make a key distinction, habits that serve our environmental needs are not the same as habits that emphasize an ability to change the environment. Both types of habits are important. There

are times when knowing how to adapt to one's environment ensures survival and ease of being. Knowing when and how to raise one's hand often ensures that the teacher hears one's ideas and questions. But, the habit of raising one's hand does not guarantee that you will be called on, that the ideas you offer will be taken seriously, or that the learning environment will be one of cooperative, joint activity.²⁰⁹

Insofar as the child knows that raising her hand is how she demonstrates her classroom citizenship, she is aware of, to varying degrees, the purpose and consequence of the habit. She is cognizant of the habit and its effect on her environment. Depending on the child's age and level of maturity, she may become aware of the ways in which the practice of raising a hand works to discipline peer interaction, she may come to find the habit tiresome, or she might not give the habit a second thought. To the extent that she thinks about and reflects upon the purpose and consequence of the habit, she, the actor, has a hold of the habit. Just as important, insofar as she understands the purposes and consequences of the habit, she is also aware of the ways in which her actions affect and are dependent upon the actions of other human and nonhuman actors. Unless told otherwise, when she is cognizant of the habit, she necessarily understands the associative character of agency. Dewey tell us that, "Habits reduce themselves to routine way of acting, or denigrate into ways of action to which we are enslaved just in the degree in which intelligence is disconnected from them." Thus, "routine habits are unthinking habits" and "'bad' habits are habits so severed from reason that they are opposed to the conclusions of conscious deliberation and decision."²¹⁰ Bad habits are, therefore, not the same as unthinking habit. Unthinking habits are routine ways of acting that help us navigate a complex world of

²⁰⁹ Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 50–62, Chapter 4.

²¹⁰ Dewey, 55.

associations. An unthinking habit can be anything from raising a hand to answer a question, to brushing one's teeth, to driving a car or riding a bike. Habits about which we don't have to think give us space to think about the actions that need conscious deliberation, such as having a conversation. A bad habit, on the other hand, is habit with which we persist in spite of reasons to discontinue the action. Driving a car while texting on a cell phone or selling semi-automatic rifles to teenagers are two examples of bad habits.

Although not all habits need to be thinking or cognitive habits, it is key that children construct reflexive and flexible habits to navigate the social world. How does one retain the capacity to both think about a habit and still routinely act in accordance with the habit? Dewey responds that habits determine the channels of thought.²¹¹ Hence, "thought is, in this sense, both conditioned *by* habits but achieved through critically reflecting *on* habits."²¹² In other words, habits structure the thoughts we have but thinking is the process of standing outside that habit and asking whether the habit and its attendant thought-channels are conducive to our growth as members of various associations. In Dewey's undemanding parlance, we must cultivate the habit to "stop and think" about our habits. In so doing, we gain the capacity to form purposes and act as creative and intelligent agents.²¹³ A Deweyan notion of agency, the ability to form purposes, is, therefore, located in the space between habit and intentional action.

For Dewey, humans are always in the process of becoming and constructing the social environments; yet, natural and made environments are also in the constant process of conditioning associative behaviors. As such, an individual autonomous agent who has exclusive

²¹¹ Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems*, 160.

²¹² Wilson and Ryg, "Becoming Autonomous," 141.

²¹³ John Dewey, *Experience And Education*, Reprint edition (New York: Free Press, 1997), 63.

purchase on his actions, such that he can be held exclusively culpable, is a fiction. Think back to the young boy who, in Chapter 3, found the gun in the garbage bin on the schoolyard. It was determined that this young boy is not controlled by the gun. The gun does not impart a script of action on the boy. It was also decided that the young boy is not entirely free from the thingy power of the gun. Instead, when the boy picks up the gun, he and the gun become an actant because the boy and the gun affect each other. The boy is different with the gun and the gun is different with the boy. The thingy power of the gun mediates the boy's plans and social gender norms produce the boy's subjectivity. Liberal autonomy, as an ideal, would have the boy, and us, believe that because he is rational agent who alone controls his actions. In other words, the belief is that he can pick up the gun and not become different. As a subject who knows he is an ontologically unique individual, (e.g. as a subject constituted by the epistemological and material frames of liberal democracy), this boy would have no reason to seriously consider the effect of the gun on his interests, self, and habits. He affects the gun, not the other ways around. The same holds for the consideration of social gender norms.

In contrast, a young boy who has cultivated "flexible habits" and knows that he is co-constituted by his association or transactions with people and things would recognize the appearance of the gun as a new situation rife with various actors and associations. He would understand the ways in which an interaction with the gun might reconstitute his thoughts and habits. More importantly, perhaps, a society educated to cultivate a similar understanding would be ready to take responsibility, collectively, for the purposes the boy comes to form.

By cultivating flexible habits, a person is able to become a thinking actor and actant in a network. As I see it, because agency is necessarily distributed across various associations, agency exists only to the extent that a Deweyan notion of habit helps us cultivate space between the idea of action and the idea of human intentionality. For the pragmatist, like Dewey, the

notion of habit has extraordinary explanatory power because it “complicates our understanding of what it means to act... It is a liminal concept, occupying a space at the border between several of the binaries that organize the philosophical discourse of action. In this respect, it tends to mingle oppositional concepts like freedom/determination, natural/artificial, active/passive, cause/effect, spontaneity/instinct, and agent/patient,” note Tom Sparrow and Adam Hutchinson.²¹⁴ Sparrow and Hutchinson highlight the malleable and liminal work a notion of habit can accomplish. Habit helps us see that a human is both free and determined. Determined insofar as she is constrained by her habits, and free to the extent that she learns to develop flexible, cognitive habits to engage with the co-constitute relations that constitution human and nonhuman life; natural and artificial to the extent that she accepts the evolving construction of the cyborg and the interplay of habits on her thoughts and actions; and active and passive in that some habits act on her and others enable her to act on her environment. Embracing these tensions, Dewey compels us to consider the multi-linear and recursive nature of causation. An understanding of habit enables us to reconcile the facts of association with the construction of a society in which unique persons, nonhuman things, and nature share conjoint experiences. In addition, flexible habits allow us (humans and cyborgs) to act within the constraints manufactured by society and social power and to change that which uncomfortably constrains.

One final word on the notion of habit; habits are sometimes stable and at other times reflect sets of actions and thoughts that are formed by the total social environment. Yet, the production of effects is reciprocal, changes in the environment create changes in habits and changes in habits lead to changes in the environment. The habit of owning a gun has, for

²¹⁴ Tom Sparrow and Adam Hutchinson, *A History of Habit: From Aristotle to Bourdieu* (Lexington Books, 2015), 3–4.

instance, created a particular environment in America, which the same habit has not replicated in Canada. The point is simple, but important: in the very nature of habit reside the objective conditions that constitute a particular point and place in time. Dewey maintains that, “Individuals with their exhortations, their preachings and scoldings, their inner aspirations and sentiments have disappeared, but their habits endure, because these habits incorporate objective conditions in themselves. So will it be with *our* activities.”²¹⁵ Hence, the objective conditions of the total social environment are noteworthy factors that influence the construction of particular habits. As such, it is not enough to say we must cultivate flexible habits that make our shared but limited agency possible; we must also aim to change the objective conditions encoded in our habits. On my view, this means that the cultivation of habits via education is about *what* young people learn about habits, which are conducive to associative living, and *how* young people learn to build these habits. In the next chapter, I turn explicitly to antifoundational democratic education and schooling, where I consider together the “what” and “how” of a habit building educational practice.

Turning Toward Antifoundational Democratic Education

In this chapter, I have argued that new materialism, in particular new materialist agency, is a rejection of and an alternative to liberal democracy’s materialist pre-conceptual frame. In addition, the alternatives posed by new materialism are methodologically aligned with a Deweyan notion of the political. New materialism’s insistence on multi-linear causation, shared agency, and situated inquiry ground an alternative conception of society and action therein. Following Dewey, I characterized human behavior as primarily associative and claimed that society is constructed on, but is not equal to, associations. Rather, small and local publics emerge

²¹⁵ John Dewey, *Human Nature and Conduct: An Introduction to Social Psychology* (New York, N.Y.: Cosimo Classics, 2007), 22.

when individuals communicate about their conjoint experience and their shared ends-in-view. Becoming an agent in the Deweyan sense is, thus, related to becoming a member of society who learns from experience, associations, and transactions with people and things, and then acts based on a discernment of how one's actions will affect, and be affected by, other actors and social power. Finally, I argued that a robust and thorough understanding of habit pries apart ideas about human action and human intention in a way that allows us to see how thinking, action, and intention are multi-linear, multi-dimensional, and can encompass the cyborg.

The multi-linearity and dimensionality of habit is key, not only because it fits methodologically with new materialism, but because it makes clear how agency and responsibility are distributed in the public. Flexible habits enable the individual to take action after careful consideration of the co-constituting things and powers that impact one's being in the world—this is what it means to form purposes. Meanwhile, when ensconced in social institutions and magnified through small publics, flexible habits elucidate the “ontologically plural public” throughout which agentic capacity is distributed.²¹⁶ Because Dewey's notion of habit brings together action and thought as well as individuals and the environment, it makes clear the various actors and actants that can be held responsible for problems in the public. In the ontologically plural public, the boy, the gun, a history of school shootings, liberal democratic education, and the contemporary state of schooling are visible actors whose affects can be addressed insofar as the practice of cultivating flexible habits in citizens has been institutionalized. In other words, schooling children on the practice of building flexible habits is vital to the enactment of peaceful democratic social progress. Dewey puts it this way, “We may desire abolition of war, industrial justice, greater equality of opportunity for all. But no amount of preaching good will or the

²¹⁶ Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*, 102.

golden rule or cultivation of sentiments of love and equity will accomplish the results. There must be change in objective arrangements and institutions. We must work on the environment not merely on the hearts of men. To think otherwise is to suppose that flowers can be raised in a desert or motor cars run in a jungle. Both things can happen and without a miracle. But only by first changing the jungle and desert.”²¹⁷ Changing the objective conditions and institutions is the first step to take responsibility for the existing habits that have created the environment in which violence, such as rampage school violence is continuous.

As I see it, affecting the objective conditions is an educational task, one that involves the creation of spaces and opportunities for young people to practice building flexible habits. In addition, these habits must be ensconced within the democratic institution of the school. Thus, in the next and final chapter, I take up the project of describing and proposing concrete steps to changes the objective conditions of contemporary post rampage schooling. On my view, antifoundational democratic education is a solution to our rampage school gun violence problem insofar as it replaces the conditions and habits generated by liberal democracy’s materialist frame, namely the idea that individuals are ontologically unique rational agents who alone ought to be held culpable for their actions, with conditions that generate flexible and associative habits and which illuminate the ways in which agency is shared and distributed. Through the institution of the school, antifoundational democratic education instills habits such as cooperation, communication, and public decision making and begins from the premise of shared agency.

²¹⁷ Dewey, *Human Nature and Conduct*, 2007, 22.

CHAPTER FIVE
EDUCATING FOR SHARED AGENCY: PROPOSALS FOR ANTIFOUNDATIONAL
DEMOCRATIC EDUCATION

The question is, how do we inculcate the habits of antifoundational democracy given the persistent logic of liberal democracy which instructs young people to see themselves as individual agents who compete for status and life in a dangerous world? Civic and community engagement have been correlated with reductions in violence by public health scholars, school psychologists, out-of-school-time practitioners, and political scientists²¹⁸ Yet, gun violence continues, especially in schools. My argument builds on these studies and the good sense that leads one to think violence against a community is connected to how one engages with that community. My argument adds a particular nuance to the chorus, which says that how we conceive of and teach young people about what it means to participate in one's democratic community is primary to any effort to integrate or emancipate the individual into society. On my view, any vision of civic education that aims toward integration or emancipation of the

²¹⁸ Wing Yi Chan, Suh-Ruu Ou, and Arthur Reynolds, "Adolescent Civic Engagement and Adult Outcomes: An Examination among Urban Racial Minorities," *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 43, no. 11 (November 2014): 1829–43, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-014-0136-5>; Lourdes I Hernández-Cordero ljh19@columbia.edu et al., "Fresh Start: A Multilevel Community Mobilization Plan to Promote Youth Development and Prevent Violence," *American Journal of Community Psychology* 48, no. 1/2 (September 2011): 43–55, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10464-010-9420-z>; Thao N Le and Samantha Johansen, "The Relationship Between School Multiculturalism and Interpersonal Violence: An Exploratory Study," *Journal of School Health* 81, no. 11 (November 2011): 688–95, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1746-1561.2011.00645.x>; Matthew R. Lee and John P. Bartkowski, "Love Thy Neighbor? Moral Communities, Civic Engagement, and Juvenile Homicide in Rural Areas*," *Social Forces; Oxford* 82, no. 3 (March 2004): 1001–35, <http://dx.doi.org.flagship.luc.edu/10.1353/sof.2004.0044>.

individual has already failed. As I argued in Chapter 4, human behavior is inherently associative, and society is made up of associations such that individual persons are always and already a part of complex networks. The individual person does not need to be integrated into society or emancipated from it; instead, she must learn to make sense of her associative experiences and the ways in which the multi-lateral dimensions of causation help her understand her capacity to act cognitively and as an actant/cyborg/citizen whose agency is both shared and constructed through the cultivation of flexible habits.

In this chapter, I introduce three policies that explain how we might move toward solving our gun problem with an antifoundational democratic education. Acknowledging the thingy power of guns, the first policy would ban guns from school grounds and thereby create environments free from violent modes of association. The second policy would affirm the agency humans and nonhumans share and displace social gender norms by ridding schools of the study of war and instead include the study of associative agentic capacity. The individualized and hyper-competitive environment of the school wherein heteronormative masculine virtues discipline would be replaced with an environment that makes possible divergent gender expressions. Finally, the third policy is iterated as a set of pedagogies that administrators and individual teachers might take up to engender the democratic habits of communication, cooperation and conjoint purpose formation. Before describing each policy in depth, I want to take a moment to carefully detail what education entails from the antifoundational perspective. Education for the antifoundational democrat is, in fact, democracy, and democracy is education. Hence, beyond these specific policy proposals, antifoundational democracy emphasizes the comprehensive role education and schooling, as objective conditions, play in the transition to inculcating flexible democratic habits.

Antifoundational Democratic Education

From the antifoundational perspective, education is more than the mere acquisition of information. In a democracy, how a society institutionalizes the education of the young as well as what a society teaches developing people affects the perpetuation of that particular society. Education is something that can happen anywhere, with anyone, and results in one becoming educated. Schooling is an institutional process by which someone is conditioned to know that which the institution deems valuable. When schooling is done in common, all are formed and schooled as the institution sees fit. Public education is the common effort to raise all children of a particular society to be particular types of people. One could say America schools its children in common in the hope that the effort will result in democratic citizens who are committed to the renewal of a democratic society. On the foundational side, this results in schooling that instills the respect for the liberal foundations of society, such as the individual, over the practice of democracy. Liberalism, not democracy, is the outcome of foundational democratic schooling. On the antifoundational side, the schooling of democratic citizens includes the practice of democracy by children as they mature, because the aim is to raise democratic citizens who will renew a democratic society.

For the antifoundational democrat, the distinction between formal and informal education (schooling and education) is unnecessary. Although schooling children in common is a positive and necessary feature of an advanced, populous, and diverse society, the distinction between what children are to learn when in school and what they come to know outside of it obscures the interconnected nature of human agency and learning. In his 1899 essay, *The School and Society*, Dewey highlights the porous and necessarily enmeshed nature of education that happen in the school and learning that happens in the course of life outside of school. Dewey states that, “when the school introduces and trains each child of society into membership within such a little

community, saturating him with the spirit of service, and providing him with the instruments of effective self-direction, we shall have the deepest and best guarantee of a larger society which is worthy, lovely, and harmonious.”²¹⁹ In later work, especially *Democracy and Education*, Dewey stresses to his readers that classroom learning is not just preparation for democratic life, but is democratic life itself. The task of the school, and the educators therein is to dissolve the divide between formal and informal education by facilitating experiences that illuminate connections between experiences children have inside the school to those they have while living. The aim is to conduct education in institutions of formal learning in such a way that the boundaries between the school and society are imperceptible. School and society, integrated in this way, foreground an environment where learning about democracy is living democracy. Here, students come to understand that they are always learning how to be a member of society.²²⁰

The technical definition of education, according to Dewey, is “reconstruction or reorganizing of experience which adds to the meaning of experience... Any activity which brings education or instruction with it makes one aware of some of the connections which have been imperceptible.”²²¹ In other words, education is the intentional expansion of a child’s experiences that, when appropriately directed, make up a continuum of experience.²²² Students grow in maturity and learning as their continuum of experience expands. As Dewey describes it:

“The child lives in a somewhat narrow world of personal contacts. Things hardly come within his experience unless they touch, intimately and obviously, his own well-being, or that of his family and friends. His world is a world of personal interests, rather than a realm of facts and laws... As *against* this, this course of study met in school presents

²¹⁹ John Dewey, *The School and Society* (New York, N.Y.: Cosimo Classics, 2008), 44.

²²⁰ Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 12.

²²¹ Dewey, 84.

²²² Dewey, *Democracy and Education*.

material stretching back indefinitely in time, and extending outward indefinitely into space. The child is taken out of his familiar physical environment, hardly more than a square mile or so in area, into the wide world-yes, and even to the boundary of the solar system.”²²³

Dewey’s point here is twofold. First, the experiences children have inside and outside of school are connected. There ought to be no *against*. Rather the child’s intimate world and the solar system are connected, just as the child’s experience with communication and cooperation are connected to her understanding of citizenship. It is the job of the educator and school to recognize and make apparent these connections. Hence, the educator must come to know and value the student’s intimate and personal associations because these experiences foreground a child’s comprehension of future experiences and associations. Second, the school and the educator are jointly charged with nurturing a child’s growth. This means schools must introduce new material, experiences, and associations by taking the child outside of her environment while providing the means for the child to construct a bridge from here to there.

Education, for Dewey, is a condition of growth and the growth of anything demands consideration of the environment in which it grows. “The fundamental factors in the educative process are an immature, underdeveloped being; and certain social aims, meaning, values incarnate in the matured experience of the adult. The educative process is the due interaction of these forces,” says Dewey.²²⁴ If one were to grow basil from seed to plant, she would need to find the right soil, learn where the proper amount of sunlight streams into her home, monitor the water level of the budding basil, check for bugs, and more. The words she may use to speak about her attempt to grow and sustain a basil plant might be: foster, nurture, and cultivate. Each of these words also arises when we speak about education. What is significant here is the idea

²²³ John Dewey, *The Child and the Curriculum* (Mansfield Centre, CT: Martino Fine Books, 2011), 276.

²²⁴ Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 276, emphasis mine.

that education is akin to growth. The notion that education ought to be conceived of as growth implicates a causal network and, thus, shared agency. In the case of the basil plant, humans monitor the soil, the sunlight, and the water to monitor their effects on the plant, while the plant uses the sun light and water to produce leaves and grow. In the growth of one basil plant a host of actors meet, associate, and contribute to the production of the environment. The child, like the plant, is affected by and affects her environment. Yet, unlike the plant her growth does not peak; it is continuous. She speaks back and edits her environment as she forms purposes and creates community.

Antifoundational democratic education necessitates a fluid and integrated education where a child is invited to grow into a mature member of society through ever expanding associative experiences with ideas, people, and things. More to the point, children must learn subject matter—they need to know how to read and write, be able to do math, have a handle on the sciences, know something of history and more—yet, each subject only matters insofar as children figure out how it relates to life among human and nonhuman others. Subject matter, content, and text books are for naught if children are unable to locate actors in a causal network. Antifoundational democratic education aim to lay bare all of the ways in which agency is shared so that human-cyborgs and cyborg-humans can formulate purposes that accurately weigh the complicated forces that affect action. For example, a contemporary American high school student who is learning about American history and the shape of civil government in the United States should be able to describe how America came to be a nation and the key components of the government, such as the separation of powers, the branches of the government, the levels of government, and so on. They should also understand the ways humans, things, and social power constituted particular subjectivities and made possible certain actions while precluding others and must learn how to communicate with particular and entangled others about their associative

experiences. Knowledge of American government means little if it is not accompanied with edification in the habits that make democracy possible.

Although the distinction between formal and informal education, is unnecessary for the antifoundational democrat who sees a child's growth in conjoint experiences as primary, the school is a vital democratic institution. The school is a formalized institution of democratic construction where children from all backgrounds get the chance to expand their horizons and identify the associations that constitute their world. Hence, the civic education that happens in schools is of vital importance; it may be the only education of the sort some children receive. On this point, Dewey agrees. Writing at the turn of the 20th century and in the midst of the industrial revolution, Dewey says, "All that society has accomplished for itself is put, through the agency of the school, at the disposal of its future members."²²⁵ Quoting Horace Mann, he goes on to say, "Where anything is growing, one former is worth a thousand re-formers."²²⁶ Schools that are democratic ought to be, therefore, engaged in forming citizens who are growing and will continue to grow in their associations. In the Deweyan spirit, Sarah Stitzlein and Amy Rector-Aranda put it this way, "public schools function to sustain, support and enact democracy, in part by serving as physical spaces open to all, where people gather together as citizens to engage in deliberation, learning, and community building. And children gather there to learn not only skills and knowledge needed to fulfill public needs, such as military protection and workforce development, but also to work with others, thereby learning to be part of the public."²²⁷

²²⁵ Dewey, *The School and Society*, 19.

²²⁶ Dewey, 20.

²²⁷ Stitzlein and Rector-Aranda, "The Role of 'Small Publics' in Teacher Dissent," 168.

Schooling in democracy that approaches democracy as way of life cultivates habits of learning from associative experiences, communication, and acting in concert.

The habits that undergird antifoundational democratic education are communication, cooperation, and the formation of purpose. Through communication associated behaviors create society. Discussion, deliberation, and persuasion are all modes of communication that bring together various human-cyborgs and actants around a common vision. As humans, communication is how we learn from another's associative experiences. Learning in this scenario is akin to finding new and better ways of dealing with, talking about, and characterizing the world. It is something that happens in conversation with different others. On Dewey's view, "signs and symbols, language, are the means of communication by which a fraternally shared experience is ushered in and sustained."²²⁸ In other words, awareness of our associations and sustained reflection on the workings of shared agency is made possible insofar as the habit of communication formalize human interdependence in society. Importantly, for the antifoundational democrat one does not learn to communicate once and for all. Rather, since communication is about relating to and engaging with different others who reside in different environments and take part in different associative behaviors, there is not one language or way of communicating that is universal to all. Hence, "perfecting the means and ways of communication so that genuinely shared interest in the consequences of interdependent activities may inform desire and effort and thereby direct action" is the aim.²²⁹ Democracy as education is transmitted in communication and communicative habits that ensure all individual persons have the means to learn by living in association.

²²⁸ Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems*, 218.

²²⁹ Dewey, 155.

Although democracy is transmitted in communication, it is enacted insofar as individual persons are willing to cooperate in joint action. Moreover, communication implies cooperation. It is surely possible to talk at someone or to announce words to no one at all, but these actions would be characterized as speech. Communication implicates another in a process of cooperation where each conversational participant engages in the associative experience. The final habit of antifoundational democratic education, formation of purposes, teaches young citizens to build thinking habits in concert with others. Moreover, insofar as the student builds the habit to consider the perspective of others, to assess one's association with human and nonhuman things, and to reflect upon the consequences of proposed courses of action given one's lived experience, this person or person-cyborg can be said to have formed a purpose. An education that takes this habit seriously would encourage students reflect on their interactions with one another as they make plans to do and try new things.

My argument is that, if democracy is the aim, then education as it happens through schools must incorporate the habits of democracy. That said, curriculum and pedagogical changes are important but will not be sufficient. Rather, the ethos and organizational structure of the school must reflect democratic ends. As it stands, schooling in the United States is marked by post-rampage security measures like the employment of school resource officers, the installation of metal detectors, and the use of active shooter drills. What's more, the dominant strand of citizenship education, as evidenced in my characterization of Callan, is suffused with notions of citizenship constructed on the idea that individuals are the exclusive owners of agency. The result of liberal democratic education and post-rampage security measures is a school that operates like a military base and students who come to think of themselves as soldier-citizens, who must become intentional rational agents so that they can defend oneself and one's way of life against rogue or psychologically defective agents.

On my view, schools must first become *spaces* that welcome antifoundational democratic habits, and this mandates the expulsion of all guns (including those carried by adults) from the environment and the de-securitization of school buildings. Second, school activities and curricula ought to be gender inclusive and designed to confront gendered social norms as well as the ways in which social power is exercised in human interactions. This means the study of domination and war through the veneration of masculine virtues must end. Third, our philosophies of education and classroom pedagogies ought to actively instill and teach democratic habits that make our shared and limited agency apparent. In the following sections, I will explore each of these normative claims

No Guns Allowed

First, if schools are to be the kind of educational institutions capable of teaching the habits of antifoundational democracy, then the environment of the school must be free of violent modes of association and disciplinary security measures that individualize students and perpetuate false ideas about individual agency. The de-securitization of schools demands, at a minimum, the re-instantiation of weapon free school legislation and the discontinuation of zero-tolerance policies, armed teachers or adults, and active shooter drills. With the construction of the environment being key for the edification of democratic habits, softening the school environment is primary.

Following the rampage school shooting at Sandy Hook, champions of the “more guns” approach to the rampage school gun violence problem moved beyond calls to hire more police to protect schools, such as school resource officers, and began to argue that schools need more guns in the hands of more people.²³⁰ The idea is that a good guy with a gun can stop a bad teenager

²³⁰ DeBrabander, *Do Guns Make Us Free?*

intent on shooting his classmate. The proliferation of guns on school campuses (and I would argue in society generally) promotes violence and dissuades the making of antifoundational democracy. Here I want to raise three specific questions to problematize the “more guns” approach. One, who trains teachers and school staff how to shoot students? Two, once everyone is armed how do you distinguish the good guy with a gun from the bad guy with a gun? Three, in a democracy is it acceptable that the more guns approach normalizes the notion that all social problems can be solved by guns and their owners?

First, consider the training of teachers to shoot students. The military uses a detailed educational program to teach its members how to kill a human target. In fact, the low firing rates of American soldiers in WWI and WWII led military educators to conclude that soldiers were purposefully not killing the “enemy” and must be taught to shoot other human beings.²³¹ Police officers also undergo extensive firearm training as well as education on the ethics of killing another human being.²³² Requiring schools to arm teachers and staff would require an equal level of additional education in the ethics, psychology, and act of killing. Advocates of arming teachers do not address the educational imperative and psychological training teachers will need to accurately shoot a student or former student. These shooters are, after all, young people about whom the staff has intimate knowledge of and relationships with. If members of the military cannot shoot the “enemy” without extensive video simulation and practice, how will teachers, even armed ones, shoot “students” without similar training? Although guns are powerful actants, they do not come with scripts. Nor do guns imbue their user with technical or moral know-how.

²³¹ Dave Grossman, *On Killing: The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society*, Revised edition (New York: Back Bay Books, 2009).

²³² Michael Caldero, *Police Ethics: The Corruption of Noble Cause*, 3 edition (Amsterdam ; Boston: Routledge, 2010).

To follow this line of thinking, schools dedicated to the preparation of teachers and schools for military preparation might simply converge on the training of soldiers. At both institutions, the idea that humans are culpable rational agents, would be primary to the construction of the enemy.

Second, let's look at the notion that we ought to arm everyone. Imagine a school shooter walking down a hallway of a high school and shooting at whomever he happens upon. As students and teachers hear the sound they too pop out of their classrooms with guns at the ready. Everyone has their gun out. The police arrive—who do they shoot or detain? Folks in the more guns camp might say this is to beg the question since the point of arming everyone is to affect a disciplined society wherein the school shooter forgoes rampaging out of fear of others with guns. The more likely outcome of the more guns answer will be little to no change. Rampage school shootings will continue. Students and teachers with guns on the campus will be called cowards for having trouble shooting a student, or worse, they will shoot the wrong person.²³³ Everyone will fear everyone else and in this environment the habits of democracy, like cooperation, will become a dangerous liability.

The third and largest issue with the more guns approach to rampage school gun violence is the severing of associations, the inaccurate distillation of individual agency, and the inculcation of the notion that guns/war/fear will save individuals from one another. In his book on guns and democracy, Firmin DeBrabander asks: “Do we want our youth to grow accustomed to guns, perhaps using them routinely to deal with confrontations or perceived offenses? Is it

²³³ Although this shooting happened at mall and not a school, it is indicative of what we might expect to happen on high school and college campuses if all folks are allowed to carry a weapon. “They Shot the Wrong Man!': Police Said They Killed a Mall Shooter — Then Said They Made a Mistake,” Washington Post, accessed December 5, 2018, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2018/11/24/police-said-they-killed-mall-shooter-now-they-say-they-might-have-shot-wrong-man/>.

compatible with democracy that guns are part of our everyday methods for dealing with social challenges?" (DeBrabander, 2015, p. 165). People in the more guns camp would answer DeBrabander's first question with a correction. They might say that when youth become more accustomed to the idea that their peers and teachers could be armed with a concealed gun, they will show deference to another individual's exclusive agentic potential. Hence, the proliferation of guns would guarantee that individual citizens act reasonably and tolerate of one another's life plans. In this way, argue the more guns camp, guns enable individuals to protect and make real foundational democracy wherein each individual is bereft of the habits needed to craft society and but in supply of the agentic potential to make rational choices about his or her individual behavior.

On my view, DeBrabander's question gets at the heart of the matter. Guns affect the emergence of democratic modes of association insofar as guns are actants that affect the ways in which citizens understand the facts of association and lead to the construction of environments and objective conditions that are hostile to and might even preclude the enactment of democracy. The aim of antifoundational democratic education is to make evident our shared and limited agency and to inculcate the capacities and habits a citizen/person-cyborg needs to make democracy. Yet, the proliferation of guns further obfuscates the gun's thing power and the complex causal networks of which we are all apart. Telling teachers, students, parents, and community members that the best way to protect schools and the students therein from rampage school gun violence is to give everyone a gun, tells them that exclusive agentic individuals are the problem *and* the solution. Moreover, this response ignores the kind of environment the proliferation of guns manifests. The proliferation of guns in schools constructs boundaries of conflict between intentional rational agents, disciplines individuals to see one another as threats,

and mandates adherence to security measures. The result is a “zero-tolerance” society that suspends democracy.²³⁴

A zero-tolerance society is not democratic, and a zero-tolerance school cannot teach young people to be citizens. When we are disciplined to see everyone as potential threats to our safety and view security practices, such as gun ownership, as necessary features of society, we abdicate our responsibility to communicate and learn from one another. We abdicate our responsibility to make democracy by communicating about our conjoint experiences. These violent modes of association individuate humans and replace the fact of association with the fact of bad actors. In a zero-tolerance school the teachers and students are taught to participate in the making of a micro police state wherein violence and fear of violence are organized into a coherent order.²³⁵ What will students educated in this environment know of accommodation and compromise? What will they know of making community and learning from associative behavior? What will they know of shared agency?

The alternative is to craft educational environments built on the study of democracy. These environments would be free of guns, metal detectors, active shooter drills, and zero-tolerance policies. They would be environments constructed on the facts of association and would invite inhabitants to learn alongside one another and nonhuman things. In an antifoundational democratic school that is cognizant of and concerned about rampage school gun violence there would be spaces for students to convene and communicate about rampage school gun violence, bullying, or gender-based norms. There would be opportunity to collaborate on solving problems, environments open to student ideas, and reflexive community norms. Security

²³⁴ Hardt and Negri, *Multitude*, 17.

²³⁵ Hardt and Negri, *Multitude*.

would be maintained and affirmed through the construction of this environment. As such, each particular student would be invited to think about their role in ensuring a peaceful and democratic educational space. Thus, students would not be drilled into preparation for an active shooter event, they (and their parents) would be welcomed to participate in the construction of a safe and gun-free school environment.

Displacing The Study of War

The more guns approach is akin to celebrating the study of war in school. In this section, I am going to explore what the study of war has to do with gender and social power. My argument is that the study of war, and therefore the more guns approach, is built on a celebration of masculine virtues, emblematic of a society wedded to the veneration of war, and, in a circular fashion, reinforces the more guns approach to problem solving. As virtues constructed on social gender norms, masculine virtues teach students to take on warrior like subjectivities that are suited for war but not democracy.²³⁶

The study of war is not a new phenomenon. It could be said that American children who attend public schools have been studying war since the founding of the common school. In his 1855 *Lectures on Education*, Horace Mann argues that unless the rising generation is educated in the “strength and sobriety of intellect which shall dispel the insane illusions of martial glory; and unless they shall be trained to the habitual exercise of those sentiments of universal brotherhood for the race...” war and war making will persist.²³⁷ As Mann saw it, education for killing

²³⁶ See Shuffelton for a discussion of Achilles, warriors, and masculinity: Shuffelton, “Consider Your Man Card Reissued,” August 2015.

²³⁷ Horace Mann, *Lectures on Education* (Ide & Dutton, 1855), 242.

produced nothing more than artful killers, while education for peace and “universal brotherhood” paved the way for the genuine renewal of society.²³⁸

More to the point, schooling that educates children in common to become citizens must weigh complicated demands. Schools must keep children safe *and* educate them to renew society. The extent to which schools view these aims as competing modulates the kind of civic education the schools perpetuate. Antifoundational civic education teaches young people that to make peace they must participate in the renewal of a democratic society. Logically, education for peace makes peace and creates a secure environment to the extent that citizens are capable of solving problems through their association and experiences and without violence. Education for war/safety mandates security measures, the creation of warriors, and, more importantly, anticipates violence. The study of war supports the production of more war makers. Education in the values of solidarity, brotherhood, and harmony bring about peace, says Mann.

To this point, in a small essay on what might make the “war against war” winnable, the early 20th century peace-party member and pragmatic philosopher, William James, argues that, “the military feelings are too deeply grounded to abdicate their place among our ideals until better substitutes are offered...”²³⁹ James argues, adeptly I think, that our feelings about war and warriors harden our judgements and make it harder for us to appreciate others, like pacifist, with feelings different from our own. In other words, American’s feelings about war, the warrior life, and binary depictions of masculinity are too deeply rooted in our judgements about the kinds of life that are worthwhile for the peace program to ignore the military folks. But what are these “American feelings” about warriors and the warrior life? James’ primary conversational partner

²³⁸ Mann, 246.

²³⁹ William James, *The Moral Equivalent of War: International Conciliation, No. 27, February, 1910* (Literary Licensing, LLC, 2013), 3.

was Theodore Roosevelt, and Roosevelt lauded the manliness of war as well as the dearth of manliness in the nation's boys. In a speech on the strenuous life, Roosevelt strongly asserts that, "Our country calls not for the life of ease, but for the lift of strenuous endeavor...Let us therefore boldly face the life of strife, resolute to due our duty well and manfully; resolute to uphold righteous by deed and by word."²⁴⁰ In a later speech he goes so far as to state that the American boy "must not be a coward or a weakling, a bully, a shrik, or a prig."²⁴¹

It is difficult to reconcile James' account of war with James' stance as a pacifist and his thoughtful work on human psychology and happiness. How could such a careful person who was committed to peace have ignored the place of women in the war against war? Did he really think men could be educated in masculine virtues and not create war? Is a war against war, counter to the point? At least part of the answer must be that given his interest one's individual character, James reminds us to take note of the individual psyche of the folks who wage war. Although military virtues represent the apex of masculine nature, according to the military party, each man is an individual who must assimilate desirable traits of character. Without the proper education men are liable to fall prey to baser war-like traits of characters, but with education in the martial virtues, boys will become heroic men, says James. Hence according to James, listening to the war party reveals the importance of martial virtues, including "intrepidity, contempt for softness, surrender of private interest, and obedience to command."²⁴² Pace Mann, James says manly, martial virtues can be redirected insofar as individual men are educated to love the right ends.²⁴³

²⁴⁰ Theodore Roosevelt, *The Strenuous Life* (Stilwell, KS: Digireads.com, 2008), 13.

²⁴¹ Roosevelt, 48.

²⁴² James, *The Moral Equivalent of War*, 15.

²⁴³ James, 16–17.

Although James sought to soften Roosevelt's toxic vision, James and others who have attempted to re-evaluate militarism and masculinity in democratic education have led us astray.²⁴⁴ James underestimates, or perhaps just does not account for, the conflict between educating for individual adoption of "appropriate" social gender norms educating for shared agency or the making of pragmatic democracy. This is akin to Jane Roland Martin's critique of James, and it is an important one.²⁴⁵ Realigning contempt for softness or intrepidity with a civic end, like taming or fighting nature to build infrastructure or the field of policing, does not constrain the habits or actions to only these arenas. Moreover, although the virtues have been aligned with worthy domestic causes, they are still tied to war, control, violence, and dominance. Men who learn to demonstrate or preform all of the martial virtues, which are still tied to a binary construction of social gender, have no reason to assume these character traits are undesirable in the public or when engaging in conversation with different others about the collective shape of our democracy. It is here that Foucault's analysis of social power is so helpful. Insofar as we take seriously the working of social power and the way in which social gender norms produce and discipline individual subjectivities, then we must account for how these norms guide and shape that individual's sense of the self. The person who adopts these martial virtues and with the recognition of the ways in which these particular virtues represent masculinity is still adopting a binary vision of gender inscribed through social power. Through the veneration of martial and binary masculine virtues, war and war making have become routine

²⁴⁴ Kerry T. Burch, *Democratic Transformations: Eight Conflicts in the Negotiation of American Identity* (London ; New York: Continuum, 2012).

²⁴⁵ Jane Roland Martin, "Martial Virtues or Capital Vices? William James' Moral Equivalent of War Revisited," *Journal of Thought* 22, no. 3 (1987): 32–44.

ways of acting, and as a routine habit, the study of war has created objective conditions wherein masculinized subjectivities are codified and disciplined.

An antifoundational approach to democratic education in a post rampage world highlights the need for egalitarian and ontologically heterogenous social values where an alternative conception of agency makes evident the ways in which social power in the shape of gender social norms is accumulated and exercised to construct masculine- warrior subjectivities. Replacing the study of war with the study of democracy, following Mann's advice, would be to take a big step in the right direction. Substituting the veneration of binary masculine virtues, where students align masculinity with contempt for softness, intrepidity and the like, with gender fluid, cyborg, and democratic habits is good. There is nothing morally wrong with teaching students to surrender their private interests or encouraging bold actions, or teaching children to listen to those who have more experience than oneself. But this is not the entirety of what James' proposes. His argument is that American democracy and the possibility of peace will be built upon re-educating the war-like nature of individual men to serve civic ends. James missed Mann's point—we cannot educate students in the martial virtues and expect peace to result. War and the study of its virtues must go if democracy is our aim. Democracy demands education in the making of shared communities and expansive agency.

It is not by accident that feminist new materialists, like Donna Haraway, make it clear that we must begin by re-thinking our conception of who and what constitutes an agent. Throughout history women and those who do not comply with the masculine norm have been denied the status of being an individual rational agent, despite liberal democracy's claim to equality. Following this lead, an antifoundational democratic education, which is situated on rejection of materialism's foundational premises, would aim to destabilize the study of war by destabilizing the assertion that *only* humans are rational or agentic, and the subsequent notion

that *only* rational humans have the ability to produce effects in the world.²⁴⁶ By exploring what it means to be human and who and what produces effects, young people would learn to contemplate the construction of cyborgs and the ways in which social power produces and disciplines particular subjects. Each student would be expected to map the causal networks of which they are a member, and in so doing, to confront the working of social power such as social gender norms and the ingrained habitual study of war. Whereas the aim of foundational democratic education is individual autonomous agency, or the ability to locate an ‘I’, the aim of antifoundational democratic education is shared agency and visible cyborg-like subjectivities. Hence, the study of shared agency, or locating the ‘we’ and ‘I’ in alternating and evolving associations is an essential component of displacing the study of war.

The goal of an active shooter drill is to instill martial virtues like surrender to command and intrepidity and to establish a zero-tolerance society wherein all can be mobilized to protect the school and fight offenders of the peace.²⁴⁷ Like the war on terrorism, the war on rampage school gun violence, is a war that requires the near constant reminder that an omnipresent enemy lurks among us. This is how we achieve peaceful schools, say some. The study war approach tells students, teachers, and community members that schools are unsafe, that they require constant protection, and that the democratic aims of schooling ought to be subverted for security’s sake. In the wake of James’ ideas American society has continued to double down on martial virtues. That we expect peace or democracy to result is madness.

²⁴⁶ Frost, “The Implications of the New Materialisms for Feminist Epistemology.”

²⁴⁷ Justin Wise, “Indiana Teachers Were Shot Repeatedly with Airsoft Guns in Active-Shooter Training: Report,” Text, TheHill, March 21, 2019, <https://thehill.com/homenews/state-watch/435100-indiana-teachers-were-shot-repeatedly-with-airsoft-guns-in-active>.

Dewey articulated another way in the early decades of the 20th century and Mann defined the stakes at the outset of the American common school movement.²⁴⁸ If we are to stop the bloodshed, we must take seriously the idea Mann led with, only peace and democracy will lead to peace and democracy. And the enactment of democracy on my account demands an accounting of the ways in which social power and social gender norms have subverted attempts to create peace. In the next section, I consider pedagogies that would the aims of antifoundational democratic education.

Democratic Pedagogies

Up to this point, I have focused on the broad role of educational environments in generating antifoundational democracy. My focus on education writ large and the environment in which this education ought to happen, and not pedagogies or classroom level teaching strategies, is intentional and based on two factors. First, the environment in which education happens matters. In Dewey's parlance, "We must work on the environment not merely on the hearts of men."²⁴⁹ Furthermore, in new materialist language, the environment is an actant that can mitigate even the best teaching strategies and philosophies. Second, focusing only on the classroom makes the mistake of placing the ownership for disrupting the study of war on individual teachers. Although teachers are important people in the lives of students and schools, placing the entire burden on teachers ignores the fact of shared agency. Hence, what I have to say about antifoundational pedagogies that are contextual, growth oriented, and that explicitly invoke the

²⁴⁸ Oona A. Hathaway and Scott J. Shapiro, *The Internationalists: How a Radical Plan to Outlaw War Remade the World* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2017); John Dewey, *Human Nature and Conduct: An Introduction to Social Psychology*, 2012, <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/41386>.

²⁴⁹ Dewey, *Human Nature and Conduct*, 2012, 22.

practice of democracy, is said with the recognition that environments and complex actors that effect classroom education matter.

Antifoundational democratic education aims to make explicit the associations that link individuals to one another, nonhuman things, and history. By exploring the context of shared activity, young people learn about the various actors that operate within complex causal networks.²⁵⁰ In our contemporary context of post-rampage schooling, one way this might be done is through a class on the complexity of violence. For example, Ivy Schamis, a teacher at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida where a school shooter killed 17 on February 14, 2018 spoke about one of the courses her students, many of them in the spotlight for their roles in March for Our Lives took. Many of these students were currently or previously enrolled in her History of the Holocaust class, where they made connections between Nazi Germany and current events, studied the rise of hate groups on college campuses, discussed how hate and violence are correlated, and learned how to be an upstander rather than a bystander.²⁵¹ On my view, curricula that encourages students to consider the complex actors that contribute to the making of hate and acts of violence make an explicit attempt to teach students that agency is shared and human behavior is associative. In other words, although Hitler as an individual can and ought to be held responsible for his actions and role in the Holocaust, so to must Nazi culture

²⁵⁰ David E. Meens, "Democratic Education versus Smithian Efficiency: Prospects for a Deweyan Ideal in the 'Neoliberal Age,'" *Educational Theory* 66, no. 1/2 (April 2016): 211–26, <https://doi.org/10.1111/edth.12163>.

²⁵¹ My intent here is the highlight the way Schamis connected the Holocaust to contemporary events. It is not to endorse the upstander movement. The idea what one ought to walk up to a shooter in the midst of a rampage and say "I love you" or some other affirmation, sets a dangerous precedent. Mark Keierleber, "Remembrance Day: Ivy Schamis Was Teaching About the Holocaust When Shots Rang Out at Parkland, Killing Two of Her Students. Now the Lessons Are Deeply Personal," accessed December 6, 2018, <https://www.the74million.org/article/remembrance-day-ivy-schamis-was-teaching-about-the-holocaust-when-shots-rang-out-at-parkland-killing-two-of-her-students-now-the-lessons-are-deeply-personal/>.

and their guns. By exploring the rise of hate and educative effects of negative feelings toward some member of the human species, students in Schamis' class were able to explore the nature of associations along with the values of diversity, pluralism, and difference.

Pedagogies, like Schamis', which are rooted in creating a context of shared activity, are pedagogies that entail antifoundational democratic education. Schamis' teaching is a good example of Dewey's vision of democratic schooling, or civic education, which rests on the participation of and research by children in their school and community so as to benefit and/or reconstruct the community.²⁵² In other words, what makes Schamis' teaching noteworthy is not the subject per se, but that she brought to light connections between how associations and attitudes that affected a historical event might relate to current events that directly affect her students. Moreover, Schamis did not create artificial connections in an effort to make her curriculum interesting, she did so because her aim was to facilitate the growth of her students.

Growth in the capacity to make sense of ever widening associations and in the capacity to understand how we might participate in the construction of the ends that we can, collectively, hold in view, is a central tenant of antifoundational democratic education. Growth is directional, continuous, and it is about the development of a capacity to affect our environments, on Dewey's view. He puts it this way, "While the living thing may easily be crushed by superior force, it none the less tries to turn energies which act upon it into means of its own further existence. If it cannot do so, it does not just split into smaller pieces (at least in the higher forms of life), but it loses its identity as a living thing"²⁵³ The image of the living thing enmeshed in the continuous

²⁵² Dewey, *The Child and the Curriculum*; Emil Višňovský and Štefan Zolcer, "Dewey's Participatory Educational Democracy," *Educational Theory* 66, no. 1–2 (n.d.): 55–71, <https://doi.org/10.1111/edth.12152>.

²⁵³ Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 4.

push and pull of actors, which it must make sense of and bring into association, captures the critical component of what it means for pedagogy to be oriented toward growth. The aim is not to gain control over all of the impingements that affect one's agency, nor is it to cede to the Foucauldian forces of power. Rather, the goal is to "grow" in our ability and capacity as humans to affect the environment as we grow in our capacity to make sense of associations. In addition, for Dewey, growth is a communal endeavor; it is not an individual effort to increase in size or capacity. It is the ever-expanding ability to make connections and the capacity to "realize our aims as we are impacted by and exert influence on our environments."²⁵⁴ Thus, the difference between Dewey and Foucault is that Dewey's theory of democracy and education "gives us a chance to grow up," to use Richard Rorty's phrase.²⁵⁵

Orienting pedagogies to Dewey's notion of growth has the effect of displacing more traditional developmental outcomes which seek to individualize a student's ability to do or demonstrate something. Whereas growth posits a continuously reaching student who is never final in their development, conceptions of education that aim to measure an individual student's particular achievements, such as the achievement of rationality or autonomous agency, posit an individual agent who becomes complete over the course of their education. This does not mean an education which aims at growth ought to view growth as a telos. Growth is the objective, but an individual person's growth is measured by assessing his or her capacity to engage critically with his or her environment *and* to keep on growing. A student who grows in their ability to make sense of her conjoint experience and who continues to pursue democratic ends is one who

²⁵⁴ Peter J. Nelsen, "Growth and Resistance: How Deweyan Pragmatism Reconstructs Social Justice Education," *Educational Theory* 66, no. 1–2 (April 1, 2016): 233–34, <https://doi.org/10.1111/edth.12165>.

²⁵⁵ Richard Rorty, *Consequences Of Pragmatism: Essays 1972-1980*, First edition (Minneapolis: University Of Minnesota Press, 1982), 204.

has constructed a flexible habit to grow. Key for contemporary teachers who are accustomed to hearing about a building “growth mindsets” in students or adopting one themselves, growth in the sense that I am using it is more than setting “SMART” goals and adopting a patient attitude with one’s personal development.²⁵⁶ Growth for Dewey, and me, is about a student’s ability to connect one experience to another, to understand how those experiences stack up along a continuum, and to assess the actants that contribute to, affect and co-constitute the student so that the student can impact, through his or her shared but limited agency, future experiences.²⁵⁷

Education that focuses on growth, therefore, can build a student’s capacity to disrupt and address social power. One cannot affect one’s environment or experiences with others without also being able to address the social and political power that acts on the environment and the various cyborgs therein. The students from Marjory Stoneman Douglas, who learned to read and interpret the complex causal networks at work in Nazi Germany were, thus, able to make connections to the rise of college hate groups. This is a good example of the ways in which curriculum and the aims of growth are interconnected because the students were able to distill causal networks in their own environment. Evidence of this can be found in the ways in which these students, following the rampage, have taken on powerful forces, like the National Rifle Association, through a campaign to reduce the organization’s funding, as well as President

²⁵⁶ Carol S. Dweck, *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*, Reprint, Updated edition (New York: Ballantine Books, 2007); Carol Dweck, “Teachers’ Mindsets: ‘Every Student Has Something to Teach Me’: Feeling Overwhelmed? Where Did Your Natural Teaching Talent Go? Try Pairing a Growth Mindset with Reasonable Goals, Patience, and Reflection Instead. It’s Time to Get Gritty and Be a Better Teacher.” *Educational Horizons* 93, no. 2 (December 1, 2014): 10–15, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013175X14561420>.

²⁵⁷ Dewey, *Experience And Education*.

Donald Trump via social media platforms, like Twitter.²⁵⁸ Their capacity to build an association of like-minded or similarly-affected young people (to create a small public), to identify powerful actors that make possible the continued presence of rampage school shootings, and to decide upon a public course of action corresponds to an education that is oriented toward growth and not individual agentic outcomes.

Finally, to effectively construct the habits of antifoundational democracy, the explicit practice of democracy must be invoked in the classroom and through a teacher's pedagogy. As I see it, linking education to democracy explicitly, and alongside students, is primary for antifoundational education wherein student's personal, not individual, growth in associative experiences enables them to communicate across personal difference and affect change in the environment. Democracy and education are twin projects, says Dewey. Insofar as democracy is agency, it is a way of life that is learned by living alongside different others and carefully constructing habits that aid growth. Growth orientated habits include, practices that arise in interaction, such as communication, cooperation, and the formation of purposes.²⁵⁹ A teacher who teaches the democratic habit to communicate would begin, as this section did, with a survey of the contexts in which students live and the identification of problems with which they deal. She would, then, generate opportunities for young people to work together on the problems they jointly identify as worthwhile. In their conjoint work on projects aimed at solving specific problems, students practice developing flexible and cooperative habits, such as accommodation, compromise, and flexibility. Finally, as students practice articulating, listening, and making

²⁵⁸ "March for Our Lives: How Parkland Students Pulled off a Massive National Protest in Only 5 Weeks - CNN," accessed December 8, 2018, <https://www.cnn.com/2018/03/26/us/march-for-our-lives/index.html>.

²⁵⁹ Stitzlein and Rector-Aranda, "The Role of 'Small Publics' in Teacher Dissent," 168–69.

sense of their experiences, they ought to be encouraged to test their solutions among and alongside their peers. In so doing, they will practice forming purposes and making small publics.

Coming together to create change is in part what makes the young people from Parkland and Schamis' teaching a worthy example of an education aimed at building democratic habits of communication, cooperation, and public building. Following the rampage, these students formed a public to take on the actants and actors at work in the complex causal network (they did not merely blame the shooter, although some did this too) and with the support of other interested parties created a public event in a traditionally public space— a march on the nation's capital. Two additional factors are worth mentioning. First, these students reached out to young people in urban environments who had similar experiences with gun violence and who shared a view of the ends. Second, these students attend and attended a modern public school that operates within the neoliberal and liberal democratic logic that I and others decry. Perhaps the lesson is, therefore, that a single teacher's pedagogy can make a difference when coupled with an extraordinary and horrific event. That said, my aim is to make it such that a teacher's pedagogy and the classroom environment come together to educate students in antifoundational democracy thereby removing the necessary catalyst of a horrific event.

On my view, what's vital is that students see the practice of exploring contexts and conjoint experience, communicating about these experiences, and forming public purposes, as democratic. The last piece of the puzzle is the explicit acknowledgment that these habits and practices make democracy. It is one thing to inculcate these habits in students and it is another for these students to use the word democracy to describe their actions. Without the reinforced, verbal acknowledgement that communicating, cooperating, and jointly crafting proposals to address specific conjoint experiences is democracy, students will identify democracy solely with

voting or with making a reasonable choice and acting as an autonomous agent. My final recommendation is, therefore, to teach antifoundational democracy as democracy in social studies and civics class in K-12 schools. Social studies and civic classes are one dedicated space in which students are given the space to consider the deep context of their experience. Simplistic changes, like titling the class “democratic education” or telling the students at various times during the semester that they are practicing democracy are not sufficient. Alone, these simple statements will not thicken the thin strands of liberal democracy that pervade current iterations of social studies classes, but it is a start. Language affects our thoughts, actions, and beliefs; what we call things affects how we act and what we believe.²⁶⁰ This is especially true for the young and immature who are building their vocabularies and conceptual imagination alongside one another during the school day and after. If they learn to name communicative, cooperative, and public building practices “democracy,” then it will not be a big leap for them to adopt democratic modes of association as mature members of society. In other words, we need to call antifoundational democratic habits, democracy, if we hope to update our liberal democratic habits.

My argument in this section is that, insofar as teachers adopt philosophies of education and teaching strategies that are situated in an understanding of shared agency, conjoint and associative experience, and name these practices democracy, they begin to develop in their students the capacity to be antifoundational democratic citizens. The students of Marjory Stoneman Douglas are a good example of what can happen when these pedagogical elements come together. I do not know if Schamis called the habits she taught her students to practice “democracy,” or that she understood her teaching philosophy in the terms that I have used here.

²⁶⁰ George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 1st edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

What matters, to my mind, is that the practice of antifoundational democratic education fertilized the ground for her students' capacities to grow and keep growing in their ability to affect the environment.

Conclusion

Antifoundational democratic education offers a robust challenge to our gun problem, as that problem is evidenced in the tradition that locates agency exclusively in the individual. Insofar as antifoundational democracy generates the capacity to make sense of shared and limited agency, it teaches individuals how to affect and change the environment for the better. Situated in a complex causal network of humans and things, antifoundational democratic citizens know to assess messy contexts, to communicate shared experiences, and to craft actions based on those experiences. Whereas liberal democracy and liberal democratic education support our gun problem by locating agency exclusively in the autonomous rational individual, antifoundational democracy distributes agency across a wide network of actors that make gun violence possible. Not only does liberal democracy support the person in thinking of himself as an agent; it also obscures the agency of other key actors, such as gendered norms, guns, gun marketing, and gun rights advocates. Thus, on my account, an adequate theory of democratic education must educate humans who are situated, partial, emotional and cyborg like, to reckon with all of the ways in which nonhuman things, like guns, and social norms, like gender, act in to shape individual bodies, minds, imaginations and the collective. The danger of continuing to ignore the shared agency of human and nonhuman actors is grave. Not only will we continue to blame and punish individual boys for shooting up schools, we will continue to use a kind of civic education that perpetuates the problem.

Antifoundational democracy asks us to rethink and reflect on our engagement with humans *and* things. It requires a balancing of individual and community needs, and it educates children to learn about the sociopolitical world by engaging with it as constitutive members. Dewey spends the first six chapters of *Democracy and Education* sorting out his method of education and the next twenty describing, delineating, and defending democratic education. The seventh chapter, “The Democratic Conception of Education,” marks the turn toward Dewey’s thinking about democracy. To open chapter seven, Dewey situates his conception of democracy by equating peaceful change with a particular method of education. He states, “Particularly is it true that a society which not only changes but-which has the ideal of such change as will improve it, will have different standards and methods of education from one which aims to supply at the perpetuation of its own customs.”²⁶¹ To drive the distinction home, Dewey places Platonic ideas on the side of perpetuation and opposite his notion of democratic education. Dewey says that the problem with folks who, like Plato, and in my view liberal democrats like Callan, lose faith in democracy is that they “[do] not trust to gradual improvements in education to bring about a better society, which should then improve education.”²⁶² That is, foundationalists, like Callan, are so worried about creating a stable state and fair political order that they do not sufficiently trust living together to educate.

On Dewey’s view, Plato’s lost faith in democracy leads him to develop an elaborate aristocratic vision of an ideal city in which education is determined by philosopher kings who understand how to perpetuate justice.²⁶³ That is, because Plato felt he could no longer trust in the

²⁶¹ Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 88.

²⁶² Dewey, 98.

²⁶³ That said, Plato’s concerns are not unfounded given the death of his friend and teacher, Socrates.

human ability to find joint points of reference and shared answers to common problems. His ideal city privileged force and noble lies instead of persuasion, communication, and cooperation. Plato's lost faith in the human enterprise of living together is not only philosophically relevant; it is generative insofar as contemporary theories of liberal democratic education evince a similar loss of faith in the human ability to learn from each other and to grow up. Like Dewey's interpretation of Plato, my interpretation of Callan and the liberal democratic project argues that liberal democrats mistakenly locate agency in the rational individual to avoid the messy work of making democracy from facts of association, complex networks of shared agency and in the midst of productive social power. Building on Dewey, I've argued that the enterprise of learning to living together requires that we seriously acknowledge the nonhuman actants that co-constitute our sense of what it means to be particular humans. The task is to trust living together to educate, even if we are cyborgs, and to re-think our conception of agency to better address violence.

Rampage school gun violence is the infiltration of America's gun problem into schools. Insofar as these schools respond to the problem of gun violence by teaching students to see themselves as individual rational agents, they leave us with a bunch of individuals pointing guns at each other. But this solution is no solution at all. Thus, if our aim is to construct a better society where democracy is plentiful and gun violence is sparse, we must not make the same mistakes foundationalists do. We must endeavor to make antifoundational democratic education a practicable option by expelling guns from schools, using democratic methods to address social and thingy power in networks of distributed agency wherein cyborgs/humans/things/powers act, and set as a standard of civic education the capacity to grow and keep growing.

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VITA

Before attending Loyola University Chicago to pursue her PhD, Samantha Deane earned a Masters of Arts in Humanities, with a specialization in Plato, from the University of Colorado Denver in 2011 and a Bachelors of Arts in Humanities, with a concentration in Religious Studies from the University of Colorado Boulder in 2007.

On contemporary issues in educational studies, Samantha has written about gun violence and police. She co-authored an article alongside Dr. Amy Shuffelton in *Educational Studies* on what calls for accountability in policing can learn from similar calls for accountability in teaching, given the commonalities of the social positions police officers and teachers share. On political theory, she has written about pragmatism and democratic theory in *Philosophy of Education Yearbook 2016* and about Rawlsian liberalism and the politics of difference in *Philosophical Studies in Education*. Finally, given her background in Greek philosophy, Dr. Deane was invited to respond to Avi Mintz's general address on Spartan schooling and Greek philosophy during the 2018 annual meeting of the Philosophy of Education Society.

Since May of 2014 Samantha has worked at a nonprofit that provides out-of-school-time programs for teenagers. She now serves as the Post-Secondary Program Manager and develops college and career exploration programs. In addition, Samantha has teaches undergraduate and graduate courses on the foundation of education at Loyola University Chicago and DePaul University.