Picturing direct and indirect behaviour modification in *Walden Two*: the flawed utopia

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Abstract

Burrhus Frederic Skinner (1904-1990), who is the founder of behaviorism, a learning theory that relies mostly on observable behaviors of organisms instead of focusing on mental activities, defends that psychology should be a science of behavior rather than a science of mind. Indeed, *Walden Two* provides an ideal context for the narrator, Frazier, to control, shape and manipulate behaviors of the people in *Walden Two* community, revealing Skinner’s view that mental states are just theoretical constructs. Being Skinner’s only work of fiction embodying his ideas and theory, *Walden Two* portrays a utopia in which each decent individual in a perfect community perfectly conforms to the regulations; thus they end up living in perfect harmony. It is also a particularly important work to focus on since it derives from Skinner’s claims about education. Skinner claims to have achieved a utopia through a science of behavior and he maintains that human behavior can be controlled via manipulating contingencies of reward and punishment. The purpose of this study is to conduct an in-depth analysis of *Walden Two* in order to unveil the underlying direct and indirect laws which govern the learning of people at *Walden Two*. In particular, the learning principles accounting for the strengthening or weakening of existing behaviors at *Walden Two* were studied and the notion of education was purified with regard to Skinner’s views. The analysis reveals that the so-called utopia seems to fail to achieve the intended ends at times.

Keywords: *Walden Two*; behaviorism; behavior modification; education; utopia.
1. Introduction

Born in 1904, Burrhus Frederic Skinner is one of the prominent psychologists. Majoring in English Literature, Skinner seriously refused to go to the daily mandatory church practices and the physical education classes. Upon his graduation, he continued his career by writing and upon writing his first book Skinner focused on psychology and took a deep interest in philosophy (Dews, 1970). His deep interest in psychology follows Watson’s lead in emphasizing behavior as the core tenet of psychology; however, his work is strictly distinguished from Watson’s and others’ works since early proponents of Behaviorism stress the significance of the concept of association. Walden Two is Skinner’s first extension of his science, system, and philosophy to issues of social justice and human well-being (Altus & Morris, 2004). Skinner defends that psychology should be a science of behavior, not mind. It should focus on the study of observable conditions, not unobservable inner states. It must be objective and avoid falling into subjectivity. As a radical behaviorist, he views humans as organisms whose behaviors are shaped by external environmental stimuli. As such, they can be manipulated by the control of environmental stimuli. Although he considers the human being a thinking organism, he denies the necessity to look for their behaviors’ explanatory purposes within entities such as the psyche. Mental states are considered to be theoretical constructs but not empirical entities for Skinner (Nye, 1981).

It is certain that utopian thought has been the precursor of other experimental communities or ways of life. Skinner’s novel, Walden Two, is a remarkable utopia. It is Skinner’s first extension of his science, system, and philosophy to issues of social justice and human well-being (Altus & Morris, 2004). It is an original utopia with relevance to a different place, yet simultaneously, differing from other utopias. Skinner (1976) also makes it clear that it is not natural forces which shape humankind but economic forces. It can be claimed that the model of this society is a sort of machine in Walden Two, which focuses on the happiness of the whole society rather than the happiness of the individual. Besides, Jameson (1994) contends that the governmental and economic factors shape society. According to Gable and Harvey (1999) it is a sort of post capitalist society as each reeducated individual is allowed to do whatever pleases him and still pleases the whole community at the same time. Skinner, unlike his contemporaries, focuses on functional relationships between environmental variables and behavior (Driscoll, 1994).

Walden Two stands as a novel which is unquestionably the central philosophical and conceptual unifier among committed behavior analysts and it has had an impact on modern international communities, particularly in North America (Altthus, et. al., 1999). According to Rakos (2006), Walden Two suggests a system where societal control is achieved through comprehensive scientific application of behavioral principles. Skinner (1976) accordingly states that an experimental analysis of behavior could be applied to practical problems since the conditions were improving for Western civilization at the time. Hitler was dead, the economic depression of the thirties had been forgotten and Communism was no longer a threat.

Rakos (2006, p. 153) also states that this was a time when American society was experimenting with a strict ‘social change’ due to powerful external forces, these most notably being the war on poverty and the civil rights, anti-war, environmental, hippie, and women’s movements. Therefore, this behavioral engineering, as Skinner names it, is in accordance with its contemporary external forces. Behavioral movement or behavioral engineering, as Skinner puts it, inspires people for change, it promises for grand goals and a new system which could improve social justice by replacing non-scientific approaches with those generated by the science of behavior. According to McGray (1984), Skinner claims that the well-being of one’s family, and / or the successful achievement of one’s life might either project as a positive reinforcement or not. In the past, this fact attracted people who were aware of the design of some incentive systems, which particularly resembled the fictive Walden Two community (Skinner, 1976).

2. Walden Two and Behaviorism

Walden Two is Skinner’s only work of fiction which embodies his ideas and theory thoroughly. The book was written in 1945; however it was not published until 1948. As its name suggests Walden Two refers to Thoreau’s Walden, which depicts his escape from the whole society and modern life with a rejection of political and economic solutions. In contrast to Thoreau, Skinner, in his idealistic community, focuses on the whole community.
He looks for explicitly scientific and technological developments on a larger scale instead of focusing on the problems of the individuals in *Walden Two*. The novel describes a utopia which bears some similarities to Thomas More’s *Utopia* in that both communities deal with the notion of a perfect society where everybody conforms to the regulations and lives a decent life. However, in both novels there are some flaws, which in fact make these works resemble anti-utopias. Within the body of this study, the main reason of the analysis of *Walden Two* derives from Skinner’s claims about education and behavior modification, and behavioral engineering within *Walden Two* community. It portrays the direct style of Frazier, the protagonist, in shaping the behaviors of people within *Walden Two* community.

As Skinner (1976) states in the preface of *Walden Two Revisited*, he observes the big harm the city schools do to education and takes a keen interest in education as it is concerned with the transmission; thus, the survival of a culture in any given community. Accordingly, he means to transfer his knowledge of programmed instruction and good contingency management by saving resources for the teachers and students alike. Indeed, *Walden Two* is a small-scale community of 1000 people and everything that is done at *Walden Two* is based on principles of behaviorism, the idea that human behavior can be controlled by manipulating contingencies of reward and punishment. Skinner aims at solving the problems a group of people face within their daily lives with the help of behavioral engineering. In behaviorist theory, two main ideas – the significance of measurable and observable behavior and the effects of the environment- comprise the milestone principles since the main argument of the theory suggests that measurable behavior forms the appropriate part to study. Behaviorism focuses on a change in external behavior which is achieved through a large amount of repetition of desired actions. Accordingly, good habits are rewarded and bad habits are discouraged. In a learning context, this view of learning can be discerned in the rewarding of correct outcomes. Mistakes, however, are immediately corrected. Negative behaviors such as negative engagement or negative contributions can be minimized by using negative reinforcement. Indeed, in *Walden Two*, Frazier is the dominant person who takes complete control, evaluates the outcomes and decides what is right or wrong. Most of the people in the community, if not the whole, do not have any opportunity as to evaluate or reflect on what they do, instead they are simply told what is right or wrong or they are led to the right outcomes through experimental engineering.

3. Walden Two and Formal Education

According to Driscoll (1994), Skinner distinguishes between two different types of behavior, respondent and operant. Firstly, respondent behavior is a significant behavior-analytic process which does not refer to internal or mental processes and which is elicited as a reaction to a stimulus. The study conducted on dogs salivating to food by Ivan Pavlov is an example of Classical Conditioning. The responses in Classical Conditioning are involuntary and biological in nature. Operant conditioning, on the other hand, ‘enables more behavioral flexibility and adaptability in the face of changing environmental demands – the relatively proximate cause changing environments in which innate and stereotypic responses could potentially be maladaptive’ (Naour, 2009, p. 17).

In *Walden Two*, the instances of Classical Conditioning do not occur whereas the contexts of Operant Conditioning are abundant. This might be because of Skinner’s way of observing behavior in order to discover the laws which govern learning. For Skinner, most behavior could be explained by organisms which emit responses that operate on the environment (Driscoll, 1994, p. 34). Skinner formulated learning principles to account for the strengthening or weakening of existing behaviors. Furthermore, he studied these principles in order to study the learning of new behaviors (Driscoll, 1994, p. 36).

In Skinner’s *Walden Two* there are abundant examples of direct behavior modification. For example, in Chapter 15, a detailed account of higher education is presented and this clearly reflects the direct style of Frazier. Upon their arrival in *Walden Two*, Castle and Burris have the chance to discuss higher education. In *Walden Two*, children, who were previously kept in cubicles undressed, are introduced with regular clothing and all the stages they go through are explained. Frazier contends that the motivation behind the education system at *Walden Two* is the main factor which differs from academia outside. For him, the education system outside embodies all the competitive emotions that *Walden Two* is trying to diminish. Frazier illustrates the motivation behind higher education and argues that the education system in *Walden Two* avoids all the administrative system to adjust to a
favorable structure. Instead all grades are unnecessary, each child develops at a different rate and they are not forced to participate in activities they do not like. Moreover, subjects are not taught in *Walden Two*; however the techniques of learning and thinking are emphasized. Children are guided, they are presented opportunities, yet they are not imposed strict rules about learning. Therefore, the education system of *Walden Two* resembles that of lifelong learning in that here is an ongoing, self-motivated and voluntary pursuit of knowledge for personal reasons. Thus, the education in *Walden Two* is not confined to childhood, yet it takes place throughout life and in a range of varying contexts. Frazier explains the kind of education in *Walden Two* as follows:

> Education in *Walden Two* is part of the life of the community. We don’t need to resort to trumped-up life experiences. Our children begin to work at a very early age. It’s no hardship; it’s accepted as readily as sport or play. And a good share of our education goes on in workshops, laboratories, and fields. It’s part of the *Walden Two Code* to encourage children in all the arts and crafts. We’re glad to spend time in instructing them, for we know it’s important for the future of *Walden Two* and our own security (Skinner, 1948, p. 112).

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### 4. Principles of Behavior Modification at Walden Two
#### 4.1. Strengthening Responses: Positive Reinforcement

Driscoll (1994, p. 37) suggests that positive reinforcement could be explained by presenting a reinforcer (satisfying stimulus) contingent upon a response that results in the strengthening of that response. Skinner’s reinforcement theory is frequently emphasized throughout the novel via several examples. First, positive reinforcement is palpable when Frazier broaches the life of an artist. Because of the inadequacy of the right conditions, he claims, artists must be free of responsibility of making a living to get a real feel of art. Other examples of Behaviorism can be discerned in Chapter 11 when two significant issues the use of leisure time and the role of environment and biology are revealed. It is clear that behavior that results in satisfying consequences will be repeated. If an artist can stimulate large numbers of audiences and if there is real appreciation, then art can improve.

In addition, in terms of environment and biology, Burris and Frazier discuss the relative contributions of environment and biology to artistic genius. Burris’ view is that genius derives from hereditary factors and that it is genetic. However, Frazier, as a radical behaviorist, harshly criticizes this. He is of the opinion that environment can be manipulated in the required way and that accounts for the reason why a genius is not affected by hereditary factors. Hence, Frazier strictly holds the view that the responses or behaviors of a person are learned, which parallels with one of the basic principles of behaviorism. For him, genes provide the most basic blueprints for the human organism; however, they have no connection to behavior.
Moreover, it is obvious that there are remarkable examples of positive reinforcement within *Walden Two* community. For instance, not saying thank you for a deliberate expression is fostered. Instead, the members of the community say ‘excuse me’ to call the attention of somebody, yet ‘it isn’t regarded as a petition for pardon’ (Skinner, 1965, p. 158). Therefore, if there is evidence that a new social practice (e.g., not saying “thank you”) will make people happier and healthier, it is immediately implemented and its consequences are carefully monitored. Thus, the desired knowledge becomes a target for strengthening (Driscoll, 1994, p. 36). Furthermore, in order to emphasize the significance of situational variables within Behaviorism, Frazier broaches the activities going on at *Walden Two* such as Theater, Studio Three, Lawn, Radio Lounge, West Entrance, English room and Yellow Game Room. In these places, announcement of certain events like concerts, matches and parties are put in appropriate places. With these events, Frazier depicts a new golden age in this community. With the new community Frazier built, it is meant that a new community could be bettered by aesthetic education and that when the right conditions are provided, which means the *Walden Two* civilization can produce art as abundantly as the outside world (Skinner, 1965, p. 80). However, according to Gable and Harvey (1999) *Walden Two* tends to limit the imagination of its residents, therefore putting strict limits on their progress.

In Chapter 20, in a discussion with Castle about what the good life includes Frazier tells Castle that they truly get the Good Life at *Walden Two* by reducing their hours of work and providing members of the community with relaxation and rest; thus he claims they get true leisure through implementing the *Walden Code* (Skinner, 1965, p. 148). Thus, through this code he claims that they eliminate serious conflicts as much as possible so as to build a happy and a pleasant community. If a rewarding stimulus which is valued by the members of the community, happiness is strengthened due to its association with a stimulus (Driscoll, 1994).

### 4.2. Weakening Responses: Negative Reinforcement

The first taste of behaviorist psychology which serves the community of *Walden Two* is apparent in the technique of keeping the sheep in the pasture within a restricted area. Although these new lambs have never been exposed to electric shock by the fence and most of them were born after the community took the wire away, they still conform to the tradition and never approach the string. Visiting the community upon the invitation of Frazier, Burris and his team realize that Frazier uses the sheep as a lawn mower by claiming that a lawn mower is ‘the stupidest machine ever invented- for one of the stupidest of purposes’ (Skinner, 1965, p. 15). Instead, the sheep are manipulated with a portable electric fence to move them along the lawn like a huge lawn mower. The sheep are conditioned to avoid the string surrounding them. In other words, the behavior of the sheep is followed by a stimulus- introducing an electrical shock and this is thought to result in a decrease in the undesirable behavior of the flock. Although the string surrounding the sheep is not electrified, they tend to avoid it. The sheep introduce the basic paradigm of behavioral control through conditioning and it illustrates a particular way of behavior control:

…We solved our problem with a portable electric fence which could be used to move our flock of sheep about the lawn like a gigantic mowing machine, but leaving most of it free any time. At night the sheep are taken across the brook to the main fold. But we soon found that the sheep kept to the enclosure and quite clear of the fence, which didn’t need to be electrified. So we substituted a piece of string, which is easier to move around (Skinner, 1965, p. 16).

In Skinner’s Operant Conditioning, generalization means that behavior translates to other situations even if they are not rewarded or punished. The behaviors of the flock of sheep are determined by the reinforcers that are provided by the social environment. Indeed, in order to attract the attention of Burris, Frazier emphasizes the fact that these sheep have never been electrified, yet they obey the rules and do not create problems. His discussions with Burris and Castle almost reveal the truths behind Frazier’s application and he almost manifests himself to be a dictator who is actually preventing the *Walden Two* community from reaching a perfect condition as a community. Particularly, in Chapter 34, the sheep, which were mentioned at the beginning of the novel, break free from the portable fold. Although the Bishop tries to drive them back, the rest of the flock manages to find a new way of escape. Thus, the sheep which began as a behavioral symbol prove that behavioral control could have some flaws when it is wrongly implemented (Skinner, 1965, p. 283). Although Frazier claims that he is using positive
reinforcement to keep the sheep under control, it is palpable that he is utilizing negative reinforcement and he verifies it as follows:

> Punishment. Negative reinforcement. The threat of pain. It’s a primitive principle of control. So long as we keep the fence electrified, we have no trouble - provided the needs of the sheep are satisfied. But if we relent, trouble is bound to arise sooner or later (Skinner, 1965, p. 283).

Thus, it is apparent that punishment may have the effect of halting any kind of behavior for some time; however, Driscoll (1994, p. 41) states that punishment tends to have some unfavorable side-effects. The effects could be short-lived as in the example of the sheep breaking free. Moreover, Driscoll (1994) suggests that the behavior being punished may disappear at the time only when punishment is administered.

The negative feelings which are attempted to be eliminated from the society are also presented in the novel. For instance, Frazier broaches a code of conduct - the system which is subject to experimental modification (Skinner, 1965, p. 95). This code ensures the things in the community run smoothly and the system is based on setting up certain behavioral processes which lead the individuals to design their own decent conduct at the right time. The residents of Walden Two spend their leisure time following educational pursuits. To set up certain behavioral processes the Managers design ‘good conducts’ (Skinner, 1965, p. 96) and study the great works on morals and ethics such as Plato, Aristotle, Confucius, the New Testatement, the Puritan divines, Machiavelli, Chesterfield, Freud to develop a method of shaping human behavior (Skinner, 1965, p. 96). Frazier, the founder of Walden Two, tries to create a perfect community, in which there is no tolerance for failure and / or boredom. The most striking example of avoiding negative feelings is expressed via the technique of ‘practicing the opposite emotion’ (Skinner, 1965, p. 96). Frazier explains that they apply the technique of ‘loving one’s enemies’ (Skinner, 1965, p. 96) so as to ease the oppression. They take away the bad feelings of people, those people feel less miserable even if they do not have their freedom or possessions; thus, a milder behavior is likely to be reinforced. However, in the following chapters, a direct reference is made to the Christian Church to reveal that it does not help people to do good to one’s enemies and positive reinforcement is misused in the hands of oppressive institutions. Therefore, Frazier suggests looking outside the field of organized religion in that these institutions are doing what they want to do instead of what they should do. He makes a direct connection between positive reinforcement within a careful design and the emotion of feeling free, and acknowledges that positive reinforcement has tremendous power in that it offers advantage of controlling the inclination of how to behave; in other words, it controls the motives, the desires and the wishes (Skinner, 1965, p. 247). Thus, the practice which Frazier believes to be the application of positive reinforcement might in fact lead to oppression and be embodied within the framework negative reinforcement.

4.3. Weakening Responses: Reinforcement Removal

In addition to presenting an aversive stimulus in order to reduce the frequency of behavior, taking away reinforcement when the behavior occurs is also an effective way and extinction is a particular case of reinforcement removal, which involves the absence of reinforcement (Driscoll, 1994, p. 42). Professor Burris’s fading desire to smoke toward the end of the book is an example of extinction within the framework of Radical Behaviorism. Burris states that he ‘had felt conspicuous when smoking and rather guilty, although not the slightest objection was made or implied’ (Skinner, 1965, p. 167). In extinction, this happens when a conditioned stimulus is no longer paired with an unconditioned stimulus. It is clear that Burris previously paired the taste of smoking with being conspicuous in the society. However, when the unconditioned stimulus (the taste of smoke) is no longer paired with the conditioned stimulus, the conditioned response disappears. Indeed, Burris finds that his interest in smoking is weakened; he finds himself taking deeper drags from the flower beds and realizes that smoking in the dark is unsatisfactory (Skinner, 1965, p. 167).

Another significant instance of reinforcement removal is blatant when Frazier broaches how they raise the babies under controlled conditions, which implies cubicles with controlled temperatures and soundproofed compartments. Frazier contends that the babies raised within Walden Two community are particularly resistant since they ‘introduce annoyances slowly’ (Skinner, 1965, p. 89). In the beginning, the infants know nothing about frustration anxiety or fear, they are strictly protected from annoyances; thus unfavorable reinforcers are removed.
The caretakers, Frazier defends, introduce some annoyances slowly according to the ability of the infants; thus they build a tolerance for frustration by introducing obstacles gradually as the infants grow strong enough to handle them (Skinner, 1965, p. 88). In *Walden Two*, Frazier also reveals a direct style in controlling situational variables. For example, he mentions *Walden Network*, which is a system of loudspeakers with a rich array of records and concerts. However, this network is again monitored not to include any advertising (Skinner, 1965, p. 82).

Furthermore, all the members of *Walden Two* want to lead decent lives with some assurance and all they ask for are the basic necessities of life. Accordingly, there is no rivalry among the members (Skinner, 1965, p. 156). For instance, competitive games are also not allowed except tennis and chess. There are never tournaments, too. Members at *Walden Two* do not talk about hypothetical cases. As Frazier contends they emphasize facts over ideas and experiments over theories. Gratitude is also a generalized attitude toward the whole community. Moreover, people in *Walden Two* are also supposed to refrain from gossiping about the personal relations of members. These practices could account for the use of reinforcement removal which lies within Skinner’s theory. By removing something bad, the community decreases the frequency of unpleasant behavior.

Moreover, John Watson, one of the prominent figures of behaviorist theory, suggests that personality is the end product of the habit systems and that conditioning principles account for almost all human behavior (Naour, 2009). Likewise, Frazier is trying to adjust the conditions for the well-being of individuals of the community. However, when the fate of the members of the community who fail to follow the rules of *Walden Two* is considered Frazier contends that people who choose to live at *Walden Two* are likely to be well-suited to it; however if they are not they are free to leave the community, which actually is a flaw. Individuals who may not be well adapted to the life at *Walden Two* might feel like they are dumped into the outside world. Although Frazier responds by using some harsh behaviorist responses, it is not directly addressed in the novel.

4.4. Weakening Responses: Punishment

In Chapter 13, Frazier claims that emotions which breed unhappiness such as sorrow, hate and jealousy can be annihilated from society through the use of behavioral conditioning. He adds that the techniques of behavioral conditioning are apparent and they are used in education and in the psychological management of the community in order to eliminate frustrating conditions. It is obvious from when Frazier says ‘…when a particular emotion is no longer a useful part of a behavioral repertoire, we proceed to eliminate it’ (Skinner, 1965, p. 93). It is clearly implied by this quotation that the process begins with behavior that is emitted spontaneously, then it is reinforced, ignored or punished so that unpleasant consequences will not be repeated. Thus, the process has relevance to animal models of the behaviorist theory.

In Chapter 22, Castle harshly criticizes Frazier’s community by drawing a parallel between *Walden Two* and the Nazi Germany by identifying Frazier’s personal magnetism with the Führer principle as he feels there is something going behind the scenes at *Walden Two* (Skinner, 1965, p. 172). Furthermore, Frazier holds the view that through necessary techniques, both material and psychological; they can create a satisfying life for everyone (Skinner, 1965, p. 180). He also criticizes the governments for using bad principles of human engineering and adds that the tragedy of the political reformer lies in the lack of cumulative knowledge as history tells people nothing. In contrast to politics, he claims, behavioral engineering can deal with human behaviors in accordance with simple scientific principles, check, alter, and repeat to see a program proves to be useful or not (Skinner, 1965, p. 181). Besides, Frazier acknowledges the idea of making good people rather than believing that people are naturally good and prepared to get along with each other, which parallels with the direct style of behavior modification of the Behaviorist Theory.

Furthermore, in order to shape children and have them build a tolerance for annoying experiences, Frazier sets up an experiment by altering the environment to achieve self-control, which overtly demonstrates punishment within the behaviorist theory. In this experiment, each child is given a lollipop which has been dipped in powdered sugar so that a single licking of the tongue can be discerned with ease. The three or four-year-old children are told that they can eat the lollipop later in the day provided it has not been licked. This endurance is so difficult for children at the age of four and Frazier also accepts this inconvenience. However, as ethical training is completed at the age of six at *Walden Two*, it is thought to be ordinary. For Frazier, this training urges the children to scrutinize
their behaviors and to recognize the need for self-control. Then, lollipops are concealed and children are asked to notice any gain in happiness or any reduction in tension (Skinner, 1965, p. 98). Therefore, through distraction, the success of the training is ensured. Upon Frazier’s remarks about this training, Castle opposes frankly to the practices by saying ‘Instead of the cross, the lollipop about my neck was hung’ (Skinner, 1965, p. 99). The training utilized is an example of punishment within the body of the behaviorist theory. In order to decrease the frequency of undesirable behavior, lollipops are removed. Likewise, a similar training is exploited when children are forced to wait to eat if they have not been able to adopt the necessary techniques.

… It’s a rather severe biological frustration, for the children are tired and hungry and they must stand and look at food; but it’s passed off as lightly as a five-minute delay at curtain time…. We follow each child carefully. If he hasn’t picked up the necessary techniques, we start back a little. A still more advanced stage… When it’s time to sit down to the soup, the children count off- heads and tails. Then a coin is tossed and if it comes up heads, the ‘heads’ sit down and eat. The ‘tails’ remain standing for another five minutes (Skinner, 1965, p. 100).

Children try to manage their biological frustrations and this way negative behavior is thought to be eliminated. These associations contribute to learning of children; however they are context specific and still Walden Two’s children suffer to gain tolerance and freedom from envy. For example, Frazier does not hesitate to mention their practice of using a series of adversities to develop self-control among children (Skinner, 1965, p. 105). Moreover, a direct reference is made to the disciplinary techniques of Puritanism when the example of submitting a boy to various tortures before granting him a place among adults is mentioned (Skinner, 1965, p. 103). Frazier defends by claiming that the unhappiness they impose on children is considerably milder than the normal unhappiness they face in their normal lives.

5. Conclusion

In brief, the novel proves itself to be propaganda although it has some flaws. In the last chapter, in an epilogue, Professor Burris and Frazier discuss the writing and publishing of the preceding narrative as a way of spreading the word about Walden Two. Professor Burris finally makes a decision and he is convinced that Walden Two offers a better life compared to the crowds, pollution and empty hopes for a better society. The novel labels itself as propaganda; however, it does not refrain from pointing out some of the flaws which are mentioned. The tension between Burris and Frazier is never resolved and it is clear that Frazier has something to say in the way the novel ends. Indeed, the Walden Two community looks like a fascist society where the founder, Frazier, acts like a dictator. For him, there exists too much personal control and; thus, it severely contradicts with a social community. Frazier puts forward some techniques such as loving one’s enemies and practicing opposite emotions in order to shape human behavior by supplying techniques of self-control.

References