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CALL FOR PAPERS

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Special Issue

Renewing the Cause of Deschooling

The Thresholds Story

Thresholds in Education (originally *Thresholds in Secondary Education*) was first published in 1975 by faculty members at Northern Illinois University in DeKalb. Their intention was to "explore fresh ideas and viewpoints that may become the pathways to the future," and for 35 years this venerable journal published four thematic issues a year. In those 35 years, articles by well-known educators and non-educators, including Theodore Brameld, Benjamin Spock (yes, Dr. Spock), Linda O'Neil, Bill Ayers, William Schubert, Jan Woodhouse, Deron Boyles, Ming Fang He (to name just a few) appeared in the pages of *Thresholds* doing exactly that: exploring fresh ideas and viewpoints. However, in the face of rising publication costs and the growing contemporary online publication milieu, the last print version of *Thresholds* was published in 2010.

Fast forward to 2014. In discussions between the *Thresholds Foundation* executive board and representatives of the *Academy for Educational Studies*, a plan was hatched: re-launch *Thresholds in Education* as an open access online journal and house it at the *Academy for Educational Studies* website. In addition to resurrecting *Thresholds*, it was decided that the new *Thresholds* would take on the look, feel, and substance of a slightly more traditional scholarly journal—the original *Thresholds* having had a more "magazine-like," short-article look and feel. With this in mind, the *Thresholds in Education* editorial board, in partnership with the *Academy for Educational Studies*, has recently published issues on the educational impact of COVID-19, critical race theory, and rural educational matters. Future issues include one on contemplative approaches to teaching and learning, and this issue.

Overview: *Renewing the Cause of Deschooling*

The problem is not that public schools do not work well," wrote Jonathan Kozol in 1975, "but that they do." Whenever children ask us why they must go to school, we are seldom honest with them, telling them– in Kozol's words – "It's for your own good." But it's not for their own good; "they go to school for something that is called 'their nation's good.'" And in the name of "their nation's good," Kozol continues,

> They go to school to learn how *not* to interrupt the evil patterns that they see before them, how *not* to question and how *not* to doubt: to learn to vote with reasonable regularity, to kill on orders and how to sleep eight hours without grief. They go to school to learn to be proficient at mechanical

> procedures, docile in the presence of all processes they do not understand, acquiescent in the presence of seeming barbarism. It is not so much that they learn how to be 'cruel' people. Rather it is, they learn that it is not needful to be urgent in compassion or importunate in justice. Not positive desolation, but a genial capability for well-behaved abstention in the presence of despair: this is the innocence we teach our children.

50 years later, we continue telling our children (and ourselves, typically) that compulsory schooling, mandated and regulated by state power, is and always has been for our own good. Is it, though? Or was Kozol right? Do schools really serve "something that is called 'their nation's good?'" If so, what is the "something" hiding behind what we call the "nation's good"? *Qui bono*? Who benefits from our learning "how *not* to interrupt the evil patterns" we see before us, how *not* to question, and how *not* to doubt all for the sake of preserving our innocence? Can we be more specific, and thereby more precise and more accurate, than calling that "something" served by the "nation's good"? Is it not the good of state power lurking behind the sentimental yet delusional idea of the nation's good? If it is, then what is the state, and why would it seek to create the institutional means by which to teach us "how *not* to interrupt the evil patterns" we see before us? Why, after all these years, do we still give our consent to the state's demand that we subject ourselves and our children to this treatment? Why do we continue consenting to compulsory schooling?

In 1971, four years before Kozol wrote the above-cited words from *The Night is Dark and I Am Far from Home*, Everett Reimer published *School Is Dead*, though his choice of title was clearly premature, and Ivan Illich wrote *Deschooling Society*. With the possible exception of John Taylor Gatto's work, challenges to the state's power to legislate and enforce compulsory school laws and the legitimacy of schooling seem to have gotten stuck in the 1970s. This special issue of *Thresholds in Education* hopes to breathe new life into the cause of deschooling. Toward that end, we invite papers revisiting and reintroducing contemporary readers to the ideas of Illich, Reimer, Gatto, and others who have already contributed ideas to that cause. We also invite papers building on those original ideas, as well as papers presenting new arguments altogether in favor of deschooling.

Author Guidelines:

Please submit your manuscript, along with a short bio and contact information for each author by June 30th, 2027 (see submission email address below as well as the issue's tentative timeline).

Final manuscripts will be approximately 10,000 words, double-spaced, 12-point font, APA style 7th edition.

Submissions will undergo a blind peer review by at least two reviewers (i.e., one editorial team member, one volunteer reviewer). Submissions to the special issue will be evaluated based on their relevance to the theme and objectives outlined in the call for papers. Manuscripts should demonstrate a clear and substantive connection to the special issue's focus and contribute meaningfully to ongoing scholarly debates or identified gaps in the literature. Preference will be given to papers that offer original contributions through novel theoretical insights, innovative methodologies, new empirical evidence, or fresh interpretations of existing research.

Submissions should engage critically with relevant and up-to-date literature, situating the study within existing scholarship while advancing new perspectives. Clarity of writing and organization are essential: manuscripts should be well structured, clearly argued, and written in an academically appropriate style. Consideration will also be given to how each contribution complements the overall coherence and intellectual diversity of the special issue. Finally, submissions must comply with the journal's formatting, length, citation, and ethical guidelines.

General Timeline

Call for papers: November 5, 2026
Drafts of Manuscripts Due: June 30, 2027
Feedback to authors: September 30, 2027
Final Drafts Due: November 31, 2027
Published: Spring/Summer 2028

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