1.      In high school I subscribed to the radical view of politics and education. The formation of my radical perspective can be accredited to the consistent presence of conflict, power, and injustice in my life. From an early age I have been exposed to two vastly different worlds: the world of the wealthy and the world of the poor. I attended a wealthy private school for a large portion of my childhood, experiencing first-hand the privilege of those that managed to find success in capitalist society. At the same time, I lived in a neighborhood not far from subsidized housing neighborhoods and had many friends whose parents made minimum wage and struggled to make ends meet. The juxtaposition of such disparate realities, the comfort of my situation and the instability of theirs, made me increasingly skeptical of the validity of our social and economic system.    
 My skepticism was reinforced by my experiences in high school. At the time I firmly believed that schools were an institution designed to empower children by providing knowledge and equipping them with skills to express themselves and achieve self-realization. However, what I saw in high school were the unjust hierarchies and power dynamics of human society mirrored in the smaller mock society of school. Students who were deft in navigating relationships and amassing power bullied and oppressed those on the bottom. What was egregious was the complicity of the teachers in ossifying the hierarchy and perpetuating inequality. Furthermore, teachers showed no sign of respect towards students and assumed complete and indisputable authority over them. Whenever challenged, teachers would justify their position of dominance by invoking their “productive participation” in society and claiming that as a source of inherent superiority. Furthermore, they would insist that the only way to “success,” which they defined to be elevation within the given hierarchy of society through the accumulation of wealth, was through good performance in school. This type of rhetoric was what pushed me to radicalism. I was convinced that as long as schools serve the function of signaling merit to corporations, as emphasized by the teachers at my high school, they could not function as neutral institutions for the education and empowerment of the younger generation.

My mother, on the other hand, has a very conservative view of school. To her the sole focus of school is to socialize its students by instilling obedience and conformity to order. The difference in our views became apparent when I refused to go to school one day as an act of protest against the coercion of religious practices (the school was hosting a mass and forcing students to learn a song to perform at the event) and my mother proceeded to kick me out of the house.

2.     My parents, despite their conservative political leanings, have been thoroughly pragmatist in my education. Growing up, I was encouraged to read and analyze literature that my parents deemed to be classics. On weekends they would take me and my siblings out on field trips or conduct creative projects in the house. Whenever I asked my parents a question, instead of giving me the answer they would make me research the topic myself and draw my own conclusions. It was natural that my parents would enroll me in a private school that employed a similar educational policy to theirs. Learning at my school was done through group work and projects, all of which were concluded in a presentation and a personal analysis of the content covered. The school focused less on teaching information and more on teaching methodology. Students were taught how to research, analyze, draw conclusions, and present them in written and verbal mediums all by themselves.

3.     The effects of the pragmatist education I received were substantial and played a key role in my later success. The high school that I transferred to was authoritarian in its pedagogical style and the curriculum it followed was of a realist nature. Teachers simply spoon-fed information to their students and tested their knowledge on the subjects. Such an approach consequentially resulted in passive students who were unequipped to express themselves or think originally. Above all, the students grew reliant on teachers to clarify what they needed to learn and became incapable of studying on their own.   
Spending my formative years engaged in pragmatist methods of learning, I was blessed with the ability to self-study. This skill was fundamental in my success in university admissions as my school did not offer classes on many of the subjects that I had to study for entrance exams. Furthermore, my familiarity with the process of forming my own interpretations and expressing them gave me an advantage in essay questions. However, the most important effect my pragmatist education had on me was that it sparked curiosity in me and made the experience of learning enjoyable in both an academic and non-academic context. It enriched my life and gave me the comparative advantage of deriving joy and pleasure from an act that many find mundane but is pivotal to success.