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Socializing a "New Man": The Role of Youth in the Cuban Revolution

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Introduction

The relationship between the state and mass schooling is understood in terms of the use of educational institutions in the formation and sustainability of modern states. The state

exercises political authority across the population as it creates social identities and notions of citizenship that are disseminated and first performed in schools. Since schools constitute a space where each individual member of the society learns the norms and requisites for citizenship, they become of paramount importance to the unity and survival of the state. An analysis of this relationship in the Cuban context is particularly pertinent today, as the Cuban state identifies and devises ways to adapt its public institutions to the country's current social needs and realities.

Because the education system has been particularly instrumental in the construction and continuation of the Cuban Revolution, the Cuban people's perspectives and experiences of schooling are important in understanding how the state might act to strengthen its relationship with the people as they navigate the economy's growing private sector, join the exodus of Cubans; predominantly youth, which has spiked in the last five years,[1] or react to the reestablishment of diplomatic relations with the U.S. While the former has given rise to speculations about the possibility of "regime change," I will discuss why this is not likely to occur in Cuba. My main argument in this thesis is that, along with critiques, new ideas and ways of envisioning the future, youth on the island are creatively recombining the values of the revolution and in order for the Cuban state to remain relevant, it needs to create formal institutional state Avenues for youth to express dissent and critique, and for their feedback to be reflected in the next iteration of Cuban statehood.

Sam Kaplan's analysis of the state and education in the The Pedagogical State (2006), enables us to contemplate the complex intersections across people's daily lives and aspirations, schooling, and the education system as it is regulated by the state. He explains that, in Turkey,

[1]Jens Manuel Krogstad." Cuban Immigration surges as relations warm". Pew Research Center (2015). Retrieved from http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/12/10/cuban-immigration-to-u-s-surges-as-relations-warm/

like in Cuba and most other states, state education has become the tool to create citizens committed to the state: "The educational system is understood as the key institutional site from which political morality and unity are established."[2] But Kaplan delves beyond to focus on the implications of the state's "moral regulation" that deeply influence how the people understand and experience citizenship. If state-regulated cultural forms, pedagogical practices, and political representations are "rendering natural...what are in fact ontological and epistemological premises of a particular and historical form of social order...coextensive with state formation," he says, then taken together, these practices "are intended to have the public take for granted historically contingent identities".[3] According to this perspective, therefore, it is not sufficient to examine official transcripts that state how the Cuban state has purported to form citizens since the founding of the education system under the Cuban revolution. It is necessary to inquire into how the lives of different groups in Cuban society have historically been and are being shaped through the state-managed education system.

Kaplan departs from the two prevalent approaches in the scholarship on the state and education. One frames the issue merely in terms of "the state as articulating a cultural project that projects its unity onto society through institutional sites," and the other looks at how responses to state rhetoric and symbols that are part of such cultural project function as strategic attempts to reimagine power and its representations in everyday life among the schooled.[4] Kaplan perceives the former two to be incomplete evaluations, but he builds on both to formulate

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[2] Sam Kaplan. *"Chapter 1: Educational Foundations"*. In The Pedagogical State. Standford University Press: California (2006), 9
[3] Ibid
[4] Ibid, 13

his own, as he considers the three approaches to be useful in making a powerful appeal to think critically about how education shapes individual and collective identities.[5]

Scholars who inquire into the first issue tend to follow the framework of Antonio Gramsci, who conceives the state as an ideologically motivated educator rather than a merely power-neutral political institution existing outside of society. Gramsci concentrates on the hegemonic practices by which the ruling class induces consent to the dominant political order through the education system. The contribution of this approach to Kaplan is that, through it, scholars have challenged the meritocratic ideology that perpetuates class differences and political unity. They emphasize the importance of studying the reproduction of social inequalities through education systems since often times education is understood as being separate from the economic and political organization of society, and as if pedagogical thought and methods were separate from ideological considerations.[6] While a deliberate intent of the Cuban government is to reduce inequalities through the education system, existing class differences in the population call for the need to evaluate potential ways by which current pedagogies, ideologies, and school practices - which are often state-mandated, might ignore, reinforce, or attempt to address the repercussions of growing inequalities. Blum states, for example, that in the late 1990s, Cuban children were prevented from bringing belongings that would make inequality visible in schools.[7]

However, Kaplan argues, the focus on the hegemony of upper-middle-class values in the school system "suffers from a decidedly teleological cast; namely, that structural and class positions of individual subjects ultimately determine schoolchildren's present political

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[5] Ibid, 22
[6] Ibid, 20
[7] Blum, Denise F. *"Cuban Youth and Revolutionary Values: Educating the New Socialist Citizen"*. Austin, TX, USA: University of Texas Press (2011), 206

consciousness as well as their future livelihood".[8] This approach tends to treat the state as a "stable self-sufficient whole, whose elements constitute an integrated culture and bound system of social relations," and ends up "imposing a one-to-one correspondence between state institutions, primordial identities, and political socialization" when in fact there is variability in how children, parents, and government officials with different life experiences respond to power, knowledge, and social change. There is not a normative ideal of the public sphere that is integrated into the behaviors and discourses of citizens.[9]

Counter to these top-down Gramscian perspectives, Kaplan discusses recent research on education that reveals the specific lived experiences of individual children, "their social values and political consciousness as they accommodate to, contest, and subvert stereotypes and forms of knowledge they are subjected to at school."[10] His examples of this scholarship include Abdullah Sahin's study of how Muslim youth in Birmingham, U.K. reinterpret their cultural heritage as they navigate between school and home cultures, and Barrie Thorne's study of two elementary schools in the U.S. where "boys and girls simultaneously enforce gender boundaries and undermine the sense of gender as division". It is thus common for these studies to show how the meaning of education is influenced by different social markers. Ideally, he says, "this bottom-up approach attributes power to subjects and subcultural groups to intervene in signifying and political systems and produce change"[11]

But Kaplan also finds a drawback in this "critical" approach. He argues that it limits the concept of resistance to what is "confrontational", as it only highlights ways in which children and researchers themselves are against the political, social, and economic order. That is, scholars

[8] Kaplan, The Pedagogical state, 20
[9] Ibid, 27
[10] Ibid, 21
[11] Ibid, 22

assume hegemony to be monolithic as well. The struggle against hegemony in their narratives is easily defined as, when in fact, Kaplan says, "identification of consensus and its characteristic internal tensions are far from obvious, and the key question becomes one of how a counterculture can recognize this consensus and operate in opposition." It is necessary to "specify what political and social imaginaries schoolchildren and youth are struggling for" in order to fully identify and address the ways they engage with power.[12]

To this end, Kaplan uses Michael Bakhtin's idea that social relations in a community are maintained through "heteroglossia" -the constant process of contradistinguishing and differentiating forms of speech characteristic of a group, where each form of speech takes into account the group's social position, ideological commitments, and "constellations of values, assumptions, and experiences."[13] He concludes that, if meaning emerges through interaction as people try to achieve their own ends and establish a social position for themselves, an educational discourse or key term like citizen "cannot be reproduced to a singular, stable meaning; on the contrary, it evokes multiple and overlapping meanings as individuals within a society position themselves differently in terms of life history, gender, age, socioeconomics, locality, and consciousness." That is, social actors tend to "recontextualize" the language of political elites, [14] such that the elements of any collective identity are framed in terms of "presentist needs".[15] Accordingly, the tenets of the Cuban Revolution most be recontextualized in the daily lives and conversations of the Cuban people throughout the decades. My own motivation for speaking with Cubans of different ages about the current state of the Revolution

[12] Ibid
[13] Ibid, 22
[14] Ibid, 23-4
[15] Ibid, 16

during my 5-month stay as a student at the University of Havana stemmed from my curiosity to hear diverse perspectives on its current role in their lives and that of other Cubans.

Bakhtian's "heterogrossic" approach is appealing to Kaplan since it provides him with a framework to capture "the indeterminate and contingent links" between multiple discourses on state and citizenship, pedagogical practices, and power relations, "especially how these links are refracted in everyday consciousness."[16] Accordingly, he ultimately frames the issue of the study of the relationship between the state and education by arguing that the educational experience of children and youth is filled with indeterminacy and contingency, considering "the uneasy relation between official cannons of representation, performances of hierarchy, and different understandings of polity and society across generations."[17]

In his study of Turkish education, Kaplan sets out to find the cultural and political processes by which the meanings of education are organized around interests, understandings, hopes, and dreams for different sectors of Turkish society. He asks the question of how mass education configure an ideal of citizenry out of fluctuating social divisions and relations, such as those relating to class and generational differences. [18]Like Kaplan, I seek to move beyond the formal approach that emphasizes the instrumental use of education by the state to examine the dynamics of socialization in the Cuban education system, and diverse notions of citizenship as well as aspirations among Cuban youth today. Kaplan finds that the Turkish education system continually experiences tensions reflective of ongoing debates over the multiple meanings of citizenship, which structure the boundaries between the state and society".[19] Due to ongoing changes in the economy and political structure of Cuba's revolutionary state in the process of

[16] Ibid, 24
[17] Ibid
[18] Kaplan, *The Pedagogical State*, 19
[19] Ibid, 27-8

recovery from the so called "Special Period" crisis of the 1990s, the Cuban people and state are also in a process of negotiating notions of Cuban citizenship and identity, in which young people, who spend large portions of the day in educational institutions, should play a crucial role since the future of the island on their hands.

Since the national school system is of interest to many politically motivated actors both in and outside of state institutions, as Kaplan states, I will use a variety of sources, including online periodicals, speeches, mass political campaigns, surveys, and anecdotes from my own experience studying at the University of Havana in addition to academic studies on the topic of socialization in the Cuban Revolution. Chapter One goes over steps taken by the government in order to socialize the population corresponding with various social, economic, and subtle political changes throughout the Cuban Revolution. In analyzing these factors in the context of present day Cuban society, I will argue that the people--especially today's youth--and not the state alone, should play a major role in the ideological development of socialism on the island. Hence, keeping youth aboard in the revolution requires providing them with the skills and avenues by which to reflect on their society and envision their future within it. After all, the state needs to collaborate with young people if it expects them to carry forward the socialist state paradigm of the revolution of 1959.

Chapter 2 contextualizes the factors that have led to a debilitated relationship between state structures and the people, and discusses specific ways in which the state is welcoming change while encouraging continuity in its political aims. Recent changes in the country's leadership represent a shift in the government's understanding of new directions for remodeling and fostering the continued development of the socialist project. While welcoming public

participation has become a priority for the government, a more democratic political culture does not seek to invite outside political models and suggestions. Therefore, the state faces the task of fomenting the development of this new culture and opening effective avenues for participation. But foremost, this process demands rethinking the current position and role of citizens in the premises of the current system.

Chapter 3 discusses the notion of "youth as the vanguard of the revolution" formulated by the leaders who envisioned the inception of a humanistic, new kind of society with the establishment of their revolutionary politics, and how youth have assimilated these expectations as the structures designed for their formation, mainly educational institutions, have changed along with societal and economic shifts in the late 1980s and 1990s. Since enforcement of this notion of youth through public institutions came to suggest that youth who did not fit the new social expectations could become an obstacle for the advancement of the revolution, this chapter questions the consequences of upholding an overarching definition of youth in a Cuba where the youngest generations are growing in a variety of socio-economic realities. Fostering the social inclusion of "youth" necessitates channeling their diverse experiences of the revolution, expectations, and aspirations for the future such that they can inform the reshaping of public institutions and the country's political culture.

Returning to the importance of the Cuban education system for the socialization of youth and in the Cuban revolution, Chapter 4 focuses on the current status and perceptions of education among today's Cuban youth, as the same political agenda and "crisis of values among youth" remains the implemented framework for the politicization of youth in education institutions. Based on the argument advanced throughout the previous chapters that critique and input from the perspectives of diverse youth are needed to envision their role in the development of their

country, I will provide recommendations for how the primary, secondary, and higher education systems can help to facilitate and channel their participation.I will borrow from pedagogical suggestions focused on the reconciliation of the current reality with curriculum and school practices that have been proposed by Cuban academics, as well as from long-established educational philosophies and classroom practices that are part of the "hidden curriculum" in Cuban classrooms, as they impart lessons and values that are learned but not openly intended and have the potential to foster participatory environments beginning in schools.

Chapter One

The History of Revolutionary Education in Cuba

The nationalist goals of the Cuban Revolution in the 1960s were supported by educational reform. In fact, extending education in order to target the disparity between rural and urban opportunities and other deeply rooted problems of access, especially concerning Cubans of color, was the first priority of education in the 1960s.The education system that was nationalized by the Cuban revolution was markedly different from that of the pre-revolutionary regime, as it replaced a public education system that established after the Spanish-Cuban-American war and still reflected the economic, political, and social relations of neo-colonialist development. Private schools that served religion and the wealthy were closed in 1961, and the Literacy Campaign, a massive effort to eradicate illiteracy that sent hundreds of children and young adults to teach

literacy in rural areas that same year, symbolized the importance of education within the revolution.[20]

The expansion of formal schooling became a primary tool to realize the vision of the transformation of Cuban society, centered on Che Guevara's belief in the perfectibility of the Cuban people to become "New Men" and "New Women." The "New Man" would advance socialism, having the proper personality, mentality, and or conciencia (consciousness) to lead or follow the revolution, and society as a whole was to become "a huge school."[21] The idea of integral education eventually included voluntary work and military training, and mass organizations were created to mobilize the participation of the Cuban people, included students. The Pioneers organization, created for primary-school children, and the Federation of University Students [FEU] became deeply integrated with daily life in schools. The Association of Communist Youth (UJC) was created in the 1960s remains the youth branch of the communist party.[22] Through mass organizations and implementation of círculos infantiles (free childcare) and Escuela al Campo (school to the countryside), as well as other projects, the state tried a variety of means to instill new values and boost the economy by mobilizing the population to work using moral incentives.[23]

Educational measures in the 1970s gave ideological rigidity and more structure to the events of the 1960s. A second period of education reform began through a process coined perfeccionamiento continuo (Ongoing Improvement), which sought to reinforce the overall athmosphere of social rigidity and combat potential forms of dissidence among Cuban Youth in

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[20] Sheryl Lutjens. "*Educational Policy in Socialist Cuba: the Lessons of Forty Years of Reform*" (2000). Retrieved from http://www.angelfire.com/pr/red/cuba/educational_policy_in_cuba.htm.
[21] Blum. *Cuban Youth and Revolutionary Values: Educating the New Socialist Citizen.* 206.
[22] Lutjens, *Educational Policy in Socialist Cuba: the Lessons of Forty Years of Reform.*
[23] Blum, *Cuban Youth and Revolutionary Values: Educating the New Socialist Citizen*, 207.

order to achieve more ideological unity".[24] It began with the First National Congress of Education and Culture in 1971 and an extensive study of the system that included Soviet specialists. An Anti-Loafing Law created the same year made loafing a punishable crime, but a practical concern with the reliance on voluntary work and efficiency gave place to the use of material incentives. Changing economic strategy also led to a reorientation toward technical and professional education, which sought to prepare qualified workers and mid-level technicians. Higher education expanded with the creation of art, sport, military education, and competitive science schools that introduced elements of competition and ranking. However, the political purposes of education continued, and the socialist party policy and constitution supported free and universal education, subsidized by the state and founded on a Marxist-Leninist worldview.

By the early 1980s, advances in education included a capacity for education research and the publication of a formal statement of Cuban pedagogical theory and practice.[25] Since Cuban youth took ownership over the revolution in its early years, there was "no sense of adolescent dissidence" in the 1960s and 70s. But by the 1980s, Kapcia argues, there were "dangerously rising expectations (from a generation unused to austerity) and frustration at the growing economic constrains and growing mediocrity."[26] The rigidity of the system and an economy of scarcity, gaps between practice and theory, and political promises and social reality lead to greater dissatisfaction among youth and the Mariel boatlift in October 1980, the first massive exodus of Cubans who left the island for the United States. Fidel Castro, who fought with Che Guevara to overthrow the Batista government and became prime minister in 1959, blamed bureaucracy and called for a return to moral incentives. However, in a declining economy, it was

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[24] *Ibid*, 208.
[25] Lutjens, *Educational Policy in Socialist Cuba: the Lessons of Forty Years of Reform.*
[26] Kapcia, *Educational Reform and Revolutionary Morality in Cuba*, 406

harder to generate emotional capital, as Blum calls it, in the way that it was garnered immediately after the triumph of the revolution.

Following Fidel's imperative, the Rectification Campaign of 1986 was designed to rectify deficiencies in the economic system, closely addressing the social and political dimensions of production by rectifying their alignment with ideology. According to Lutjens, Rectification was to reassert the idealism of the Cuban socialist model from the 1960s and the economic pragmatism of the 1970s. In the area of education, 170,000 educators participated in Party-organized discussions and rectification marked another era of reforms through the Perfeccionamiento continuo plan. Improving the quality of formal education was again the general goal, as education was playing a vital in the enactment of new economic strategies. The opening to foreign investment and tourism, new forms of agricultural property and food programs for domestic self-sufficiency, and the stress on bio-medical and other exports all relied on the efforts and accomplishments of the education system. A strong emphasis on scientific research was thus characteristic of this period.[27]

In the first few years of the campaign, new educational facilities were built with voluntary labor as a measure of the revival of moral incentives. However, limited resources affected the construction plans.[28] With the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1989, which had become Cuba's major economic ally since 1959, the Cuban economy began to struggle to execute its ambitious plans for educational expansion. As a result, a new economic reality emerged in the 1990s, declared the " Special Period in Times of Peace" by Castro.[29] And notwithstanding, educational expansion no longer the solution to the country's economic problems. The high number of professionals on the island began to cluster at the top of what

[27] Lutjens. *Educational Policy in Socialist Cuba: the Lessons of Forty Years of Reform.*
[28] Blum, *Cuban Youth and Revolutionary Values: Educating the New Socialist Citizen*, 99.
[29] *Ibid*, 208

many academics have described as an "inverted pyramid," as an widening gap now existed between the level of education of young people and the jobs available for all who were highly qualified. Migration from rural to urban areas increased as a consequence, leading to a decline in primary and secondary school enrollment in rural schools.[30] Disenchantment and hopelessness at the face of hardship led to another exodus in 1993.[31] The focus of the Sixth UJC Congress in 1992 was on sobrevivencia and supervivencia (resistance for survival), an invitation for youth to continue participating in public programs and opportunities for collective survival.[32]

The political goal of rectification in education stressed the ideological and political responsibilities of education. As part of Rectification's appeal to the domestic roots of Cuban socialism, even in times of economic distress, changes in the content of basic education included more emphasis on Cuban history and the introduction of civic education. The resort to Cuba' own educational traditions was part of this process. Articles on historic figures such as Jose Martí and Che Guevara and their educational philosophies were published in the ministry's journal Educación and a journal of Cuban Pedagogy was launched in 1989.[33] At the same time, educational institutions experienced decentralization due resource scarcity, and Perfeccionamiento Continuo encouraged the abandonment of "authoritarian" classroom practices and rote learning in favor of active and participatory learning that was to be facilitated with creative teaching methods.[34]

By the 1990s, the contradictions between revolutionary values and reality were even greater. The economic crisis was threatening social cohesion as class and race distinctions

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[30] Ibid, 99-100.
[31] Ibid, 208-9.
[32] EcuRed. Anexo: Congresos de la Union de Jovenes Comunistas. Retrieved from http://www.ecured.cu/Anexo:Congresos_de_la_Unión_de_Jóvenes_Comunistas#VI_Congreso
[33] Lutjens, *Educational Policy in Socialist Cuba: the Lessons of Forty Years of Reform.*
[34] *Ibid*

became more pronounced. The introduction of capitalist measures such as tourism and foreign investment in restricted sectors have helped to lift the economy since 1996, but a firm stance on the country's political foundations remains. Televised classes were designed to help maintain the quality of educational content and political ideology, and Raul Castro dismissed the former minister of education Luis Ignacio Gomez, arguing that "he had lost his revolutionary consciousness and energy."[35] The state perceived the return to the country's socialist roots through educational campaigns as the solution to remediate the social consequences and "value crisis" among youth, as an ideological fallout was evidenced as pockets of youth began turning to crime and underground market transactions. The number of unemployed, out-of-school, and pregnant teenagers had begun to increase.[36]

In search for a path to social recovery, the Cuban State required periodic demonstrations to protest the embargo and demand the release of the "Cuban Five,", five Cuban intelligence officers who were arrested in September 1998 and convicted of conspiracy to commit murder and espionage while acting as agents of the United States government. In November 1999, the return of Elían, a six-year-old boy who had survived a capsized boat at sea and held by his relatives in the United States, gave the Cuban state an opportunity to frame the conflict with the Miami exile community as a "Battle of Ideas," in which "neoliberalism threatened Cuba's national sovereignty." The case of Elián helped to revive an understanding of the belief of the United States as an exploiter and enemy among the Cuban people, and moved them closer to ideological unity again.[37]

The Battle of Ideas became an educational campaign inspired by popular mobilization in Cuba to demand his return. The campaign included more than 170 cultural, social , and

[35] Blum, *Cuban Youth and Revolutionary Values: Educating the New Socialist Citizen*, 209.
[36] *Ibid*, 213
[37] *Ibid*

educational programs to reinforce socialist ideology. Schools of Social Work trained unemployed youth from Cuba's poorest neighborhoods as social workers to work with at-risk populations, and the state asked youth to offset the teacher shortage by creating a maestros emergentes (emerging teaching professionals) program, a program that included on-the-job teacher training and a monthly stipend.[38] According to Antoni Kapcia's analysis of the Battle of Ideas, the preparation of maestros emergentes and social workers is evidently part of the deeply rooted ideological impulse of "an aging revolution Education's desperate search for its youth."[39]

Chapter Two

[38] Ibid, 214-5

[39] Anthoni Kapcia."*Educational Reform and Revolutionary Morality in Cuba: the 'New Man', youth and the new 'Battle of Ideas*'". Journal of Moral Education 34:4, 2005), 399-412, 411

Cuban Socialism: The Simultaneities of Preservation and Change

Achieving a more democratic culture has been a salient challenge identified by Fidel Castro, the leader of the Cuban Revolution, before retiring. In his first speech in 2008, Raul Castro, his brother and successor, quoted his last public words at the University of Havana, where Fidel expressed the self-criticism that, "One conclusion that I have reached after many years: of the many errors we have all committed, the most significant mistake was to believe that anyone knew anything about socialism or that anyone knew how to build socialism."[40] In this statement, Fidel and Raul refer to the discrepancy between revolutionary ideals, which have sought to advance the welfare of society as a whole, and the corruption, bureaucracy, and theft of state provisions that are observed across Cuban society today.

As Carlos Alzugaray Treto explains in his essay on continuity and change in Cuba, the pressure that the half century US policy of "regime change" has placed on Cuba and the need to guard the achievements of the Revolution has led to a common perception among many leaders that the only purpose of debate is to convince the population that the best course of action proposed by higher authorities is the only revolutionary one, or that those with dissenting views are naïve, or "are not adequately informed," though the required information is unavailable because "disseminating it can be useful to the enemy". Practices of property nationalization and centralization of the decision-making process have thus led to paternalistic and vertical approaches, and "homogenization with insufficient sensitivity in dealing with the diversity of needs and heterogeneous interests (of groups, territories, localities, etc)'. "[41] Raul, echoing Fidel,

[40] Carlos Alzugaray Treto. "*Continuity and Change in Cuba at Fifty: The Revolution at its Crossroads.*" In *A Contemporary Cuba Reader: The Revolution Under Raul Castro*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015 Second edition. (2008), 45
[41] *Ibid*, 42

has recognized the need to actively engage Cuban people with the state in order to resolve these issues since, clearly, the relationship between the two no longer translates from the tenets prescribed by the historic leaders of the Revolution.

In his speech, Raul's prescription following his brother's assertion stated that, "...The best solutions come out of the intensive exchange of diverging opinions."[42] In contrast to Fidel, who had the power to mobilize and often create a consensus as any form of debate was subject to his ultimate authority, Raul is calling for active public participation such that the state can use the people's input to reform and improve its institutions. While the shift in power from Fidel to Raul represents the continuation of "historical leadership" in the country, Raul has established his own priorities based on the current need for continual transformation of the economic and governance systems in the country. By inviting the people's input, his initiative involves the reworking of social relations between the political system and the people in order to challenge the prevailing bureaucracy which, as Prieto explains, assumes that only those who remain in positions of authority know how to build socialism. He has acknowledged that due the growth of the informal sector of the economy in the past decade, and the resulting corruption in the middle and lower levels of government businesses and services, the survival of the country's one-party system and the construction - or reconstruction - of socialism in Cuba requires bringing Cuban society back to legality and trust in public institutions.[43] Raul's pronouncement to deepen democracy, debate, and deliberation as the ultimate tools for creating the consensus necessary to clarify and advance national policy is therefore a measure of the current government's interest in directing the reintegration of the people into the current socio-political system.

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[42] *Ibid*, 45
[43] *Ibid*, 44

Raul's encouragement of public contribution nonetheless highlights the continuation of the existing one-party system, coupled with the advancement of agreements that would continue to fall within an umbrella framework of Cuban socialism. According to Ted Piccone's foreign policy report on Cuba, the Cuban government faces the challenge of maintaining the faith of its people, especially as it continues to introduce economic reforms that resemble those of a free labor market and promote a culture of individual responsibility that counters its long-established practices of dependence on the state.[44] Raul has pronounced that, "if the people are firmly united around a single party, it must be more democratic than any other, and along with it society as a whole, like any human work, can be perfected."[45] He is aware that a balance between political rigidity and providing flexibility appears to be of paramount importance for the party's survival. If reforms happen too quickly, "it could cause excessive dislocation and unhappiness and potentially destabilize the regime,"as Piccone suggests. But if the pace is too slow, on the other hand, "budding entrepreneurs, the middle class, and disaffected youth, who have no overt commitment to the values of the 1959 revolution, may give up sooner and head to greener pastures in the United States."[46]

It is worth noting that, while striving for balance between gradual change and the preservation of core revolutionary ideals, the Cuban government does not seek to abandon the achievements made under the leadership of Fidel, but to make necessary adjustments and transformations with the input of several actors, including youth. Cuba is not undergoing a period of "transition," as conceptualized by theorists who understand social and political transformation in post-authoritarian states as a "path" to which nations move as they become

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[44] Ted Piccone."*Cuba Is Changing, Slowly But Surely*", Foreign Policy Trip Reports, Brookings Institution. (2012) Web.
[45] Treto, *Continuity and Change in Cuba at Fifty*, 45
[46] Piccone, *Cuba Is Changing, Slowly But Surely*

functioning democracies.[47] This is a prevalent misconception, especially among scholars in the Cuban exile community who perceive the ongoing economic reforms in Cuba to be a sign of forthcoming regime change towards Western-style democracy in the country.[48] Although it is obvious that changes must be made in politics and governance, they will be a response to an internal dynamic, as Treto suggests, rather than to demands coming from outside, as has happened throughout the Cuban revolution. In 2008, Raul Castro restated this position: "I reiterate that we will never make a decision - not even the smallest one!- on the basis of pressure or blackmail, no matter what its origin, from a powerful country or a continent."[49]

Paradoxically, the Cuban revolution is conceived of by the Cuban government as a process of social, economic, and cultural change, so transformation itself has always been a self-defining feature of socialism in Cuba. This idea is found in Marxist literature that refers to the evolution of socialist society from an initial to a more advanced stage.[50] "Change" and "transformation" in Cuban political discourse continue to be framed as part of the necessary unfolding of the revolution. Attesting to this framework, Sobe Timberlake argue that both socialism and insertion into the global economy can be reconciled in the Cuban context, since both can be seen as furthering Cuban independence and strengthening the Cuban nation.[51] What follows is creating collective self-reflection and deliberation to prompt such reconciliation. Participating in this process becomes particularly relevant for the younger generations of Cubans, who are being encouraged to partake in deciding what kind of socialism will develop for their future.

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[47] Noah W. Sobe and Renee N. Timberlake. "*Staying the Post-Socialist Course: Global/Local Transformations and Cuban Education*".International Perspectives on Education and Society. (Volume 14: Post-Socialism is not Dead: (Re)Reading the Global in Comparative Education, 2015), 352-3.
[48] Andy S. Gomez. "*How Education Shaped Communist Cuba*". (The Atlantic, 2015).Web.
[49] Treto, *Continuity and Change in Cuba at Fifty*, 40
[50] *Ibid*, 39
[51] Sobe & Timberlake, *Staying the Post-Socialist Course*, 358

Chapter Three

Youth Participation in the Cuban Revolution

The belief that youth 'hold the key' to the successful evolution of the Revolution has informed youth policy and culture since the first decade of the Revolution. Anne Luke's study of political culture in Cuba explains that, through the construction of youth hero figures who fought

in the revolution with which young people were encouraged to identify, as well as speeches to and about youth, a dominant discourse revolving around youth emerged. This discourse tied youth to the idea of the rebirth of nationhood and a young revolution by asserting that the two central features of youth were purity and enthusiasm. According to Fidel, young people born into the Revolution "were pure by virtue of being untainted by Cuba's corrupt bourgeois past," and that, before the revolution "young people were unable to express themselves...that which every young person has within himself - vitality, enthusiasm, a yearning for the future, an urge to struggle, a thirst for life."[52]

The mention of a negative past and aspirations for youth made room for the promotion of the "new Cuban man" for the future, as termed by Che Guevara in "Socialism and Man in Cuba." But the new man whom the young would be shaped into through revolutionary rhetoric came to define what youth should be - ambassadors of the revolution, destined to emulate the young martyrs who died fighting for their ideals and national liberation. The establishment of a uniform political culture revealed the role of the Cuban state as the ideologically motivated educator that Gramsci describes.[53] The demarcated role of youth became an identifier that reached beyond what youth inherently means, and excluded those who did not work nor study. The former were identified as *desvinculados* (disenfranchised) - from the society - in the media and popular debates about youth, and were therefore perceived as a problem and alert for the revolution.[54]

Historically, as discussed in Chapter 1, deviant behaviors among youth have called for widespread discussion of subversive youth as a problem instead of as the vanguard of the

[52] Anne Luke. "Creating the Quiet Majority? Youth and Young People in the Political Culture of the Cuban Revolution". Bulletin of Latin American Research, (Volume 31: 127–143, 2012), 132
[53] Kaplan, *The Pedagogical State*, 20
[54] Luke, Creating the Quiet Majority, 133-6

revolution, and for educational interventions by the state to reintegrate them into the process of constructing the socialist society that it has envisioned. This is a way in which the state itself has assigned an oppositional position to dissenting youth, when the consensus and intentional tensions might be more complex, as Kaplan suggests.[55]Nonetheless, the number of those who may be perceived as *desvinculados* only increases as the country deals with greater inequalities and tries to tackle social and economic issues. In response, the major outlet to express dissent enacted by government officials has been the endorsement of protest culture in music and art, though not through formal institutional avenues.

The 10th Havana Arts Biennial is an example of the government's failure to incorporate youth input in a genuine manner. In this event, artist Tania Bruguera held a "public opinion installation" entitled "Behavior Art" where speakers came up to a microphone and denounced the constraints of the revolution. Abel Prieto, Cuba's Culture Minister, commented on Bruguera's installation by arguing that the Cuban government must encourage criticism from inside the revolution because critical art is healthy, coincides with analysis of the self, and shows a commitment to the revolution by attempting to combat its inefficiencies and bureaucratic excesses.[56] However, the state's primary intent in permitting dissent through artistic expression so far is to re-establish the validity of revolutionary ideals and foster compliance among youth, hoping that youth will identify ways in which capitalism have continued to corrupt Cuban society as dollars flow into the country via tourism, foreign investment, and a relaxed attitude toward private enterprise.[57] Allowing critical art forms might function as a way to increase

[55] Kaplan, *The Pedagical State*, 22
[56] Maria Alvarez. "Hombre Nuevo en Tierra Nueva: The Aspirations of Recently Arrived Cuban Immigrant Adolescents."The University of Iowa. Dissertation. (2009),13-4.
[57] *Ibid*, 14

freedom of expression, but it does not guarantee that these criticisms will factor into the government's plans and decision-making processes.

The resurgence of state-directed campaigns to 'reeducate' or 'resocialize' have taken place in tandem with political or economic shifts of the period. However, the last initiative of the state in response to the economic difficulties and resort to capitalism in the1990s, the "Battle of Ideas", does not include a broader examination of the national reality experienced by youth who may differ across ages, geographical location, gender, and socioeconomic circumstances. As Kaplan explains, it is necessary to take into account these differences as youth position themselves differently according to their lived experiences across these factors.[58] But the Battle of Ideas does not consist of opening spaces for debate on the model of socialist transformation - even while the state publicly advocates for civic participation.[59] The measures of the this initiative are grounded on perceptions of youth and their social struggles by older generations. In her study of aspirations and social perceptions among Cuban youth, María Isabel Dominguez finds that different experiences living through the economic crisis of the 1990s and the readjustment period, as a child or at different stages of adulthood, contribute to different sets of perspectives and expectations across youth groups. Based on how they describe younger generations, Dominguez concludes that the 25 to 30 year old subgroup identify with older age groups. This group attribute "unfavorable connotations in areas such as moral values, character traits, culture and formal education, and political values to younger groups.[60] This finding extends the application of Kaplan's theory to generational differences in addition to differences

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[58] Kaplan, *The Pedagogical State*, 23-4

[59] Juan Valdez Paz, "*Cuba in the "Special Period": From Equality to Equity*" In *Changes in Cuban Society since the Nineties* (Washington DC: The Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2005),103-22.

[60] Maria Isabel Dominguez. "*Cuban Youth: Aspirations, Social Perceptions, and Identity.*" In *Changes in Cuba Since the Nineties* (Washington DC: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2005), 162-3

in social position. What is perceived as a "value crisis" by older Cubans constitutes the *double moral* mediation or reconceptualization of revolutionary values among young Cubans.

While conducting research on civic education in Cuba for a class at the center for demographic studies at the University of Havana, I noticed that Cuban academics have similar impressions of a value crisis among youth. They discuss Cuban youth, as Lutjens writes, "in reference to dropping out and other problems of performance in the school setting - including cheating, as well as delinquency and other nonconforming social behaviors defined by law and institutional practices."[61] It is evident that the diverse range of experiences and perceptions among youth bring to light the challenges in defining youth so broadly. Consequently, this poses a challenge to the process of finding solutions to issues concerning youth and constructing a social framework that is inclusive of their views and aspirations if they are not able to voice themselves and be listened as contributors. In a symposium about role of leaders in different sectors in the transformation period, Carlos Lage Codorniú, the former president of the University Student Federation (*Federacion Estudiantil Universitaria, [FEU]*), stated that, "It is not about a lack of communication, but there are many new ideas that should be allowed to be expressed...In order to strengthen the weight of the young generation we mush push, be more visible. Some sectors have recognized the need for young people to take part, but others still have great reservations."[62]

The dissenting behaviors among Cuba's youngest generations noted by older generations indeed comprehend a generational difference that manifests as a reflection of how each group has experienced the Revolution. In addition to the mixed ideological messages brought about by the introduction of capitalist measures for economic recovery, the contradiction

[61] Sheryl Lutjens. "Educational Policy in Socialist Cuba: The Lessons of Forty Years of Reform" (2000). Retrieved from http://www.angelfire.com/pr/red/cuba/educational_policy_in_cuba.htm.
[62] Treto. *Continuity and Change in Cuba at Fifty*, 43

between public, official norms and the private norms of the informal economy have given rise to two codes of attitudes and conduct, or the *doble moral*, as termed recently by scholars studying Cuban society. That is, Cubans, especially young people who grew up in the Special period and thereafter, have learned to negotiate two codes of behavior. This takes place, for example, as they share critical perspectives on the state in private or operate a business out of financial need inside the informal economy, while complying with official norms in public spaces where government supervision prevails.[63] Another survey conducted by Dominguez revealed that, although young people today maintain a strong sense of national identity that is associated with historical and political factors at the roots of the Revolution - as they identify with values such as patriotism, solidarity, good interpersonal relationships, and the ability to face problems with a sense of sacrifice and optimism - youth also report recently becoming more self-interested and "losing their Cubanness" without perceiving the two sets of values as polarized visions.[64] These hybrid identities corroborate with Kaplan's emphasis on the indeterminacy and contingency that characterizes the educational experience of children and youth inside and outside of schools.

But knowing how to mediate the *doble moral* does not imply an acceptance of it among young people, as Blum argues. The widening gap between norms and praxis, even as the government promotes the growth of a free labor market and tries to instill personal responsibility, creates a sense of disillusionment and disconnection from the dominant values, as contradictory behaviors can lead to the emergence of a new way of life or culture.[65] Unlike their parents and grandparents, who fought for the principles of the Revolution and at least witnessed its better days, Hansing notes, the main point of reference for youth is the economic crisis of the

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[63] Blum, Cuban Youth and Revolutionary Values, 209
[64] Dominguez, *Cuban Youth: Aspirations, Social Perceptions, and Identity*, 161-2
[65] Blum, Cuban Youth and Revolutionary Values, 209

Special Period, and its many social contradictions.[66] In the midst of economic hardship, young Cubans who were socialized during the1990s and after grew up seeing family members and others leaving their jobs to find more lucrative work in the tourism industry, getting involved in illicit businesses, or making the difficult decision to leave the country among other practices that they have adopted uncritically.[67]

As a result, young Cubans are more focused on meeting their personal needs relating to family, the ability to own one's home, material well-being, emigration, health and spirituality, as opposed to their elders who participated in the countrywide literacy campaign and had aspirations for humanitarian service and international solidarity in the late eighties.[68] They are also curious to discover and create new ideas and lifestyles, as observed in the various subcultures emerging on the Island. Youth are are listening to songs by controversial hip hop groups such as Los Aldeanos, organizing underground parties and concerts, and selling or paying for illegal cables and packets of entertainment content downloaded from the internet in order to connect with the outside world. According to Hansing, as youth carve out alternative spaces and parallel market mechanisms to the state through their independent actions, the relationship between the individual and the state changes.[69] Young people are increasingly taking their destiny into their own hands. The process of "reincorporating" youth will demand that the state treat youth as pivotal social actors, channel, and legitimize their ideas through its official institutions as it envisions the future of the Island.

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[66] Katrin Hensing. Changes From Below: New Dynamics, Spaces, and Attitudes in Cuban Society. NACLA (2014). Retrieved from https://nacla.org/article/changes-below-new-dynamics-spaces-and-attitudes-cuban-society

[67] *Ibid*

[68] Dominguez, *Cuban Youth: Aspirations, Social Perceptions, and Identity*, 160

[69] Hansing, Changes From Below

As Lutjens (2000) states, young people fled to the U.S. as *balseros* (definition?) and have contributed to the resilience of the black market and the new *jineterismo* (prostitution) that is now so visible in Havana. Yet they continue to participate in formal education, mobilizations, paid labor, and the array of activities and official groups that order Cuban life. Because this generation will have a decisive role in determining the future of socialism and the revolution, rigorous understanding and theorizing about cultural change and systematic information about the beliefs at work in the lives of young and older Cubans are still needed.[70] Spaces for feedback and criticism inside the island should go beyond the arts to include official participatory mechanisms through the media, schools, and other public institutions. Without incorporating the meanings of a socialist education, which are organized around the diverse interests, understandings, and aspirations of different sectors of society, as Kaplan puts it, it is not plausible for the state to advance ideas of citizenship that will be inclusive of younger as well as older generations of Cubans.

[70] Lutjens, Educational Policy in Socialist Cuba

Chapter Four

Youth Integration through the Cuban Education System

"For three decades, the education system was a genuine vehicle for the integration of social classes, racially diverse groups, and especially women", says Maria Isabel Dominguez, who argues that the crisis of the 1990s had a number of structural effects with deep implications in terms of social integration - in the areas of employment, sociopolitical participation, and education.[71] While the state made great efforts to minimize the impact of the crisis and readjustment on education, and to maintain universal coverage at the primary and secondary levels with far fewer resources, there were effects; particularly in the internal structure of middle

[71]Dominguez, *Cuban Youth: Aspirations, Social Perceptions, and Identity*, 156

and high school education that contributed to declining enrollment in higher education.[72] Universities became institutions that reproduced social inequalities. Efforts to reduce the number of college graduates and counter the mismatch between training, research, and contribution to production resulted in an imbalance in college entrance. In the 1980s, the increased access for children of professionals was already noticeable, to the disadvantage of the working class and peasantry.[73] Dominguez and Sobe Timberlake explain that, in turn, the changes began to undermine the ability of the government to ensure social mobility, and the culture of academic achievement has since suffered with new social perceptions of the role and stature of education.[74]

Higher education remains a key objective for the Cuban Government. Although the main challenge is to improve quality and performance in education, the government's primary concern appears to be the "the socio-political situation in universities," which is "known as the political and ideological work in higher education." It perceives a "great need to strengthen education on values related to the Cuban socio-political system" because it is "insufficient." According to Rodolfo Alarcon Ortiz, the current minister of higher education, "the current discourse on educational policy change repeatedly recognizes the priority of this work...both for an internal 'crisis of values in young people'", as discussed in Chapter 2, and "external reasons such as increased activities of 'political subversion' where young people remain the target."[75]

Danay Quintana explains that this concern has led to the design of the current university policy, focused training "highly qualified professional revolutionaries committed to the nation and socialism and to train patriots with strong anti-imperialist sentiments and deep knowledge of the principles and values of Cuban socialism." Justifiably, however, she asks why this remains

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[72] Ibid, 158
[73] Danay Quintana Nedelcu. "*Cuban Education Between Revolution and Reform*". International Journal of Cuban Studies 6.2 (2014): 205–221. 210
[74] *Staying the Post-Socialist Course*, 363
[75] Cuban Education between Revolution and Reform, 213

the government's focal point if the government itself recognizes that political and ideological education is not contributing to better results.[76] Clearly, she says, "the economic and political crisis in the last decade of the last century, instead of producing a theoretical reformulation of the principles of socialism, degenerated into a campaign of symbolic reaffirmation of revolutionary nationalism."[77] Although the government is publicly encouraging more participation, education that insists on the same historical narrative in order to counterweight the opening process as the Cuban people experience it can further alienate young people. It ignores their own reinterpretation of revolutionary values as they live through the consequences of the Special Period, which include the negative and unexpected effects of the country's resort to capitalist solutions to resource scarcity and other economic issues.

While lower rates of educational attainment indicate a growing disconnect between youth and the state, as schools have been the main formal institutions by which the state reaches youth, a reformulation of the social and political goal of education itself might be a crucial step in promoting youth inclusion for those who are still part of the system. After all, this is where youth become familiar with their role as members of Cuban society, and where they learn the skills necessary for civic engagement. While the creation of various formal institutional avenues will be necessary, schools as the institutions of youth formation should be the first set of institutions to experience this shift.

In light of youth disengagement with education in today's Cuba, especially youth, Sobe Timberlake conclude in their analysis of the future of Cuban education that, "the challenge of the next decade will be to try to understand, as Cuba's transformations continue, what role(s) and purpose(s), and techniques are ascribed to the education system; what results or outcomes they

[76] Ibid, 214
[77] Ibid, 211

produce; and how they too have transformed and continue to transform over time." However, they do not expect the state alone to determine the course and purpose of education, even though it is clear that Cuba will remain some form of "socialist". They agree that multiple sets of actors and institutions have played and will continue to play a role in social, political, and economic changes. I agree with them, that in order to understand these changes and proceed to enact education reform in the future, "the task is to establish what structures and patterns have emerged through multiple sets of interactions and the ways in which the Cuban government (and other actors) describe and acknowledge those interactions."[78] This response also follows Kaplan's suggestions.

As Quintana states, "the main function that education could have in the face of present changes in Cuba is to try to anticipate and prepare generations of young people with a vision of the country that must be defined by the government and society."[79] These conversations should prompt changes in the higher and secondary school systems. It is necessary to review and update the content and methods used to socialize youth and children in schools, and experiment with ways in which democratic processes may be enhanced through current university policy and curriculum. This may even be useful for the government to decipher young people's relation to education. Currently, universities play a unique role in disseminating Marxist-Leninist and Marti's ideas. But ideological debate and controversy should also be encouraged practices in educational settings, along with the capacity for critical, committed, and revolutionary analysis, knowledge, and respect for history as prescribed at the basis of the political culture of the revolution in Cuba.[80]

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[78] Ibid, 365
[79] Ibid, 217
[80] Ibid, 213

Current Prospects for Pedagogical Change and Greater Youth Integration

Walking out of my Latin American history lecture at the University of Havana on a Tuesday morning, a colorful poster with the day's date and approaching time caught my attention. It was announcing the screening of *Canción de Barrio,* a documentary about Silvio Rodriguez's tour across Havana's most underserved neighborhoods that included interviews with residents who spoke about their living conditions and take on the country's revolutionary politics. I hurried down the stairs to join the screening, and found the room stuffed with students, professors, and administrators. Silvio is the musical ambassador of the Cuban revolution, and the filmmaker, as I later found out, was the father of Joan, one of my classmates.

Joan openly expressed disillusionment with the present state of Cuban education when I asked him what he thought were our professor's expectations of us during biweekly 60 minute lectures. He called his education "rather...dogmatic," and asked me if I knew how old my textbook was in a humorous tone - which nonetheless revealed his frustration. Immediately following, Joann opened his computer and offered to pass me *Canción de Barrio* and other documentaries made by his father, whom he encouraged to show the documentary at the university. I later realized that what was so appealing, and perhaps even liberating to Joan, was that his dad's work enabled him and his fellow classmates to learn how the Cuban people were living the revolution in their current reality. Silvio was singing his political and romantic songs in poor neighborhoods not in order to be another channel of revolutionary thought, but to give families that cannot pay to enter a theater the opportunity to enjoy his music. The documentary enabled all university members to observe the work of someone who loves his country but remains in touch with its deepest struggles. Joan's description of his education suggests that the

inviting opportunity that was the documentary at the University is not commonplace in Cuban schools today.

The separation between culture and the social sciences in Cuba continues to limit the extent to which students can arrive at critical understandings of the new complexities shaping their lives and the rest of Cuban society. In his "Notes of Cuban Studies", Rafael Hernandez argues that, "the role of knowledge would help nourish a debate that is already underway in many formal and informal spaces...where issues such as equality, changing moral and ideological values, the impact of tourism, citizenship, and plurality are already part of the everyday discourse."[81] The visual arts, film, and theater have also been spaces where social issues were explored, ahead of the social sciences. But schools can work towards bridging this gap, and thus enable young people to engage in questioning and producing knowledge that is immediately pertinent. As Hernandez suggests, the study of art and literature is an important form of knowledge to consider "in the development of research hypothesis, definition and 'field' strategies, "reliable collection of 'data,' and of course, the analysis, interpretation, and organic understanding of the particular 'social phenomenon' that is being dissected."[82] To Hernández, examining social issues merely through official frameworks and narratives, without racial, generational, and spatial elements, often times in outdated materials, prevents youth from reflecting on social phenomena having repercussions in the social fabric.[83]

Current Pedagogical Shifts Towards Fostering Participatory Spaces in Cuban Schools

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[81] Rafael Hernandez. "*Mirror of Patience: Notes on Cuban Studies, Social Sciences, and Contemporary Thought.* In *Changes in Cuban Society since the Nineties.* (Woodrow Wilson Center for Scholars: Washington, DC, 2005),148
[82] Ibid, 148-9
[83] Ibid

The "Third Revolution" in primary and secondary education that began in the early 2000s, however, is supported by ideas involving the reconciliation of the Cuban education system with the present realities and voices of young people. Along with the government's efforts to reincorporate as many youth as possible into the education systems, some of the new pedagogical theory and practice formulated by Cuban academics as part of the Third Revolution encourage teacher sensibility to the diverse living experiences and realities of their students. According to Lutjens' study of the Third Revolution, new teacher initiatives that are associated with a reduction in the student-teacher ratio "hope that teachers will know each and every student, their needs, and the material and social conditions of their home lives."[84] A pedagogical shift is captured in *Pedagogy of Tenderness,* a book written by Balbina Pita Cespedes and Lidia Turner Martí, the former Director of Research in the Ministry of Education and former President of the Association of Cuban Educators. Turner and Pita also coauthored a second volume for newly trained teachers who are entering the classrooms, titled, *Teachers! Secrets of Education.*[85]

In *Pedagogy of Tenderness,* Pita and Turner suggests that children should be the protagonists of education. The book is dedicated to " the educators and parents who love children and youth, who have trust in their potentialities, " as they state that their professional pedagogical work and that of the parents at home ought to respond to respond to "the challenges brought about for human development in the new millennium." That is, they are encouraging parents and teachers to open themselves to their students' ideas in their search for solutions to the "value crisis" among youth. Inspired by their years of experience working in Cuban classrooms and the need for adjustments to today's conflicting realities in the education system, they encourage parents to "...make possible the manifestation of himself [the young person] and make

[84] Sheryl Lutjens. 2007. "Rereading Cuban Educational Policy" in Recapturing the Personal: Essays on Education and Embodied Knowledge in Comparative Perspective (163-194), 185
[85] Ibid

him that what he learns is of use to him, that what he desires because he can express that which makes him curious and participate actively in the search for his answers."[86] This also suggests a shift in the focus on students as a collective expected to embrace a set of established values, to a focus on each individual student and how he or she assimilates such values in the context of diverse life circumstances. Meanwhile, the revolutionary aim of fostering the 'humanization' of all members of Cuban society is not discarded.

Instead of interpreting Che Guevara's idea of the creation of a "new man" in Cuba merely in terms of the task of shaping individuals to adopt revolutionary values, they anchor their proposition of listening to each student on the idea that the "new man" is one who achieves the development of his human potential. Ultimately, they want older generations of Cubans to appreciate the great potential that youth already possess. Abiding by the historic legacy of the Cuban revolution, Pita and Turner ascribe their book's inspiration to Jose Martí's confession to his son: "I have faith in the improvement of humanity, in the fineness of life, in finding virtue in utility, and in you." And they begin their *Pedagogy of Tenderness* also by citing Martí's statement that "Each human being carries in himself an ideal man, in the same manner each piece of marble, in its raw form, a statue as beautiful as the one the Greek Praxiteles hizo del Dios apolo."[87] In a 2002 interview, Lidia Turner called her book a "pedagogy of optimism," which clearly does not seek to break with the past. As Lutjens states, " it is rather a revolutionary shift that turns full attention to the student."[88]

The process of implementing the *Pedagogy of Tenderness* in Cuban classrooms may be facilitated by some of the dynamics, rituals, and relationships that are have already been

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[86] Pita C, Balbina Turner M, Lidia. "Pedagogy of Tenderness". Chapter 1. Retrieved from http://portal2.edomex.gob.mx/dregional_amecameca/programas/valores/materiales/groups/public/documents/edomex_archivo/dregional_amec_pdf_p_lpt14.pdf .Translation by Juliana

[87] *Ibid*

[88] *Rereading Cuban Educational Policy*, 185

observed in ethnographic studies of the Cuban education system. Together, these are the practices that Philip J. Jackson grouped and termed the "hidden curriculum" in schools.[89] While Jackson describes daily routines he discerns in American public school environments that are rarely noticed, and yet mostly unfavorable to the learning and development of children, I highlight positive practices that are conducive to an environment where teachers and students are receptive to each other's views and feelings on the same subject.

World Bank Education Specialist Lavina Gasperini, for example, associates the "positive school climate" in Cuban classrooms with Cuba's outstanding results in educational indicators internationally.[90] Among teachers, she says, a strong emphasis is given to teamwork and exchanges of experiences. And competition among Cuban groups in the same class, different classes, and schools takes place in the form of "emulation", as a method for self-improvement that occurs through learning from one another and is not meant to lead to greater selectivity and stratification. Since school management is guided by the principle that, "education is everybody's responsibility," and participation is an important means of addressing problems in the school, a variety of participatory mechanisms exist, including student assemblies, parents' councils and schools, and school councils. [91] These same participatory spaces, which most likely enable school agents to develop good listening and communication skills, can transform to welcome divergent views and propose practices for the adjustment to the current realities and interests of different students.

Similarly, Blum analyzes the spaces and habits that already present opportunities to critique and challenge the values, tenets, and rules established by the revolutionary government.

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[89] Philip W Jackson. "*The Daily Grind*' in *Life in Classrooms*. (University of Chicago.Teachers College Press: New York, 1990)
[90] *Rereading Cuban Educational Policy*, 186
[91] Lavina Gasperini. " *The Cuban Education System: Lessons and Dilemmas*." Education Reform and Management Publication Series. (The World Bank, 2002.)11

"In promoting a collective attitude," he says, "teachers encourage an affective dimension...an emotional infrastructure is presumed, which includes particular feelings such as solidarity, affection for the leaders and others, optimism, and respect for authority." But he also states that, "however, unwittingly, the revolution has also provided tools for questioning...with assemblies and the analysis encouraged in the classrooms."[92] Perhaps without yet enough precedence for youth to diverge more significantly from the established social norms - even while youth and teachers reinterpret revolutionary ideas to fulfill their present needs or avoid neglecting pressing social concerns, the result remains a "wrestling of compromises to foster a stronger bond with youth...A struggle for the hearts and minds of young Cubans... ."[93]

[92] *Cuban Youth and Revolutionary Values*, 136
[93] *Ibid*

Chapter 5

Conclusion

The goal of forming youth to fulfill a humanist vision for new Cuban society made education a fundamental tool of the state orchestrating the Cuban Revolution. The decades-long movement of Ongoing Improvement and the period of Rectification followed by the Battle of Ideas were all official attempts to instill common values and foster social unity as the country tackled the consequences of the Special period. It was in fact during this period that the Cuban state discerned the need to institutionalize a curriculum of civic education promoting the tenets of a Cuban socialism. The latter was starting to blur as the revolution could no longer fulfill its promises to the extent predicted during its emotional beginning.

While the tenacious leaders are aware that a nation-wide socialist revolution cannot exist without the support of the people, exhaustive steps remain necessary to ensure that public input readily effective in shaping the political structures and culture of the country. Younger generations of Cubans; those who may carry the revolution forward, can no longer be given the same guidelines and solely moral stimulus as the youth who participated in the Literacy Campaign as a way to partake in the making of a new beginning. Today's youth who are "the future of the revolution" hold identities that preserve some of the same values, but that have also been shaped by varying lived experiences, giving rise to different aspirations and goals.

Raul Castro is aware of how people are navigating state institutions and the current economy, and expresses willingness to renovate a harmonious relationship that can be promising

for the continuation of the socialist project. Civic participation and calling changes will not lead to rapid nor radical reconditioning. It is clear that, no matter what kinds of imports enter the country as it opens its door to other countries, Cuba will not come to adopt a political model at the suggestion or pressure from outside actors. The government's insistence on gradual development that does not digress entirely from the historical roots of the revolution indicates that the state will lead the adaption of incoming ties and recommendations.

The ways in which arriving influences and long-rooted notions of progress will interact and be combined to shape the economy, political model, and the country's culture can be foreseen as a socialist system unlike any previous one in our history. Ongoing conversation and debate regarding the future of Cuban society is undoubtedly taking place across Cuba. Discussions must include concerns and questions about the social roles and purposes being taught to future generations in schools. The *Pedagogy of Tenderness* is only one conception of how to work with difference among children as a way to bring new and old ways of thinking into the classroom. Fortunately, classroom dynamics fostered through the actualization of the revolutionary vision in the education system, such as collaboration among students and all other school actors, will help facilitate the implementation of pedagogies explicitly promoting the formation of youth who think critically of the existing system and discuss personal experiences and opinions. Cuban youth can hardly partake in the reconstruction of a socialist state that is inclusive of them if not given the agency to envision it through their years of schooling.

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