
Democracy & Education

Negating Amy Gutmann

Deliberative Democracy, Business Influence, and Segmentation Strategies in Education

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Abstract

The task of creating a public will is daunting in any political system, but a democracy dedicated to the principles of participation and public deliberation faces specific challenges, including overcoming organized opposition that may not accept democratic tenets. In the sphere of education (and social reproduction more generally), business-influenced movements to reform public education question many of the established goals and norms of democratic education and thus may be the vanguard of such opposition. In order to interpret and explore these movements, this article enlists Amy Gutmann's work as a heuristic device. In so doing, it looks at the task of instituting a unified public school system and organized opposition to this task within the context of a democratic polity and its deliberative processes.

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Now, surely nothing but universal education can counterwork this tendency to the domination of capital and the servility of labor.

—Horace Mann, Fifth Annual Report to the Board of Education of Massachusetts, 1842

Introduction

THE TASK OF creating a public will is daunting in any political system, but a democracy dedicated to the principles of participation and public deliberation faces specific challenges, including overcoming organized opposition that may not accept democratic tenets. In the sphere of education (and social reproduction, more generally),

business-influenced movements to reform public education question many of the established goals and norms of democratic education and thus may be the vanguard of such opposition. In order to interpret and explore these movements, this article enlists Amy Gutmann's work as a heuristic device. In so doing, it looks at

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both the task of instituting a unified public school system and the organized opposition to this task within the context of a democratic polity and its deliberative processes.

Since the 1980s, education policy in the U.S. has been increasingly influenced by business interests and ideologies. Examples include accountability regimes based on standardized tests, public asset privatization (such as charter schools), performance pay (sometimes referred to as merit pay), the importation of business “best practices,” changes in labor relations, changing systems of evaluation, an advocacy of administrative autonomy (as opposed to teacher autonomy), and a move away from civics education, physical education, arts education, and music education (see, for example, Cookson, 2013; Cuban, 2004; Giroux, 2015; Levin, 2001/2018; Nichols & Berliner, 2007).

These are intertwined and for the most part have a common political lineage; they are based on market emulation models that promote hierarchical authority structures, lessen professional teacher autonomy, and at the same time provide opportunities for private entities to make profits in the public education sector.

What is striking is that, since the 1980s, the form that influence takes, the positions that business takes, and the authority that business wields can plausibly be interpreted as a direct response to Amy Gutmann’s *Democratic Education* (1987), perhaps as an attempt to refute its premises and principles. Rather than a discourse on the problematic of education in a democratic society, however, there is an emphasis on evaluation systems devised by outside experts, concepts of merit, and the promotion of administrative autonomy vis-à-vis teachers.

Specifically, significant aspects of the pro-market education reform movement seem to closely and negatively correlate to the arguments Gutmann (1987) made in favor of deliberative democracy and egalitarian social goals. Moreover, two principles that Gutmann said must not be abandoned—nonrepression and nondiscrimination—are no longer reasons for revamping the system but are addressed, if at all, not by core changes but by programs appendant and appurtenant to the main. Finally—and potentially both more important and most intriguing—there is an effort to recast the three sources of authority that Gutmann held are foundational in education: the state, parents, and professionals.

Gutmann’s (1987) analysis of parents, the state, and professional educators as the three sources of authority in education seems to provide a playbook for political action. This program consists of coopting parents via school choice, narrowing the state’s mission, and attacking and marginalizing educators; in addition, the profession is divided hierarchically, as tasks such as curriculum development fall to outside educational experts and exclude classroom teachers. Accordingly, this article is an exploratory piece, a heuristic exercise that examines this lineage by tracing what might be regarded as an attempt to negate and counter the influence of Gutmann’s work.

Thus, what I suggest, half as a conceit, half as a description—and only speculatively as an explanation of how ideological justifications are produced—is that business influence manifests itself in contemporary education reform as a point-by-point rejection of Gutmann’s (1987) central goals and seems

determined to be systematic in its rejection of Gutmann’s conclusions. One could call identifying this “seeming” a hunch, but it is a hunch supported by evidence that points to such a pattern. There are different types of decision-making. Consumers make decisions that are somewhat different from the decisions a business makes and much different from the process of deliberative decision-making in a democracy. A chief example is the set of business logics focused upon marketing products to different population segments; these have to do with the discovery of individual preferences and associated “profit pools,” including behavioral triggers to get people to buy, not with collective decision-making. This runs counter to the ideal of “conscious social reproduction” in Gutmann and may reveal and clarify a diametric opposition between market-based education and democratic education.

Overall, outcomes are based on the aggregation of individual projects. The motivations of business and the interests of investor classes cohere in such a manner as to advance policies that allow for the greatest freedom of action for owners and model the labor market so as to align with business needs and are, as a result, antithetical to liberal democratic concerns.

The paper is divided into eight sections:

The first is “Conceits, Caveats, and Deliberative Models of Authority.” It outlines three models of authority, each based solely on only one of the three types: the family state, in which children are educated for the good of the state and the sake of social harmony; the state of families, in which parents are entrusted to make choices for and pursue the best interests of their children; and the state of individuals, which relies on educational professionals and expert knowledge to create institutions which maximize the *future* choice of children.

It begins by defining what I mean by “conceit” and continues with the exploration of how business entered into this discourse and the effects of that entrance, emphasizing this key point: Business logics are guided by self-interest; democratic logics work to arrive at a collective interest.

The second is “Some Personal and Historical Background, Plus Diametric Opposition.” While I am not proposing that there is a simple binary opposition between business and democracy as one would explain them abstractly or might allegorically personify them, I am noting there is at least a diametric and recurring tension between accepted values in business (as reinforced especially by competitive business practice) and normative values in liberal democracy, especially those advocating democratic deliberation. One impact of this dynamic that seems obvious is that, keeping in mind the power of wealth, democratic practitioners tend to call for state oversight and regulation of private projects, while business practitioners tend to look askance at such state actions, labeling them counterproductive. This is not true in all cases, but overall, whether deliberation is considered a method of democratic-will formation or a total theory of democratic society, it will likely rub business the wrong way. The impact of profit-seeking enterprises, in contrast, is largely actuated by advancing a particularistic set of interests, a set of preferences that are likely to come into conflict with the set of interests arrived at by

a process of deliberation that is thought to be constitutive and to reshape preferences.

The contrast is clear. Deliberative democratic logics draw on a normative theory of the educational purposes of society, which postulates that democracy must shape education so that the educated are capable of deliberation. This section also begins a brief discussion drawing on John Dewey's (1916/1997) *Democracy and Education* that continues in the following sections.

This includes the third section, "Neoliberal Ideology, the Public Will and Organized Opposition," which begins with attacks on public education that go back 60 years or so, to Admiral Rickover and President Eisenhower in the 1950s promoting back-to-basics education and explicitly attacking Dewey's influence. Briefly summarizing some of the main tenets of neoliberalism as expounded on by Bourdieu, Harvey, and others, I then expand on Dewey's defense of democratic education. For Dewey, to "participate in an interest" is more than a transaction—it is a transformative experience, sharply distinct from merely following an interest. Preferences are not assumed but are reshaped during the deliberative process. Thus, there is an antagonism between the particularistic interests that drive business practice and its aggregated outcomes and the communicated experience that arises out of deliberation on shared, overlapping, and sometimes conflicting interests. The section concludes by quickly looking at the perspectives of, among others, William Weld, Milton Friedman, Myron Lieberman, and John Chubb and Terry Moe.

"Proxies for Children, a Purported Insight, and Changed Questions: Agendas, Authority, and Influence," the fourth section briefly considers the question "Why should the business community not also be considered a source of authority?" It eventually reviews Gutmann's (1987) critiques of focusing on one type of authority in education, but it first points out that, unlike business, all three of Gutmann's sources of authority have custodial roles. The business community has no such role except in the small minority of cases in which schools are being run as businesses, but parents, the state, and schools serve as proxies for children in different ways—in terms of, respectively, direct parental custody, the state's role as custodian of last resort, and the schools' role *in loco parentis*.

The fifth section, "Contrasting Perspectives on Testing Regimes, Productivity, and Creativity," considers paradigm change and how testing and data are central to contemporary education reform. Paradigm change is, of course, broader than this and includes privatization and the deregulation movement.¹ Still, in

1 Paradigm change involves much more than testing and data collection, which are instrumental techniques, but testing nonetheless enables other policies, such as pay-for-performance and phasing out "failing schools." We can think of testing as one pillar of a market-emulation paradigm—a proxy for profits. School choice and competition are others:

Public school education has experienced notable changes in governance and control over the past three decades primarily due to school choice laws and policies. . . . the growth in magnet schools and quasi-public schools such as charter schools, as well as the use of public dollars to finance a private-school education

reviewing changes in educational discourse and policy, especially in the 1980s and 1990s, it is argued that business perspectives most often hold that we set the strong-minded and capable economic actors who can navigate the market in motion and watch them make change. Equity and social justice became secondary concerns.

This, again, contrasts with perspectives that emphasize democratic practice, but the section also raises the question of creativity and how the testing paradigm has affected it. Most pedagogical programs at least give lip service to producing critical and creative thinkers, but for advocates of democratically oriented education, this means capable democratic actors who, among other things, might question the wisdom of constantly following the directions in which the market and its incentives take us. For business-oriented educators, it means encouraging those who produce innovations *that may have value in the market*. Meanwhile, creativity among youth has declined and education reforms are all over the place—in some places drill-and-kill is adopted as much as problem-based learning because the tests are standardized and the answers can be memorized, at least many of them.

"Capitalist Exploitation, Good and Bad: Contending Perspectives Historically Considered" is the sixth section. This is a meta-theoretical section, considering "the problems of capital(ism)'s excesses." If we take the three factors of production, land, labor, and capital, the last is the dominant factor in capitalism. Moreover, the way capitalism works, capital is meant to exploit the other factors of production. The section looks briefly at the historical context of business influence, especially as identified by Kliebard (1986).

"Business Logics and the Marginalization of Democratic Deliberation" is the seventh section. Identifying business logics with a specific, market-oriented version of what Kliebard (1986) called the "social efficiency" approach, the section begins by arguing that this was hardly how education was argued for in the early days of the American republic. In contemporary discourse, in contrast, we are more likely to see mainstream business logics in which the goal of creating a deliberative democracy engaged in conscious social reproduction is eschewed in favor of accepting the outcomes of the market. There is also some mention of the march of great men (and some women) of talent pursuing simultaneously their own self-interest and their own idiosyncratic vision à la Ayn Rand. This is the core of business influence and how it operates. It is no longer the foremost role of public education to foster basic democratic principles, such as equal opportunity and liberty, that have an inherent value, but education is an instrument to other ends. It advocates the pervasive theory that, if not the family, then the state and educational professionals might in fact be

with vouchers have made it more challenging to recognize who or what controls public schools in each state. The transformation in school choice policies has been made possible mainly because of the United States' political and economic environment that supports deregulation, marketplace competition, and decentralization. (Thompson Dorsey & Plucker)

the source of a problem that could be solved by applying common sense—the common sense of what works in business.

Finally, the eighth section, “The Common Sense of Segmentation,” considers some of the dangers we encounter because what works in business is not always something that works in democracy. In business, inequality, class, and stratification are not necessarily concerns—in fact, they may be seen as opportunities. The question then becomes, what happens to education when the primary ethos of a society is acquisitive, grasping—in short, monetary? Looking at the dynamic of stratification, it points to something new that, while it is not so neatly delimited, we can nonetheless see clearly in the institutional forms of publicly funded education. Business strategies that aim to segment the market in education have shown robust growth, and since the 1980s, marketers have used economic and behavioral theories combined with data heavy analytical techniques to identify market segments and develop strategies to take advantage of differentiation opportunities. What private business strategies do is segment the market. The section then examines how a market or population is subdivided into segments with defined similar characteristics—dividing a broad target market into “subsets of consumers” who have common needs and priorities.

In conclusion, decision-making by consumers, businesses, and deliberators in a democracy are different in kind. The question is raised as to whether the pervasiveness of business and consumer logics conflict with the promise of egalitarian democracy. The first two are centered on individual interests, but the last is collective. The last is also largely based on the promise of public education—that it function to educate the vast majority of citizens so that they may aspire and succeed, participate in politics, have sufficient agency to help to shape the future.

Concepts, Caveats, and Deliberative Models of Authority

According to the political philosopher Amy Gutmann (1987), there are, broadly speaking, three types of political theories of education: those that give authority over education to the family, those that give it to the state, and those that give it to education professionals. Gutmann then outlined three models, each based solely on only one of the three types: the state of families, in which parents are entrusted to make choices for and pursue the best interests of their children; the family state, in which children are educated for the good of the state and the sake of social harmony; and the state of individuals, which relies on educational professionals and expert knowledge to create institutions that maximize the *future* choice of children, “without prejudicing children towards any controversial conception of the good life” (Gutmann, p. 34).

Of course, whenever one says there are three kinds of anything, it is a simplification and often a conscious oversimplification for the sake of clarify. In this case, for instance, one might consider human communities other than the state as being sources of authority; one might question the definition of family; and one might wonder if, as an alternative to education professionals, we might consider giving authority to those who are deemed somehow to have a “calling” for educating the young. It is unlikely that Guttmann (1987), whose *Democratic Education* has been

praised as the most important book on the role of education in a democracy since Dewey (Yudof, 1989), is unaware of this. Rather, she has not been willing to embrace any single viewpoint but offered a model that incorporates all three, seeking a balance among them.

The point of her argument is clear: None of the above is *by itself* sufficient for a democratic polity. Gutmann ended up rejecting all three models. Unwilling to embrace any of these viewpoints, she called for a “democratic state of education [which] attempts to balance the power of the state, parents, and educational experts and officials” (Gutmann, 1987, p. 42).

With all this, it is interesting to note that “business” and “markets,” so much the woof and warp of contemporary debates on education reform, are words that do not appear among her chapter titles or the titles of the subsections. Nor is business included in her threefold division of authority. This is doubly striking because the most forceful calls for education reform of the current day look not to the state, not to the family, not to “future” individuals (nor, by any means, to educational professionals acting on their behalf) to be the main actor. Rather, they seek to authorize a fourth group to shape the future of public education in the U.S.: business. If one were to rank the influence of different coalitions on education policy in the U.S., near the top would be the coalition centered on the globally connected business community and those who feel they have a calling to use business methods to improve and reform the school system.

Further, this rewriting of authority also has consequences for both curriculum, in both its broad and narrow senses, and for Gutmann’s (1987) major principles, those of nondiscrimination and nonrepression. Cuban (2004) listed three questions that remain “unasked by business-inspired reform [and] go unanswered today.” First, do “schools geared toward preparing workers also build literate, active, and morally sensitive citizens who carry out their civic duties?” Second, if it is possible at all, how “can schools develop independently thinking citizens who earn their living in corporate workplaces?” These two overlap considerably with much of the discussion below, but Cuban also raised a third: When “unemployment increases, and graduates have little money to secure higher education or find a job matched to their skills, will public schools, now an arm of the economy, get blamed—as they have in the past—for creating the mismatch” (Cuban, 2004, pp. 237–240)?

In addition, however, omitted from the current economic and political agendas, we can include two of Gutmann’s (1987) major normative principles, those of nondiscrimination and nonrepression. Gutmann’s principles of nondiscrimination and nonexclusion are sometimes given lip service, but the ways they are normally used—to buoy “high-performing charter schools” or programs to revamp teacher evaluation—are not necessarily consistent with providing high-quality education for everyone or improving the quality of teaching.²

2 I realize this, along with others that follow, is an argument that still needs to be made more fully. I will not do so here, however, because this article is quite long as it is. Besides, reaching any definitive conclusion

The principle of nondiscrimination states all educable children must be educated, not, as often is the case with private schools, vouchers, and charters, as with programs that select poor students with potential and send them elsewhere,³ that some children will be selected out to go to better schools.

The related principle of nonexclusion means that no one may be excluded from being educated so as to have the tools for participating in our democracy. However, while testing regimes and pay-for-performance systems do develop tools, the tools they are likely to develop are arguably much narrower. This is for many reasons, including gaming the system and deep-seated social inequalities and social pathologies associated with lower socio-economic status.

One is tempted to say that in most current debates, nondiscrimination and nonexclusion are not imperatives but platitudes. Accordingly, the present article starts from a conceit—that business influence manifests itself in education reform as a point-by-point rejection of the central goals of Gutmann's (1987) *Democratic Education*. This is not a fact but a somewhat fanciful

would be, to say the least, difficult. The argument in favor of school choice aligns with our common sense as consumers in the market: It engenders competition, and this will be a positive force “generat[ing] greater educational opportunities, particularly for disadvantaged students.” The premise is that “competitive incentives will change the organizational behavior of schools” and districts, leading “to more equitable access for students across varied and often segregated urban landscapes” (Lubienski, Gulosino, & Weitzel, 2009). Nonetheless, the premise has been challenged; indeed, Lubienski, Gulosino, and Weitzel (2009) pointed to “patterns of exclusionary strategies that schools embraced to enhance market position.” More critically, Thompson Dorsey and Roulhac (2019) argued, first, that “school choice policies and the movement to privatize education have become the currently preferred school reform methods on both the state and federal levels,” but, then said this seems to be merely “under the guise they will provide equal educational opportunities and access for all students,” and further “contend[ed] that the present-day school choice and privatization movements may be a part of a larger social, political, and legal cycle of inequality that has established residence in the American educational system for more than a century” (pp. 420–441). Clearly there are different schools of thought on this.

3 Examples would include Prep for Prep (PFP) and A Better Chance (ABC). For others, see “A Guide to Programs Sending Kids to Better Schools,” accessed November 2019 at https://www.education.com/magazine/article/Scholarship_Programs_that_Send/. I mention PFP and ABC not to single them out for criticism but merely because at different times in my life I interviewed with both of them, and I did so because I felt they both had the potential to make positive contributions. However, neither seems to be truly scalable to the degree one would need, and both also have potential negative effects because they remove students from their home communities. Instead of addressing the inequality of neighborhood resources and building up “a cadre of role models accessible to students” in their neighborhood or community, they “take the opposite approach—they take students into educational settings where high levels of community resources already exist” (Gandera, with Bial, 2001, p. 33). For an in-depth account based on interviews with participants, see R. Martin, 2019.

argument, and it cannot be proven conclusively one way or another. However, I offer as a hypothesis that we can presents facts, patterns of events, and transconfigurations of discourse that point to a paradigm shift in education, or at least multiple efforts to change the paradigm of public education. These seem to have foundational understandings of education's role in society that are economic and run counter to Gutmann's foundational understandings of education's role in a democratic society.

Thus the conceit is that there is both a systematic disavowal of her goals, treating them as, at best, lower priorities, *and* a grand strategy that draws on her description of the three pillars of authority in education in order to bring about political support for this economic changes. As a suggestion, it can open avenues of inquiry—the conceit is meant to be an imaginative construct pointing to the negative correlation between the principles of deliberative democracy and pervasive business logics. In turn, this leads to a more sophisticated understanding of the objects of the comparisons and of the processes by which education reform has accrued.

The word “conceit” is often used in literary criticism to describe metaphors. According to Dame Helen Gardner (1961), “a conceit is a comparison whose ingenuity is more striking than its justness . . . we are made to concede likeness while being strongly conscious of unlikeness” (Gardner, p. xxiii).⁴ Thus anyone seeking a detailed, sociological, or technical depiction of ideological production will be disappointed; rather, the purpose at hand is to draw attention to certain aspects of business-oriented education reform that run contrary to democratic ends in general and to deliberative democracy and democratic education in particular.⁵

Gutmann's understanding of education has been tightly coupled with her work on deliberative democracy,⁶ as she has claimed that democratic education must have as its goal the development and instilling of deliberative character, one consisting

4 Shakespeare, however, gives the word to Edgar in *King Lear*, so as to mean “illusion” or “imagination”: “I know not how conceit may rob/The treasury of life, when life itself/Yields to the theft” (Act IV, Scene VI; Edgar is speaking about his newly blind father, Gloucester, who relies on Edgar's reports to imagine the reality about him).

5 There is, nonetheless, one very relevant point to be made on ideological justifications: Their political production and formation involves coalitions. For instance, taking the coalition pushing for reform along Democrats for Education Reform (DFER) lines, there are three groups with different beliefs who converge. There are “true believers,” who think the statistics, case studies, and other research shows that we should adopt these measures to improve the system; there are political actors who see political advantage in adopting those positions; and there are those who think the adoption of these measures presents an economic opportunity.

6 This has also been both well-regarded and highly influential. Moreover, it is worth noting that Gutmann has been a practical educator at the highest level, becoming the president of the University of Pennsylvania in 2004. How being the president of a private, voluntary, and selective university relates to her understandings of public, compulsory, and universal K–12 education is, however, an open question.

of “sturdy moral character” together with “a developed capacity for reasoning.” The democratic state of education does not merely balance different types of authority—it also questions *all* authority. The inculcation of deliberative character should be democratic education’s particular purpose: “Children must learn not just to behave in accordance with authority but to think critically about authority if they are to live up to the democratic ideal of sharing political sovereignty as citizens” (Gutmann, 1987, p. 51).

Authority is a central issue, and an anecdote may bring some clarity. In my twenties, I wore a button that said, “Question Authority,” sometimes pinned to a T-shirt with the words, “Read, Think, Write, Speak.” (I also at different times wore a button that said, “Wearing buttons is not enough,” but that is another story.) The “Question Authority” button bothered one friend. He was a vice president (among many) of a major Swiss investment bank, and he grimaced with impatience as he asked why I had to bring attention to myself with that button. I explained that behind my snarky, critical, idealist persona, I was a democratic pragmatist and thus wanted to bring attention to our role as critics of those elements of our system that were unjust, wrongheaded, or unwise.

His take on pragmatism was different than mine. A few years later he told me, “Over time you become more pragmatic.” When asked what he meant by “pragmatic,” he responded, almost as if the answer to the question was self-evident, “I mean pragmatic in your own self-interest” (Anonymous, personal communication, May 1994).

One need not rely on that single quote; one need only look at business magazines and the advice they offer. The ideology of business—its foundational understandings—is manifest in the advice given to people who want to get ahead and which the magazines say they would do well to take to heart. Moreover, they tend to project that life-view on everyone else as well.

Certainly it was true that my friend had grown more pragmatic as he grew older. However, it was not, for him, a personal statement: He stated it as a general truth. I don’t want to make too big a generalization, but this life-view holds that those who do not put their self-interest front and center are somehow deluding themselves by indulging “an overdeveloped sense of social justice.”⁷ Whether it applies to everyone or not, business affects this, at least to a degree; if we are involved in business day in, day out, we then become more calculating—and self-interestedly pragmatic—as we adopt the norms of business.

That points to the key point: Business logics are guided by self-interest; democratic logics work to arrive at a collective interest. The attitude toward authority is illustrative. While I would argue that questioning authority is a necessary and constitutive part of deliberative democracy, business logics how to understand

7 For an example of how those with an “overdeveloped sense of justice” are prone to over-the-top “indignation,” see the discussion between business and law school students (one of whom has a bullhorn) and sociology grad students (one of whom quotes Schiller and begins to define post-structuralism), in Tucker Max (2012), *Sloppy Seconds*, Blue Heeler, pp. 26–27. I am not quite sure, incidentally, how this book ended up in my house.

authority and how it affects opportunity. Not to put too fine a point on this key point, we can say that instead of questioning it, one accepts and reinforces authority, strengthens administrative hierarchy, and brings in administrative experts to make money off newly strengthened hierarchies.

Still, business logics do not accept authority passively; rather, they analyze and adapt themselves to it, manipulate and seek to direct it. In business and economic activity, the questioning of authority is, accordingly, not primary; rather, stress is on the ability to recognize and take advantage of opportunities. Along with this comes the ability to sometimes construct and promote opportunities. Entrepreneurs find niches—this is part of the foundational understanding—but politically networked entrepreneurs can *create* niches. They do not so much question authority as massage and then redirect it.

This is the contrast to which the conceit will point: Business logics turn the logic of deliberative democracy on its head. Deliberative democracy can be defined

as a form of government in which free and equal citizens (and their representatives), justify decisions in a process in which they give one another reasons that are mutually acceptable and generally accessible, with the aim of reaching conclusions that are binding in the present on all citizens but open to challenge in the future. (Gutmann & Thompson, 2004, p. 7; see also discussion, pp. 4–21, some of which is paraphrased immediately following)

Deliberation, to the extent it is inclusive and nonarbitrary, legitimizes political decisions. The standard that is enshrined is the collective judgment of the governed as arrived at by an open and mutually respectful processes of public decision-making that posits public-spirited perspectives.

In business, however, it is the aggregated judgment of those engaging in economic activity that is the standard. A thousand (or a million) choices add up to what the market tells us. While there are some arguments that this will inevitably be in the public interest, that is hardly foreordained. The most famous quote indicating the benign effects from the market is, of course, from Adam Smith (1776):

It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the baker, or the brewer that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest. We address ourselves, not to their humanity but to their self-love, and never talk to them of our own necessities but of their advantages. (Smith, chapter 2)

Self-interest is not greed, however. That Smith distinguished between self-interest and selfishness is often ignored.⁸ Significantly, this ignorance might not be accidental, but a common occurrence—a mental construct—in a competitive, calculating,

8 Smith’s paragraph begins:

He will be more likely to prevail if he can interest their self-love in his favour, and show them that it is for their own advantage to do for him what he requires of them. Whoever offers to another a bargain of any kind, proposes to do this. (Kennedy, 2009a, 2009b)

and self-interestedly pragmatic milieu that includes rent seekers as well as producers. One should note that Smith took his examples from a limited group of economic activities, all of which are producers for direct consumption; it is unlikely that Smith would have sanguinely and without caveat included financiers, public relations specialists, lobbyists (the word had not yet been coined), advertisers, or marketers alongside them.⁹ But even in the productive trades, according to Smith, we have to worry about cartels and combinations: “People of the same trade seldom meet together, even for merriment and diversion, but the conversation ends in a conspiracy against the public, or in some contrivance to raise prices” (Smith, 1776, book I, chapter X). Cartel formation, moreover, is an extreme example of a more general phenomenon.

Actors take the information they gather from the market to pragmatically pursue their self-interests. The goal in business is not to promote the legitimacy of collective decisions or subject preferences to scrutiny—preferences are a given to be discovered, the raw material on which to build business strategies. They are not questioned but used, manipulated in some instances, altered and shaped in others. Market research and advertising provide some salient examples; lobbying, think tanks, and philanthropy provide others.¹⁰ The point is not to deliberate and, when in disagreement, discover the reasons for this disagreement while still promoting mutual respect; rather, the point is to get the other to accept your view of what is necessary and worthwhile, to spend money on your product or to accept your point of view, and to get your project on track.

The contrast is clear. Deliberative democratic logics draw on a normative theory of the educational purposes of society which postulates that democracy must shape education so that the educated are capable of deliberation. It is a clever construction in which the snake swallows its own tale.¹¹

Dewey (1916/1997) made much the same point and then extended upon it in *Democracy and Education*: “The devotion of democracy to education is a familiar fact. The superficial

Greed—even the appearance of greed—would poison such a bargain.

9 Moreover, while often misquoted, Smith used “brewer” instead of “candlestick maker,” raising the question of whether he prioritized beer over light.

10 Theoretically extreme, but everyday and increasingly commonplace, are consumer-oriented business strategies that “push us to sever all links with the evidence of our senses.” Online strategies, such as

the monetisation of propaganda as “fake news”; the use of machine learning to develop user profiles accurately measuring and modeling our emotional states; the rise of neuromarketing, targeting highly tailored messages that nudge us to act in ways serving the ends of others; [and the] a new technology, “augmented reality,” [are among] the processes shaping our drift to a new world in which reality is both relative and carefully constructed by others, for their ends. (Pesce, 2017)

11 My apologies for the pun, but narratives and understandings in public discourse are central concerns.

explanation is that a government resting upon popular suffrage cannot be successful unless those who elect and who obey their governors are educated” (Dewey, pp. 91–92). He then went on to say, “But there is a deeper explanation,” as discussed later.

Business logics, especially those that laud the invisible hand, frame the question of education much differently, looking for the individual to develop skills and capacities to navigate the system as it develops “naturally” over time. The individual is not a deliberative citizen but a consumer following preferences or a potential worker seeking remunerated employment or an investor seeking opportunities.

This logic transfers to politics as opportunities must be recognized by power holders and they must devote resources to fully exploit them. This is true of both enterprises that must find their own revenue stream (the private sector) and those that depend on a revenue stream decided upon through collective decision-making as manifest in state action (the public sector). In addition, individuals must also produce their own revenue streams—or their families must.¹²

Of course, there are other business logics that stress factors having little to do with the “invisible hand,” such as organizational capacity and long-term management.¹³ Nonetheless, those that are management focused tend toward the hierarchical, not the democratic. Business logics emphasizing management do tend to run counter to narratives that focus on the entrepreneur, and it is arguable that much of the individualistic ethos fueling proposed neoliberal solutions diverts us, intentionally or otherwise, from the reality of managerial power. It can also be argued that investors, thanks in part to stockholder-rights movements and in larger part to improved financial communications and new financial instruments, have gained the upper hand over the last 40 years at the expense of managers. One does not have to choose between these two, however. Both the reality of long-term managerial power and

12 This is a thought, incidentally, made resoundingly by Margaret Thatcher when she said there was no such thing as society, only individuals and families. Here might be the fulcrum of the Thatcherite revolution, relevant in that we are presuming a paradigm change that took hold about the same time she took office (and she also had extensive plans for education). Interestingly and significantly, we can compare her statement to one from Dewey (1916/1997):

Society is one word, but many things. Men associate together in all kinds of ways and for all kinds of purposes. One man is concerned in a multitude of diverse groups, in which his associates may be quite different. It often seems as if they had nothing in common except that they are modes of associated life. (Dewey, p. 86)

13 Particularly pertinent is Chandler’s *The Visible Hand* (1977), which highlighted administrative coordination, managerial hierarchy, and middle managers who preferred policies that favored long-term stability and growth of their enterprises to those that maximized current profits. He argued managerial hierarchy itself became a source of power, permanence, and continued growth; large enterprises grew and dominated major sectors of the economy, altering the basic structure of these sectors and of the economy as a whole.

greater investor power are real things in education, however, as large companies take over management tasks formerly performed by public entities. As is usually the case in public asset privatization, both investors and managers have opportunities to benefit.

In sum, according to the deliberative democratic logic, education is designed to promote and support open debate on public issues, critical thinking, collective outcomes, and mutual respect. This contrasts to business logics. In the neoliberal business logic, education is designed to allow for the pursuit of private interests, critical analysis of the changing market, individual adaptation, and aggregated outcomes. In the managerial business logic, education is designed to equip people who can man the machinery of business organizations.

The neoliberal logic calls for less state involvement and a curriculum based on the ability to find one's niche. The administrative logic calls for a curriculum that trains people to perform business tasks. Both give us a hint of what to expect as we now turn to the question of how business influences education.

Some Personal and Historical Background, Plus Diametric Opposition

This article is drawn from a manuscript waiting to be a book, *Democratic Education and Markets*, which takes half its title from Gutmann's 1987 book but concentrates on business, markets, and the underlying goals thereof. It is not merely that business has influence in education debates—that is something that has been true since at least the early 1900s. What we find is that we are not dealing with disinterested policymaking but an agenda-laden process in which the agendas are not usually on the surface layers but are deeply rooted and are informed by the eye of the profit hunter (Ford 2016a, 2016b).

The implications of this for democracy have been widely commented upon. For instance, Paul Thomas (2013) argued:

Education reformers have framed the need for national standards, increased testing, and greater teacher accountability as essential for creating a world-class work force and to keep the U.S. competitive internationally. But this narrative serves as a mask for the ultimate results promised by such reform—shifting the locus of authority and expertise away from teachers, professors, and scholars [emphasis added] and to state created and enforced instruments that render people powerless and interchangeable. (pp. 204–205)¹⁴

I would add that those “state created and enforced instruments” are both increasingly modeled upon the market, employing so-called best practices derived from business, and increasingly open to nonstate actors.

Since the 1980s, the form that influence takes, the positions that business takes and the authority that business wields, could plausibly be interpreted as a direct response to Gutmann

14 In a shorter article for *The Guardian* (16 Nov 2010), Thomas summarized: “The messages coming from state education in the US, then, are that government has failed and that only the private sector can save us.” One comment contested this, but yet another seconded it: “Education, like healthcare provision, is not a right but a business opportunity.”

(1987)—an attempt to refute its premises and principles. Thus, the article explores this lineage by tracing what might be regarded as a negative doppelgänger of Gutmann's work. Significant aspects of the pro-market education reform movement seem to closely and negatively correlate to the arguments she made in favor of deliberative democracy and egalitarian social goals. Accordingly, we expand on the conceit—that business influence manifests itself in education reform as a point-by-point rejection of Gutmann's central goals.

Or, rather, we shall start from a conceit and a caveat, for while market-oriented education reform *could* be interpreted in this way, this is not to say that it actually developed this way. One need not posit a conspiracy.

One *need not*, but that is not to say there is no evidence to support conspiratorial coordination, either overt or covert. One can go back to Admiral Rickover and President Eisenhower in the 1950s promoting back-to-basics education and explicitly attacking Dewey's influence.¹⁵ Or one could look at soon to be Supreme Court Justice Louis Powell's famous 1971 memo to the Chairman of the Education Committee of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.¹⁶ In the years that followed, many institutions, including the Heritage Foundation, the Manhattan Institute, the Cato Institute, Citizens for a Sound Economy, Accuracy in Academia (explicitly against “liberal bias in education”), and the Olin Foundation, were created.

15 Admiral Hyman Rickover, original head of development of the nation's nuclear submarine program, wrote *Education and Freedom* (New York: Dutton, 1959) after the launch of the Sputnik by the Soviets. Rickover blamed Dewey, unfairly lumping him together with the “educationists” who had emphasized “life-adjustment education” focused on adolescents' personal as opposed to their intellectual development. Thinking U.S. schools too lax and education standards too low to produce the technical expert who would be “the man of the future,” Rickover later wrote both *Swiss Schools and Ours: Why Theirs are Better* (Little, Brown, 1962) and *American Education, a National Failure: The Problem of Our Schools and What We Can Learn from England* (Dutton, 1963).

Eisenhower, as president, published a letter in *Life* magazine (March 15, 1959) that was similar. It descried the weaknesses of U.S. education and attributed them to Dewey's influence while advocating a back-to-basics approach. The attacks, which were much more widespread, were significant, and Jeffrey Herold (1974) said the “account of how Dewey had corrupted the schools was sheer fantasy” (p. 150).

16 While focused on the postsecondary level and advocating measures such as “establishing a staff of highly qualified scholars in the social sciences who do believe in the system . . . a staff of speakers of the highest competency . . . a Speaker's Bureau [and the] evaluat[ion] of social science textbooks, especially in economics, political science and sociology,” he also called for “Action programs, tailored to the high schools and similar to those mentioned” for colleges. The covert memo's confidentially became a thing of the past when it was leaked to Jack Anderson. In a syndicated column, “Powell's Lesson to Business aired,” September 28, 1972, Anderson cited it, warning that Powell, who had been elevated to the Court in January of that year, “might use his position on the Supreme Court to put his ideas into practice . . . in behalf of business interests.”

At the same time, Milton Friedman became a PBS star and anti-Keynesian monetarist texts multiplied while Paul Samuelson's Keynesian-oriented *Economics* textbook ceased to be the standard. Or we could look to the passage of Proposition 13, enacted in 1978, becoming article XIII A of the California Constitution, which limited the annual real estate tax on a parcel of property to 1% of its assessed value; since schools depend on property taxes, it had huge ramifications. Or there is *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), discussed later. The actions of the Broad Foundation, the New Teacher Project, the Gates Foundation, and many others also point to multiple efforts.

Nonetheless, one need hardly contend that the movers and shakers of industry and finance gathered together at a conference center or an enormous private estate, read Gutmann's work alongside Hayek's and Ayn Rand's, compared it unfavorably with those works, analyzed it point by point and then gathered together to launch a campaign to shape American education in the opposite way. Indeed, if you concentrate your explanation by offering up conspiracy theories, you miss a lot of the action. But if that is not what happened *and* if I am right that the main tenets of market-oriented education reform negatively correlate with Gutmann's theory, then how did *that* happen? What forces led to this outcome?

Not to dismiss active efforts to shape thought, but if one does posit a conspiracy, certain dynamics will be overlooked. A large part of the answer to this puzzle is systematically rooted in the structure of economic incentives and accepted business strategies. Overall, we can suggest that the motivations of business and the interests of investor classes cohere in such a manner as to advance policies that, predictably, allow for the greatest freedom of action for owners, model the labor market so as to align with business needs, and are, as result, antithetical to liberal democratic concerns in general and, in particular to deliberative democracy and egalitarian goals (Ford, n.d.).

Take, for example, the business logics focused upon marketing products to different population segments. These do not have to do with collective decision-making, rather with the discovery of individual preferences in order to craft a business strategy. As will be discussed, the "collective" outcome is based on the aggregation of individual business projects.

Overall, this is not to propose there is a binary opposition between "business" and "democracy" as one would explain them abstractly or might allegorically personify them. "Business" and "democracy" both have too many aspects to do that. It is rather to note there is at least a diametric tension between accepted values in business (as reinforced especially by competitive business practice) and normative values in liberal democracy, especially those advocating democratic deliberation.¹⁷

¹⁷ This gives me a chance to acknowledge my two anonymous *Democracy & Education* reviewers, one of whom was quite positive, one of whom was more skeptical, both of whom offered insight and helped improve the article. The latter was particularly concerned that I had presented a "binary opposition between democracy and business," something that I did not think was the case but had to admit was a

We can illustrate this by posing a question: Should the democratic state have oversight authority and the ability to regulate private projects? If so, to what degree? I am not going to go into depth on this subject but just offer a heads-up: The democratic principle tends to call for an institutionalized state actor with oversight capacity and the ability to regulate private business actions to significant degree, but the business principle not so much.

This is not an absolute but a tendency. The "business side" during the early days of the republic through the 1840s was led by figures such as Hamilton and Henry Clay who called for an energetic federal government that could take on debt, run a banking system, fund infrastructure, and otherwise enable economic advance; their partisan opponents, such as Jefferson and Jackson, labeled themselves Democrats (and in the latter case even called his assembled supporters "the Democracy") and eventually shut down the Bank of the United States in the 1830s, so that the U.S. had a largely unregulated banking system until the creation of the Federal Reserve in 1913.

The U.S. did not have a central bank from 1836 until the advent of the Federal Reserve just prior to the first World War. After the Civil War, when America began to become the world's greatest industrial power, "Great Britain served as the premier banker to American railways and factories, powering the country's economic growth at a time when American finance could not have managed the feat alone" (Chernow, 2017, p. 727). During that period, the U.S. suffered through recurrent panics, one every 20 years of so—1837, 1857, 1873, 1893 and 1907. (Thanks, Andrew Jackson!) For the most part, they were addressed by private, rather than public, intervention, such as that of financier J. P. Morgan. In 1907 Morgan led a group of New York bankers to pledge large sums of their own money to steady the market by injecting liquidity back into the market (Ahamed, 2009).¹⁸ They did so in the place of the independent treasury system, created by Congress in 1846, that supposedly managed the federal government's money supply through the U.S. Treasury until 1913, but by 1907 it was recognized that it was ineffectual and sometimes counterproductive, often allowing revenue surpluses to accumulate and thus tightening credit.

plausible interpretation. Like most good criticism, it was at first vexing. While something approaching a binary opposition—a dramatic and dynamic opposing tension—may be generally the case as regards state oversight and regulation, it is much more complex than that politically and ideological coalition formation is a political phenomenon that draws from groups with different beliefs. To the extent that one presents a simple binary opposition, one is oversimplifying and misrepresenting a complex political process, so I particularly appreciate that the vexing question was asked. However, if anyone complains about this article's length, I felt I had to address the question—some of the blame goes to the reviewer who asked the question in the first place.

¹⁸ Morgan "had lived through more panics than had any other, in 1895 actually bailing out the United States government itself when it was within days of running out of gold and defaulting on its debts to Europe" (Ahamed, 2009, pp. 125–129).

Still, one can imagine there are some instances in which people who operate businesses will want regulation—for, instance, wanting banks to be regulated to avoid monetary stability, or perhaps, they might want to avoid a “race to the bottom” that leads to wages so low that overall demand is insufficient for business expansion or a different “race to the bottom” that leads to negative externalities and environmental degradation—in the day-to-day operations of business oversight and regulation will appear as obstacles to implementing needed decisions. This is the source of an underlying dynamic tension that surfaces in policy, discourse, and ideological positioning.

Whether deliberation is considered a method of democratic-will formation or a total theory of democratic society, it will rub business the wrong way. Deliberation is time-consuming and has to consider all interests; on a deliberative account, identifying interests is not as simple and unproblematic as is commonly supposed and “the formation of a point of view arises from the give and take of reasons [as opposed] to merely ranking preferences.”¹⁹ The impact of profit-seeking enterprises, in contrast, is largely actuated by advancing a particular set of interests that are likely to conflict with other sets of interests.

As noted previously, Dewey offered two explanations for “the devotion of democracy to education.” First, there is a superficial one that popular suffrage depends upon an educated population. Second, there is a deeper one that goes beyond merely repudiating the principle of external authority:

There is a deeper explanation. A democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience. [Of the] individuals who participate in an interest . . . each has to refer his own action to that of others, and to consider the action of others to give point and direction to his own, [which] is equivalent to the breaking down of those barriers of class, race, and national territory which kept men from perceiving the full import of their activity.

Dewey also contrasted this to “a group which in its exclusiveness shuts out many interests” (Dewey 1916/1997, p. 91–92).

Democracy in his view fundamentally concerns “the realization of a form of social life in which interests are mutually interpenetrating, and where progress, or readjustment, is an important consideration” (Dewey 1916/1997, p. 91–92).

For Dewey, to “participate in an interest” is more than a transaction—it is a transformative experience, sharply distinct from merely *following* an interest. Varied points of shared common interest elevate the recognition of mutual interests to the level of the socially inviolate; principles of diversity are emphasized as freer interaction between social groups makes change in social habit imperative. Thus, there is an antagonism between, on the one side, the particularistic interests that drive business practice and its aggregated outcomes and, on the other, the communicated

19 The distinction between will formation or a total theory and the quoted phrase comes from personal communications by email with Christopher Martin. While I think they were helpful and insightful, I am not sure he would hold to those views or the precise phrasing.

experience that arises out of deliberation on shared, overlapping, and sometimes conflicting interests.

This is not to deny that there is a general business interest, but the motive force comes from a set of parallel particularistic interests—a group of enterprises that are seeking to make hay while the sun shines and arguing that the sun should be allowed to shine into the heretofore closed corners of the public system. The general business interest, as it coalesces in leading ideologies, emphasizes how the market solves problems and that the solution lies in creating entrepreneurial opportunities. At the strategic level—at least as embodied in the phrase “creative destruction”—the chief method of solving problems is to destroy or dismantle first, allowing others to repair or create later.

Whether we conceive of interests as particularistic or deliberative is important in that the question we are looking at is how business influences those with direct authority over education. On the one hand, the general public can come to decisions that are influenced by market forces and ideologies. On the other, the three specific sources of authority in education are affected by how questions are framed in public discourse and how they are advanced by the ideological apparatus of the private sector, ranging from think tanks and media to foundations and funding organizations (apropos of this, see Carey, 1997).

The crucial factor need not be some sort of shadowy coordination of efforts. While this is hardly absent, the main impetus is that there is money to be made, and this draws people in. Narratives incorporating this dynamic motivator have been bandied about since at least the 1990s, such as when former Massachusetts Governor William Weld told us “the fundamentals are all aligned for a great number of people to make a whole lot of money in this sector” (Walsh, 2000, p. 13).

Significantly, Weld finished his statement, “and do well by doing good.” More significant was the occasion of the statement—a conference in New York “for investors, policy analysts, and others interested in the growing business of education.” For those holding to conspiracy theories, the conference was cosponsored by Wall Street financier Theodore Forstmann, cofounder of the Children’s Scholarship Fund, who gave this ideological thumbnail: “A monopoly produces a bad product at a high price, and the education monopoly in America is no exception to that rule” (Walsh, 2000, p. 13). Thus, there is a clear perspective, one that identifies monopoly with government, not business, and it often makes reference to the justification of privatization in the form of school vouchers that was suggested by Milton Friedman as long ago as 1955 (see McEwan & Carnoy, 2000, pp. 213–239).²⁰ In addition to vouchers, other propositions, such as pay-for-performance (aka “merit” pay) and charters (a second choice for voucher supporters but with support from those such as Joe Nathan, who think charters an avenue for school innovation and differentiation), are part of a single multistranded discourse that has both a constructive and a destructive (as in “creative destruction”) aspect.

20 Interestingly enough, it has been pursued most vigorously in the country most dedicated to Friedman, Chile.

The flip side is that many commentators on the right describe the unions as producer organizations with anticompetitive policies. The unions are rent seekers, they say, a remnant of socialist and collectivist efforts that must be eliminated. Teachers must be like just about everyone else—workers who can be fired at will or nearly so. Lieberman (1993, pp. 47–53), in the forthrightly named *Public Education: An Autopsy*,²¹ was one of the first to do so.

Others in favor of market-based reforms, such as Chubb and Moe, specifically identify “The Root of the Problem” as democratic control of schools. In that first chapter of their book, they argued that schools are “open systems” and respond to their environments, and when that environment is democratic, they do so negatively. Since they are democratically controlled entities, schools respond to constituents, not consumers; that means parents, making choices for their children, have no greater voice than anyone else in the community (Chubb & Moe, 1990).

Arguing that parents *should have* a greater voice is a normative point—one can argue that as education changes and shapes society, then everyone should have a voice. In addition to its normative basis, it is also in part a reaction to government control of schools that is seen as centralized, bureaucratic, and ineffective (for a critique of this second point, see S. R. Glass, 1997).²² Overall, Chubb and Moe hold that democracy is essentially coercive, but that markets, because they are decentralized, allow parents and students the freedom to act as consumers, not as constituents, where they will have a more powerful role.

Beyond that, since they believe that bureaucracy imposed by democratic principles vitiates the most basic requirements of effective organization, Chubb and Moe promoted organizational autonomy and school-based management, including autonomy of principals and teachers. They claimed that school governance is the key variable, “that excessive bureaucracy is the proximate cause of problems in the schools, and that politics are the ultimate cause

21 A case study of Lieberman, as someone who seems to be a “true believer” advocate, might be in order. He once ran unsuccessfully for the presidency of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), but the theme that he developed over time was acute criticism of teacher unions—the AFT and the National Education Association (NEA)—for standing in the way of needed improvement in our schools, arguing that “the teacher unions are in the business to achieve more, not less, favorable terms and conditions of employment for teachers.” Other works by Lieberman include *The Impact of the Taylor Act upon the Governance and Administration of Elementary and Secondary Education* (1971), City University of New York; *Beyond Public Education* (1986), Praeger Publisher Division of Greenwood Press; *The Teachers’ Unions: How the NEA and the AFT Sabotage Reform and Hold Students, Parents, Teachers and Taxpayers Hostage to Bureaucracy* (1997), The Free Press; Encounter Books; and *Teachers Evaluating Teachers: Peer Review and the New Unionism* (1998), Transaction Publishers.

22 Based on extensive interviews, S. R. Glass (1997) “challenge[s] oversimplified assertions that differences of any importance exist between the autonomy experienced by professionals in public and private high schools . . . and challenges the myth that teachers and principals in private schools enjoy autonomy and freedom from democratic bureaucracy that their public school counterparts do not” (p. 1).

of the over-reliance on [a] bureaucracy [that] cannot be changed unless the underlying political structure is changed” and “therefore recommend that the present system of public school governance be scrapped in favor of a market-driven one in which parents have primary control over the schools” (G. V. Glass & Matthews, 1991, pp. 24–27).

Chubb and Moe further emphasized not only that organizational autonomy is related to high achievement but that differences in student achievement are due to differences in organizational autonomy.²³ So they welcomed the autonomy that the market supposedly brings but also indicated that autonomy requires a reworking of labor relations.

But what if Chubb and Moe are wrong? What if student achievement is a result of, for instance, high-quality parent involvement? Then the direction of causality would be something like (1) parent involvement, (2) high student achievement, (3) bureaucracies see no need to intervene, and, therefore, (4) school autonomy is a result of other factors. The fact of school autonomy would then be an epiphenomenon caused by the quality of parental involvement, and efforts to increase school autonomy might then be misguided. In this regard, it is important—at least as an illustration—to consider charter schools as a type of intervention, especially as they are concentrated in areas of lower achievement and greater poverty. Poor performance, somehow measured, becomes an invitation for intervention and, as it turns out, *intervention of a particular type*.²⁴

We need to see this in context. Whatever the form of governance, that still leaves the question of whether administrators or classroom teachers have the most influence. It is not only that autonomy requires a reworking of labor relations but that it needs a reworking of labor relations with enormous consequences. In a market system—for that is the context—you have to think that in most cases the boss is the boss and teacher autonomy is not likely to be robust. Here, the business logics tend to converge on the

23 The direction of causality is not certain, however. While Chubb and Moe claimed they both established a correlation, their argument that it is autonomy that leads to achievement is hardly solid. It could be the other way around, that autonomy *follows* achievement, that is, that schools with higher-achieving students may be granted more freedom, and those with lower achieving students may invite more interventions in their operations. Chubb and Moe both admitted this as a possibility—“organization may be both cause and effect”—and then somewhat unconvincingly dismissed it:

Despite all we have said about the problem of reciprocal causality, we believe that the key influences on student achievement tend to run in one direction. We believe that school control affects school organization more than the other way around, and that school organization is primarily a cause of student achievement and not a result of it. (Chubb & Moe, 1990, pp. 113, 114)

For the original of this analysis, see G. V. Glass & Matthews, 1991, pp. 24–27.

24 For a list of recommendations for other types of intervention, see Morsy and Rothstein, 2015.

issues of public-versus-private enterprise and collective bargaining.

While not necessarily its most representative example, Chubb and Moe (1990) are still part of a pattern in which poor performance in a small subset of schools is used to justify a massive change. While their school autonomy model seems to be at odds with an accountability regime based on an extensive system of tests, data collection, and accountability, they can be mutually reinforcing. The metric by which schools are judged to be performing well or not is largely determined by the accountability regime; even if it shared by the public and private sectors, there is also a bureaucracy, a newly shaped one with different goals and measures. The goals are less about equity, more about achievement and performance; the measures are the metrics by which we gauge achievement and performance. As Slavin (1999) noted, since the early 1980s school reform has been constant and “the main focus of reform has been on school governance *and* [emphasis added] accountability” (p. 325).

Yes, there is a pattern: first, point out “poor performance” and argue that the public system does not work; second, draw off some funding from public enterprise; third, make funds available to private-sector entities with projects that will remake the public system and purportedly solve its problems. And there are coordinated efforts, such as attacking school performance, insisting on “accountability,” instituting regularly administrated standardized tests, changing curricula and standards, and altering evaluation methods. Still, it is not the coordination of one single unified campaign that leads to the discounting of the liberal values of democratic education but the aggregation of many smaller efforts that see those values as obstacles.

What gives the movement much of its force is that, in countless instances, the business outcome has priority over democratic imperatives. This is the common sense of business, and it emanates from people engaged in largely parallel efforts. Market-based systems succeed because they benefit people—at least those people who successfully navigate the market. A significant portion involves clever young men (and some women) pursuing opportunities to dismantle the public sector or peel certain parts away, thus allowing for-profit entities to enter the field. And if the democratic goals of education get in the way of that, then let’s just not pay attention to them.²⁵

25 This is directly related to the decline of civics education. As regards this, we will not go into it in any depth, but it is a well-worn topic, and multiple authors have described the decline of civics education. Some recent examples:

- “Civic knowledge and public engagement is at an all-time low” (Shapiro & C. Brown, 2018).
- After the 1960s, “civics offerings were slashed as the curriculum narrowed over the ensuing decades, and lost further ground to ‘core subjects’ under the NCLB-era standardized testing regime” (Litvinov, 2017).
- “For at least half a century America’s schools have systematically failed to prepare students to be capable citizens” (Rebell, 2018).

Neoliberal Ideology, The Public Will, and Organized Opposition

The task of creating a public will for a unified public school system is daunting. It is even more so when there is organized opposition. And there is.

Without invoking some level of organized opposition, one cannot accurately frame many of these business interventions. There are reform movements that promote market-based models of education and/or reform efforts centered on the emulation of market mechanism. This is not only in the United States—Pasi Sahlberg, former director general of Finland’s CIMO (of the Ministry of Education and Culture) in Helsinki, has termed it the Global Education Reform Movement (GERM).

Nonetheless, I am emphasizing ideas over organization because these interventions gain traction more readily if there is a shared set of beliefs—such as “the common sense of business” referred to previously—and if there are numerous, parallel sources. This is evident in U.S. public education, where market-emulation models seek to divert efforts to create a unified public school system and substitute in its place a patchwork of charters, vouchers for private schools, online education, home schooling, virtual schools, and public schools based on market emulation models.²⁶ These are all separate economic opportunities and have somewhat different motivating forces, but they share some significant common features.

Education reform largely based on market-driven economic forces is a global phenomenon and should be considered as part of a neoliberal movement that can be dated back to the late 1960s and the 1970s.²⁷ Neoliberalism holds generally that poor economic performance is due to state interference in the market mechanism. Amounting to a type of market fundamentalism, neoliberalism seeks to change the relationships between state and society; four

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- “We need to ask whether schools are equipping students with the tools to become engaged, informed, and compassionate citizens” (Hansen et al., 2018).
 - “There is abundant evidence of an abysmally low level of understanding of the constitution, our system of government, and American history in general. . . . Many Americans profess, or at least did when the question was asked in surveys from 1968 through 2000 that the ‘civic mission of schools is an essential—if not the essential—purpose of education.’ The centrality of a civic mission appears dubious in light of the recent focus on training and testing in STEM courses” (Folz & Dodd, 2014).

See also Ward, 2014.

26 For the purposes of this article, I will not attempt to establish this but will take it as a given. The literature on this is immense; for a review of much of it, emphasizing the misuse of statistics and quantitative studies, see Ford, 2012. Other sources are in other footnotes.

27 The term “neoliberalism” was, however, coined long before, by economists and legal scholars affiliated with the Freiberg School of the University of Freiberg in Baden-Württemberg, Germany, in the interwar period (Steger & Roy, 2010, p. ix).

relevant features are privatization, financialization, management and manipulation of crisis, and state redistributions.²⁸

Increased corporate power, commodification, and privatization are, according to Harvey (2006), and many others, part of the neoliberal project. Thus, privatization, in whole or in part, is applied to public institutions (ranging from prisons to universities) and public utilities (such as water, electricity, and transportation); it has even changed the structure of warfare through the use of private contractors. In the U.S., regulations on telecommunications have been largely removed, and social welfare provisions (such as housing, health care, pensions) have been reformed in accordance with market models.

Neoliberal ideology . . . aligns the concept of free markets with individual freedom, laissez faire, and the individual entrepreneur with classical liberalism [and then] goes beyond classical liberalism by embracing market fundamentalism since it is believed in neoliberal ideology that society is a market where “every human being is an entrepreneur managing their own life, and should act as such.” (Kabir, 2013, quoting Treanor, 2005, as cited in Prechel & Harms, 2007, p. 4)

Applying such a view to education would obviously have a huge impact, emphasizing not the student as a deliberative political citizen but as a multifaceted economic agent—worker, investor, and consumer.

The political aspect of neoliberalism is drawn primarily from Hayek and Friedman, both of whom argued for individual economic freedom that would, by extension, also apply to businesses, including corporations, functioning in the market. (Whether Smith [1776], given his fears regarding “conspiracies against the public and contrivances to raise prices” [book I, chapter X] and having little experience with corporations, would agree is an open question.) In a neoliberal policy agenda, market-driven economic forces are the key factor in determining the goals of the education system, emphasizing how each student must become an economic entity, either by getting a job or by starting a business. Students, while they are still biding their time in school, are considered to be consumers, buying a product that will enable their economic futures.

One thing left out is the production of citizens or, if you will, deliberative democrats. This was Gutmann’s topic, and by looking at her three sources of authority—the state, parents, and educational professionals—we see how this movement has worked. In order to examine these models, we will use Gutmann’s work as a heuristic device to interpret business-influenced movements to reform public education. This involves the fit between the infusion of ideology “from above,” so to speak, and the strategies of business built from the ground up.

Proxies for Children, a Purported Insight, and Changed Questions: Agendas, Authority, and Influence

Why should not the business community also be considered a source of authority?

First, a bit more personal background. This paper is an elaboration of an insight, and I think it is worth going into the background. In 2012, when I was living in India, I reviewed galley proofs for my soon-to-be published book on U.S. education, the subtitle of which fairly describes its theme, *The Rhetoric Gap and How Research on Schools has Laid the Ground for New Business Models in Education*. The draft had been finished while I was still in the U.S., but after the proofs came out, I had a chance to make final changes.

One proposed addition was a thought I had about Gutmann’s work, particularly the three sources of authority she posited for education: the state, parents, and educational professionals. Why, I thought at the time, should the business community, which had great influence, not also be considered a source of authority? Certainly, much of what was embedded in new education reform proposals were based on an economistic common sense. Such were the underlying principles of a neoliberal reform: Competition is the way to efficiency; successful schools would multiply while failing schools should be closed down; business practices can be imported into the education system to great effect; an entrepreneurial ethos can guide the system’s development.

I wrote a few paragraphs, but they were not included in the book since they went beyond the 5% that, by contract, I was allowed to add. (In this case, the marketplace of ideas was limited by marketing concerns.) Still, the question remained as how business had as much influence as it did when it did not have direct authority.

I want to stress that it is the latter question I am exploring. I am *not* asking why Gutmann (1987) did not include business influence in her work. Some readers of earlier versions have suggested that I sought “to demolish” Gutmann, but that was by no means the point. It seems fairly clear why business would not have been included in Gutmann’s work as a source of authority. First, business is from a different sphere and does not have a custodial relation with children. Second, business influence was not nearly as great as it later became.

Yes, Gutmann’s (1987) work could certainly be seen in a much different light—perhaps many different lights—because of how education reform has unfolded since she wrote the book in the 1980s. Neoliberalism and business influence do change the problematic, and it might very well be that the relationship between democracy and education has to be rethought in an era in which technology has enabled a new type of globalization that has the potential to undercut democratic efforts at the national level. While it would have to engage with the question I am posing, that sort of reworking of the theory of democratic education—a reevaluation of its underpinnings under changed circumstances—is a task that is beyond me.

Rather, this piece seeks to answer another question: How have business and investor classes achieved a large measure of success in advancing their agenda in education? How can we track their influence? They answer to that is, of course, partly to be had from identifying and tracking their superior resources, but even that has not given them direct authority over education. Instead, what business-influenced education reform has done to gain influence is

²⁸ The list comes from Harvey, 2006. See also Prechel and Harms, 2007, pp. 3–17. For the manipulation of crisis, see Klein, 2007.

to change the questions that the three sources of authority seek to answer.

For the state, educational purpose has narrowed, and political citizenship has changed to economic competency. The question has changed from “how to create proper democratic citizens who can someday participate in national deliberations?” to “how to serve customers so they can some day navigate the changing eddies and currents of the global market?”

For parents, they have been co-opted; rather than partners in developing and maintaining educational institutions, they have become consumers. Their question has changed from “how to contribute to a collective effort to build a fair, equitable, and high-quality school system?” to “how do I make the best choice for my child among the educational options laid before them by a system based on choice?”

For educators, they have been marginalized and subjected to attack. The question has changed from “how can I seek out from administrators what I need to enable me to teach?” to “how can I avoid being blamed for the failures that the system is now intent on spotlighting?”

Continuing with Gutmann’s (1987) sources of authority, all three serve as proxies for children in different ways. Proxies are needed for children because of their age and their stage of cognitive, emotional, intellectual, and political development; they are not thought capable of making informed choices (C. Martin, 2018). This depiction of competing proxies does a lot to explain educational discourse by looking at the three groups that at some point have custody over or a compelling interest in the welfare of the child—the parents (in general), the school (*in locus parentis*), and the state (in extreme conditions enforcing community and legal standards).

These three sources balance and check each other in different and important ways. First, the state seeks to shape individuals so as to serve state purposes—in war, agriculture, industry, technology, governance, etc. It may also seek to fulfill an ideological vision of what a society should be and how individuals would be accordingly shaped by the educational system. This might be deemed the ethical content of the state—ideas that vary according to the cultural specificities of a particular state and society. In using this as its justification, the state can call on parents and educators to comply with established norms.

Second, similarly, parents often work to impart ethical content and to transmit cultural traditions, to leave a legacy of their own, and to have a sense of satisfaction in seeing their children become independent adults. As participants in discourse and voting, they have an impact on who state actors are and what state actors can deem legitimate. Third, those who actually engage in education out of the home, as their profession, their calling, or both, draw on both theory and practice to make the claim that they know—or at least have a more informed perception of—what is best for the child and for the future individual the child will become. Plus, whatever the theory and directives for education are, they must be implemented, and it is educators who will implement them.

Accordingly, all three may be proxies for children. Since children do have limited capacities when compared to adults, the argument is that they would likely benefit from having a proxy who is both honest and insightful. That does not mean, however, that the proxies don’t have their own agendas or that trustees or proxies can be trusted fully. While it is an issue that cannot be considered fully here, we ought to remember there are two meanings to trust—one based on intent, the other on capacity. I may trust my brother with my life, but I won’t have him fix my roof since he does not know the first thing about construction or carpentry. Good intentions or not, the roof is likely to fall in.²⁹

Still, by looking at the conflicts between these three sources of authority, one can do a lot. Gutmann (1987), as a theoretical project, argued that none of them are sufficient unto themselves; thus, a democracy and the system of democratic education on which it relies must achieve a balance among the three. In practical and empirical terms, one can look at how issues arise from one source of authority or another and how actors in the three spheres interact to explain outcomes on policy issues ranging from school funding to sex education to prayer in schools.

What the depiction of three sources of authority does not do, however, is explain the rise of one of the most powerful influencers of education reform over the last four decades: business. Business influence differs in many ways from the three sources listed previously, but in particular it differs in that it has not normally been thought to have *direct* authority over education. Unlike the other three, business is not usually a custodial actor, the rare exceptions being in those cases where schools are run as for-profit entities, and these only account for a very small percentage of minor students in K–12 settings.

Just as it does not have direct custody, business has a different conception of trust. In *The Logic and Limits of Trust* (1983), Barber spoke of how business espouses and wants others to embrace “the indirect road.” He described it as follows:

29 The discussion on “trusting in intent” versus “trusting in capacity” hardly ends there, either.

On the issue of intent, it is not clear that people would take their trustee role seriously. After all, they might just feel that now they have two votes, and it is thus open to misuse. It is hardly clear even in the case of parents that they would treat this proxy vote differently from their own—a proxy should be concerned with the interests of the individual for whom they are proxies.

Even more vexing is the issue of capacity: Could the trustee proxies actually know the preferences of those whose votes they hold in trust? Could they be able to predict which vote will lead to the greatest good for those whose votes they hold in trust?

Overall, we have two worries: How seriously do they take their own role as a proxy voter? How informed are they? In a brief argument, we can draw on the work of Bernard Barber (1983) on trust. Barber treats trust as a complex notion in which expectations of future performance vie with beliefs in good intentions. Accordingly, I argue elsewhere that one way of describing the paradigm shift in education is to say there has been a shift in the mode of trust from models based on family, political, and philanthropic spheres to a model based on business interactions.

Social control over service to the public welfare is assigned not to public expectations of direct fiduciary obligations and their fulfillment, but to the indirect competitive mechanisms of the market. That is, the profit incentive, operating through the market, will ensure indirectly that businesses effectively serve the public good. (Barber, p. 101)

Moreover, while the state, parents, and educators all have agendas of their own, they are thought secondary to their interests in the well-being of the student. Perhaps this is an optimistic view, but they nonetheless contrast with the profit-seeking motives of those engaged in business; these are primary, and their agenda is more obvious. While a parent's agenda might be to want a child to be educated to make the parent's life easier, to advance their own careers, or to make their life more secure (for instance, by doing tasks around the home, by working in a family business or on a family farm, or by eventually taking care of aged parents), there are limits on this, limits, for instance, that educators would articulate and that the state might impose if a child was taken out of school.³⁰

Similarly, if educators are self-interested, parents and the state could potentially step in; indeed, such accusations have been a prominent way of attacking teachers and teachers unions, claiming they do not put "children first." Finally, if the state inculcated a culture that was directed only to the state's interests, such as a military culture, this would generally (with perhaps the exceptions of ancient Sparta and Plato's imagined Republic) result in at least some resistance from parents and educators; most parents do not want their children to be cannon fodder, and many educators have qualms about recommending their students enter the military.

Gutmann (1987) discussed why all three sources are insufficient by themselves early in the book; without looking at self-interested agendas, she found them wanting nonetheless. None of these can stand alone. The family state is unacceptable because it forbids parents from influencing their children's upbringing. The state of families is unacceptable because children need some liberty vis-à-vis their parents. The state of individuals is unacceptable because it keeps us from teaching virtues or inculcating children with visions of the good life (pp. 26–37).

Business, however, is of questionable standing for multiple reasons. Business cannot operate without profits or "margins" (at least not for long). Traditionally, it does not have direct authority over children. In some schemas, businesses are in a different sphere altogether—not the sphere of reproduction but instead the sphere

of production.³¹ Nonetheless, business has effects—it channels liberty into a particular vision of the good life; it affects how parents influence their children; it treats educators as instruments.

While business does not have direct authority over education, the indirect influence of business and investor classes has been enormous, making the question of how to track it quite pressing. One way is to, in the well-worn phrase, follow the money.³² Yes, businesses can and do lobby government; businesses can start and have started chains of private or charter schools. Also, businesses can and do produce educational products, ranging from textbooks and curricula to data systems, standardized tests, and computer-assisted instruction; businesses can and do enter into public discourse; businesses can and do start foundations and give money to educational institutions; and businesses can and do support educational alternatives, but they affect the project of public education indirectly.

Another way, which does not preclude the first, is to focus on the sources of authority in education and how they are influenced. Businesses are not one of the three primary sources of authority and traditionally do not exercise authority directly. Rather, they have a secondary authority or what may be thought of as a mediated influence. Each of the three primary sources of authority is influenced indirectly by framing the question of how to provide public education in a particular way so as to redirect one of the primary sources.

Three core examples are the standards movement, school choice, and attacks on educators. These illustrate a paradigm change in the provision of education. First, we have the standards movement (which morphed into the Common Core) seeking to redirect state attention from the civic components of education to the "rigor" of core academic subjects (especially mathematics, English language, and scientific technical subjects), which include the key skills needed by business, leaving the "richness" of art, music, and literature in the second string.

Second, we have an accompanying shift from considering students as future citizens to considering them contemporary consumers and future workers or entrepreneurs. The first takes the form of school choice, in which parental authority is redirected from the *provision* of public education to the *selection among* different existing public education and publicly funded education options. Along with this is a switch from considering students as participants in democracy to preparing them primarily for economic roles; citizenship becomes, primarily, economic citizenship.

30 For a few years I was one of the managers of a residence for developmentally challenged adults in the Boston area. One of the residents, I will call her Tessa, was taken out of school after the fifth grade and kept at home in order to do cleaning and cooking. While Tessa was certainly challenged to some degree, my opinion was that if she had the opportunity to get an education, she would have been able to lead a life much like anyone else's. While I don't imagine that special education programs were robust at the time, and that may well have contributed to her parent's decision, Tessa was more challenged emotionally than cognitively; her absence from school, lack of rudimentary skills, and lack of socialization were the greater factors leading to her need to be in a supported setting.

31 The state also may be said to be in a different and third sphere—the sphere of coercion, since it controls the legitimate means of coercion. However, that is not its only function, and it is also in most cases the leading apparatus through which a human community implements collective decisions, including establishing a school system.

32 One often follows the money through foundations, such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Walton Family Foundation, and the Broad Foundation. See Reckhow, 2012. See also Ravitch, 2010. If I recall correctly, she also uses the phrase "follow the money."

Finally, and related to this, there are direct attacks on the quality and motives of professional educators, attacking “bad” teachers as the cause of educational failures and attacking teachers unions as distributional coalitions that protect the incompetent; accompanying this has been a change in teacher evaluation, including using standardized tests to gauge the effectiveness of teachers and introducing new rubrics for observation in the classroom.³³

I will try to unpack that sometime, but it is important to note that there is a common element linking all three: testing. Tests are not the only factor, but they were at the core of the model of standardized tests and a system of data collection. Testing is how we determine if children meet their standards. Testing is how we assess school success and failure and which schools stay open and which ones close. Testing is how teachers are evaluated—do they increase their students’ scores?—how teachers might earn “merit pay,” and how teachers are promoted or fired.

Contrasting Perspectives on Testing Regimes, Productivity, and Creativity

If we accept that there has been a paradigm change—or at least a contestation of how the paradigm should change—we should start with testing.³⁴ Testing is central to contemporary education reform in the same way caffeine is central to choosing among types of coffee. There are different views on how testing should be used just as people differ over how much of a jolt their coffee should give them. There are those who advocate testing as the essential element

33 Henry Giroux (2012), Ken Saltman (2012), Diane Ravitch (2010), Alex Means (2013), Richard Rothstein (2010a, 2010b), and many others have highlighted attacks on teachers as central to the educational reforms promoted and financed by the mega wealthy, such as Bill Gates, Rupert Murdoch, and Eli Broad. These reforms promote privatization, charters, online classes, and high-stakes testing, but the flip side of this is deprofessionalization. Teacher autonomy is reduced or eliminated; teacher training is thought unimportant; teachers unions are denigrated as mere distributional coalitions, at the same time impugning the character and the unions that support them.

34 While this paper considers the neoliberal period, from the mid-1970s (or even the late 1960s) to the present, with special emphasis on the use of standardized testing beginning in the late 1980s and 1990s, one might nevertheless easily connect this to the arguments between pedagogical and administrative progressives from the 1920s onward. The latter “sought to apply a top-down model where expert bureaucrats ran schools seeking social and economic efficiency [with] a primary focus on organizational performance and aggressive ‘uniform’ goals (high-stakes tests, evaluation rubrics, and standards),” while the former pursued “student-centered learning approaches” informed by theories of cognitive development. For a brief summary with exciting illustrations, see the source of the quotes, Heilig, 2013. I would note, however, that there are significant differences, especially in that administrative progressives followed a statist model, not a market-emulation model. That is to say, they were concerned with organizational issues and operations protocols, not entrepreneurial ethos and market emulation—it was a different species of capitalism. Moreover, many advocates of charters (e.g., J. Nathan) have strong arguments to make on pedagogical, organizational culture, and developmentalist grounds.

in an accountability regime, and those who worry that testing takes away from higher educational aims.

No one disputes, however, that beginning in the 1980s, there was an effort to evaluate educational outcomes by using standardized tests.³⁵ The watchword was accountability. According to Klees (2014), “the emphasis was on narrow views of efficiency more than equity, implemented through narrow versions of accountability focused on testing and measurement.” This was in sharp contrast with “the 1960s and 1970s, [when] there was attention focused on the inequities and inequalities of education, the marginalization of many people around the world, and the need for substantially more resources to be devoted to all levels of education.” He compared this with the post-1980s period when neoliberalism became ascendant and “led to a sea change in discourse and policy. . . Basic problems of public schools have been ignored; instead, policies promoted market solutions through private schools, vouchers, charters, and the like” (pp. 13).

There was also activity from government agencies, foundations, and universities. The University of Pittsburgh, for instance, started a New Standards Project™ in which the phrase “New Standards™” was trademarked (Ford, 2012, p. xxxi). While no single set of national tests was ever created, almost every state had statewide, high-stakes tests by the end of the 1990s, and this was encouraged at the federal level. After 2002, the George W. Bush administration formalized this leverage with the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) program. NCLB called for annual testing of all students in English language (but not so much literature) and math from grades three through eight, with plans for expansion to science and to other grade levels.

While the expansion plans were never met and the Obama administration rolled back some aspects of NCLB, one must note that support for testing was bipartisan. Then Senator Edward Kennedy was key to getting NCLB passed in 2002. Also, despite referring to NCLB as broken, Obama Secretary of Education Arne Duncan used the law as a leveraging instrument, giving states waivers to NCLB *only* after they agreed to implement some pet policies, such as creating more charter schools (thus expanding school choice) and using student test scores in teacher evaluations.³⁶

Perhaps the most prevalent bipartisan element is what seems to be the underlying theme of the neoliberal era: Schools are failures, and it is the fault of teachers. Illustrative is the NCLB

35 As I argue in *Social Learning and Hegemony*, data technologies made this qualitatively different than other such attempts, but it was hardly the first time testing in the U.S. was controversial. See Kaestle, 2012; Reese, 2013; and Gould, 1981.

36 In 2015, Duncan said NCLB “has long been broken. We can no longer afford that law’s one-size-fits-all approach, uneven standards, and low expectations for our educational system” (Miller, 2015).

Prior to that, he had, however, used the waiver process to require states to create more privately managed charter schools and to tie measures of student growth to teacher evaluations. See for instance, Brill, 2011, pp. 227–233; Derthick and Rotherham, 2012; Ravitch, 2012; and Emma, 2013.

system of deeming schools “failing” and then closing them down if they did not sufficiently improve. Also prominent is Democrats for Education Reform (DFER), a New York–based political action committee with its roots in “the data-driven business community” (Maranto & McShane, 2012). DFER promotes use of more charter schools, alternative school funding, an end to tenure, stricter teacher evaluations, standardized testing, and the Common Core educational standards. It has been highly influential, and it has been posited that Duncan’s elevation to secretary of education over Linda Darling-Hammond, Obama’s education transition chief, was indicative of their influence.³⁷

Public asset privatization and the importation of business practices were normalized during the Obama presidency. Calling “reform” a misnomer, Ravitch (2013) argued both that the “corporate reform movement,” with its close ties to the Obama administration, in fact “has its roots in an ideology that is antagonistic to public education” and that “the advocates for this cause seek not to reform public education but to transform it into an entrepreneurial sector of the economy” (p. 20, p. 19).

There were certain efforts to raise caps on the number of charter schools. Janelle Scott has identified an “emerging charter school policy-planning network” in which the “federal Department of Education, state legislatures, and philanthropies and private foundations have facilitated much of the growth of charter schools in urban school districts through their investment in charter school management organizations (CMOs) and through their investments in sundry advocacy organizations” (Scott, 2015, p. 132).³⁸

Perhaps more important, large sums of money were dedicated to building data systems to keep track of test scores, to link teachers to their students’ test results, and to fund merit pay programs based on that link (Ravitch, 2010, p. 183). Duncan’s chief of staff, Joanne Weiss, laid out for the readers of the *Harvard*

37 During the Bush-to-Obama transition, Darling-Hammond was considered the principal adviser to the Obama transition team. Nonetheless, Duncan, who had long known President Obama both in Chicago and on the basketball court, was chosen as secretary of education. But it wasn’t just their personal association; DFER founders—Whitney Tilson, Boykin Curry, and John Petry, all hedge fund “value investors”—recommended Duncan (Brill, 2011, pp. 223–225). This was of major significance: Darling-Hammond was a great proponent of an institution building model, while, according to Giroux and Saltman (2008), Duncan saw that neoliberal methods had a place in the real worlds of political and economic competition; with Arne Duncan, they said, “neoliberal ideology is on full display in the various connections he has established with the ruling political and business elite.” While Darling-Hammond was a strong advocate of building up a highly qualified teaching force (for her viewpoints on teachers, see Darling-Hammond, “Teacher Quality and Student Achievement,” as cited in J. K. Rice, 2003, pp. 2–3), Duncan used elements of market emulation models, including new evaluation systems for teachers, that, while calling NCLB “broken,” built on both its underlying principles and its methods, especially the use of leverage to get states to adopt U.S. DOE reforms. See for instance, Bracey, 2009; Klein, Hoff, and Gewertz, 2008.

38 Scott referenced Zehr (2011).

Business Review how “the market for education technology is likely to accelerate” and entrepreneurs needed to be matched with school systems, including enabling “data-driven culture in their schools that depended on a formative assessment regimen” (Weiss, 2011).

Moreover, in February 2010, President Obama took a stand in favor of closing low-performing schools that was straight from the DFER playbook. He defended the firing of all 93 school employees at Central Falls High School in Rhode Island because the school had failed to measure up. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan praised the courage of those who made the decision. Whatever courage they displayed, they seemed to ignore that the majority of school failures are in areas of concentrated poverty and that student achievement is highly correlated to the educational attainment and economic level of one’s parents (Ford, 2012, pp. 81, 100, 124; see also Goldstein, 2011).

Yes, there are direct actions, but for the most part, it can be described as “the natural state” in a market system where people and groups pursue their interests largely independently. Again, a question that arises is whether this is somehow a plot—a grand conspiracy. If we mean that the major players meet in smoke-filled rooms, then the answer is again most likely no. If we mean that the players talked with one another or read the same materials, the answer is often yes. But that is not the main point. This is not meant to be a criticism of conspiratorial business actions but of pervasive business influence, and that influence comes not only from foundations and individuals seeking to alter the system but in largest part from the entrepreneurial opportunities offered by opening up the system. Thus, when we look at these reforms, we don’t have to preclude the presence of good intentions, but we do have to understand that the dynamic forces come from the promise of future profits:

Some sincerely believe they are helping poor black and brown children escape from failing public schools. Some think they are on the side of modernization and innovation . . . others see an opportunity to make money in a large, risk-free, government-funded sector or an opportunity for personal advancement and power. Some—a small but important number—believe they are acting rationally by treating the public education sector as an investment opportunity (Ravitch, 2013, p. 20).³⁹

Business may seem to be a nonspecific term, but the vagueness disappears when we ask the question “What does one learn in business school?” Though they have their effects, we are not talking about the infusion of capitalist ideologies justifying the system as a whole but rather the practices one must adopt to remain

39 Again, it is worth pointing out that ideological coalition formation draws from groups with different beliefs who converge: true believers who firmly believe that research shows that we should adopt these measures to improve the system; political actors who want to adopt these positions for political advantage; and those who see the adoption as advantaging them economically. This is, of course, just the crudest of thumbnail sketches, but one important in understanding the formation of ideological and strategic positions, where they come from, how they develop, and how they interact over time.

competitive. In other words, it is first about strategies—ideologies are secondary. People in business internalize the principles and practices that characterize a private market economy and can justify their being applied to the pursuit of the public good.

Business approaches to education do dovetail with a privatization ideology, including the promotion of public-private partnerships, but still it is about strategy:

[I]deas from business and business leaders have been marketed as important to the improvement of education . . . Sometimes this entire business-oriented approach is subsumed under the heading of “new public management.” . . . School district superintendents and university presidents are now called chief executive officers, and too often are selected with a business background instead of an education one. And, most common, is that task forces and commissions on education routinely give pride of place to business executives, as if business strategies translate to education strategies. (Klees, 2014, p. 144)⁴⁰

We also see the increased use of terms that are business-oriented, such as “best practices,” even if we cannot know that they are really the best as opposed to being merely preferred by a select group. “Best practices” are a mixed bag at best and can include, as I can attest as a teacher who gets a lot of them, your assistant supervisors sending out multiple group emails that cheerily begin, “Hey, Team!”

Still, this is not a conspiracy; rather, it is something one should expect. Just as a simple matter of backward planning, if someone has an economic perspective, then they are most likely interested in efficiency, competition, and comparative advantage and, consequently, would likely support *as a public good* a program that produces strong-minded and capable economic actors who can navigate the market.

Consider these contingencies:

First, if you had a list of imperatives for education that are developed with the goal of allowing for some sort of egalitarianism—at least in so much as a person’s talents would be recognized and nurtured.

Second, if this list had been developed by looking at the possible ways in which the pursuit of profits may produce undesirable social consequences, including the concentration of power, and if this list also seeks to create a democratic citizen who considers the general good, balancing it with their individual interests.

Third, if education were thought of, at least in part, as a way of balancing out the inequitable (economic, social, and perhaps even natural inequities).

If you had all these things, then you would also expect to some extent there would be a similar list, with content that was

40 Klees added, “This is ubiquitous and has given most educators a lot of headaches. Primary, secondary, and higher education have suffered from the call for business plans, strategic plans, performance budgets, right-sizing, impact evaluation, merit pay, and the like. Evaluations of teachers have multiplied, usually illegitimately tied to a few very narrow indicators.” (p. 144)

diametrically opposed, derived from other interests and other perspectives. The list might assume the lack of egalitarianism was not a big problem, that the market would take care of that. It might assume that the social consequences of ignoring the profit motive are even more undesirable, that the concentration of power allows for tough discretionary judgments, and that the appeal to the consumer instead of to the citizen advances the interests of the individual. It might highlight how education can select individuals by merit and let them advance.

Business perspectives most often hold that we set the strong-minded and capable economic actors who can navigate the market in motion and watch them make change. Equity and social justice would be secondary concerns. If, on the one hand, one has a perspective that emphasizes democratic practice, one would support a program that produces critical and creative thinkers—capable democratic actors who, among other things, might question the wisdom of constantly following the directions in which the market and its incentives take us.

This is not to say these perspectives cannot share some goals. While they may very well differ in terms of both social costs and how to create a productive system, the two perspectives may overlap in many regards, especially in terms of productivity in the long run. Presumably creativity and critical thinking skills are necessary for both. But, on the other hand, there are differences in priority—for one perspective looks for the aggregate and the other for the communal, or at least the mutually created.

One can argue that recent American education reform is tinged with the irony that it might have been counterproductive, even in economic terms (Ford, 2012, pp. 120–130).⁴¹ Since the 1980s, reforms were meant to increase economic performance by introducing higher standards and promoting accountability through the instrument of a testing regime. The results are, however, mixed at best—the “standards” movement in the 1980s and how it then segued into the data-driven system of assessment we have now are of questionable value, but they match fairly well with business perspectives on how to train, select, and evaluate employees. Of course, in public education, selection is a much trickier issue, because we presumably do not want to exclude students, but the business perspective still has its effects.

Moreover, business influence is driven by business opportunity. Weiss (2011) pointed out one example directly:

The development of common standards and shared assessments radically alters the market for innovation in curriculum development, professional development, and formative assessments. Previously, these markets operated on a state-by-state basis, and often on a district-by-district basis. But the adoption of common standards and shared assessments means that education entrepreneurs will enjoy national markets where the best products can be taken to scale.

There is a problem, however. By using the word “entrepreneur,” Weiss (2011) might be drawing on an image of a

41 The following several paragraphs are a condensed version, without including all the citations or nuances, of the argument in “Achieving Creativity” of “Section H: Consider the Hero.”

garage-incubated start-up or a mom-and-pop shop—and there are some examples of those—but taking something to scale requires huge resources. So, we end up with McGraw Hill or Pearson Education, which labels itself “The world’s learning company.” Pearson’s annual revenues tripled, from \$2 billion in the early 2000s to roughly \$6 billion in the 2014 fiscal year, and its “increasing profits come, in no small part, from the company’s continued influence over federal and global education initiatives which has led to the wholesale adoption of Pearson’s products in nearly every aspect of public education today” (see Attick & Boyles, 2016, pp. 5–19).

Meanwhile, the irony is that creativity among youth has declined, and education reforms are all over the place. In some places, drill-and-kill is adopted as much as problem-based learning because the tests are standardized and the answers, many believe, can be memorized, at least a lot of them (Kim, 2011). When Jonathan Plucker, a U.S. creativity specialist, was asked while visiting China to identify trends in American education, he described the U.S. focus on standardized curriculum, rote memorization, and nationalized testing. “After my answer was translated, they just started laughing out loud. They said, ‘You’re racing toward our old model. But we’re racing toward your model, as fast as we can’” (quoted in Bronson & Merryman, 2010).⁴²

However, while China moves elsewhere and the European Union declared a European Year of Creativity and Innovation (which involved “holding conferences on the neuroscience of creativity, financing teacher training, and instituting problem-based learning programs—curricula driven by real-world inquiry—for both children and adults” [quoted in Bronson & Merryman, 2010]), the U.S. has seemed bent on market model reforms and standardized tests of basic skills, neither of which has been shown to improve education anywhere else in the world. However, outsourcing of assessment through the use of standardized tests fits right in with the market model, so we should not be surprised that they go hand-in-hand.

Maybe it is more than irony but a central paradox: Efforts in the U.S. over the last 30 years—the national attention on education reform as a means to keep the U.S. from slipping in international economic competition—seem to have resulted in a system that has gotten worse at its core, in its philosophical tenets, and in its ultimate effect on children and young adults, placing unwonted pressure on them and stifling their creativity and stunting their emotional lives. Arguably, it has also made the U.S. less competitive economically.⁴³

42 While I have great respect for Plucker, to what extent we are rushing to rote memorization is contestable.

43 As noted, this is the summary of an argument I have made elsewhere. Some advance readers have suggested it is polemical and unsupported. While I admit it is both speculative and on the polemical side, it is supported by reference to the literature on creativity as well as a logical progression:

- 1) Creativity is an important ingredient in economic advance;

So, to some extent, one can see these two currents coming closer together. Business, after all, is not one thing but many activities requiring different skills. However, if we accept business is nonetheless nearly unanimous in opposing government programs that redistribute wealth, then we are likely to conclude that the thrust for market-based reforms is not a stand-alone movement—it is nestled in the shift toward neoliberalism on a global level.

At the same time standards-based reform was being transformed into a monitoring regime—one might say a modern Panopticon—other reforms, including the advent of charter schools, attacks on teachers’ collective bargaining rights, and the effort to restructure remuneration based on proxy measures of productivity, employed the hegemonic logic of late-20th- and early-21st-century neoliberal political economy regimes—weakening public control and relying on market mechanisms. And it will all get worse if these concentric circles have their way—if teachers, instead of having some degree of autonomy, become the handmaidens of assessment.

Economic logics and democratic logics will never perfectly overlap, for education or anything else. The promotion of creative and critical thinking might be a common ground for both economic and democratic perspectives, but from a business perspective, creative and critical thinking may have a negative aspect to the extent they question authority structures and the status quo. So, too, might deliberative democracy be considered an encumbrance to be overcome or an obstacle to be avoided.

Capitalist Exploitation, Good and Bad: Contending Perspectives Historically Considered

We can group many issues together by talking about “the Problems of capital(ism)’s excesses.” If we take the three factors of production, land, labor, and capital, the last is the dominant factor in capitalism.⁴⁴ Moreover, the way capitalism works, capital is meant to exploit the other factors of production.

I do not necessarily mean “exploit” in a pejorative sense but merely in the more generic sense of “to put in use.” A business operator who employs capital and finds a job for labor or turns

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- 2) the U.S.-instituted standardized testing on a nearly nationwide basis in the 1990s;
 - 3) at the same time creativity began to decline in the U.S.;
 - 4) therefore, it is reasonable to argue that the testing regime may well have reduced creativity;
 - 5) and thus, it may very well have made the U.S. less competitive than it would have been otherwise by removing an important ingredient that helps the economy to advance. QED. Almost.

44 This is treating capitalism in the abstract, but concrete capitalism always involves other factors. For instance, antebellum capitalism in the South of the U.S. can plausibly be described as a combination of capitalism, patriarchy, and racism. In Germany and Japan, one might venture that the three legs of the stool would be capitalism, the inherited post-feudal honorific system, based on notions of the landed aristocracy and the power of the landed classes and a burgeoning nationalism that developed in the face of military threats from other nations.

marginal land into productive farmland is at the core of capitalism's energy and productivity. Moreover, business is set up to "exploit"—to put factors of production into play and profit. This is generally to the good, but it has a dark side, for business is not set up to consider the negative effects on labor or land. Predictably, workers are not always treated well, and the environment is often abused.

In sum, nonpejorative exploitation is not sharply set off from excessive exploitation. The difference is an ethical or moral judgment, and that judgment is extrinsic to the core processes of production and profit-making. What is more, ethical and moral judgments are not made in isolation but within the context of an interacting culture in which business has great influence.

These norms are not disinterested but socially conditioned. Where, then, does one draw the line? What is acceptable exploitation? What goes beyond the pale?

As for education, there are additional questions. If strategies are proven to work in business, why would they not be applied to education? If business engages in segmentation strategies, shouldn't we be likely to find them at the core of business's approach to education?

These are questions that should properly be considered the terrain of deliberation in a democracy, but the emphasis on economic logics looks at this type of "limit-setting" by deliberation as an immense danger. So, too, is state regulation of economic projects. When we talk about speech, we worry about chilling effects and self-censorship. Business orientations also worry about chilling effects on strategies and actions, as well as the consequent decisions to curtail investment.

That is not to say that these worries are groundless, but the logic of business focused on profit and loss for the enterprise; considerations of social cost and social benefit are secondary and are largely outside their purview. The logic of deliberative democracy runs in the other direction; social cost and social benefit are primary, while the cost and benefits of individual and enterprises are for the most part considered in that context.⁴⁵

Let us, then, look briefly at the historical context of business influence and education.

Business influence is nothing new in the U.S., and current attacks on the public education system, which have been a constant of the discourse on American education for half a century (see Berliner & Biddle, 1995; Emery & Ohanian, 2004; Ford, 2012, "Section E: Quote and Research"), are also a way of restaging debates on education that go back to Horace Mann and the Common School movement. More pointedly, since the late 1800s, economic goals have been an important component informing education in the United States.⁴⁶

45 This is not to say they are equivalent—business logics can support private profits even if they are outweighed by social costs and often, as in the case of polluters, ignore negative externalities. Deliberative democracy, however, must take into account private costs.

46 Larry Cuban's "Making Public Schools Business-Like . . . Again," provides a succinct overview.

As identified by Kliebard (1986), there are four types of curricula that have vied for dominance in American schools:

- social efficiency, which urges that schools be oriented to economic needs and training of the work force
- humanism, or the liberal arts tradition, which emphasizes general intellectual skills and familiarity with the cultural traditions of society and understanding of other cultures
- social meliorism, which sees the schools as an instrument for social, political, and economic change
- developmentalism, which starts with the psychological development of the learner and the needs of the individual learner

While hardly new, the pervasive reach of business-oriented approaches is the most notable aspect of education reform since the 1980s. For the last nearly 40 years, the first goal has eclipsed the others. Consequently, social efficiency had been defined in terms of economic goals, and the humanist perspective has been challenged by the ideal of a "modern individual," competitive, entrepreneurial, and acquisitive, in keeping with the creation of a "nation of owners" (see Valdes, 2008, p. 6.).⁴⁷ In accordance, social meliorism has a new, highly influential strand—a school, with roots in the works of Joseph Schumpeter and Ayn Rand, in which the entrepreneur is the hero of history. Finally, developmentalism, in the most common neoliberal view, can be adequately addressed through Skinneresque theories and a type of mechanical causalism in which incentives, primarily monetary incentives as provided by the market, create the motive force of social change.

Business Logics and the Marginalization of Democratic Deliberation

It is noteworthy that the "social efficiency" approach, while not of recent vintage, was not how education was argued for in the early days of the republic. While it seems quite plausible to us that Americans prior to the 1860s would view education as an instrument of economic advance and development, "explicit connections between economic development and education by contemporaries were infrequent and vague. . . . Nowhere was the contribution of education to economic growth emphasized. . . . Even in treatises on political economy written by Americans in the 1820s and 1830s, education was a minor theme" (Kaestle, 1983, pp. 25–26).

Rather, education was seen in terms of vice and virtue. The want of education led to misery, immorality, and distress for the individual. Also, "republicanism united concepts of virtue, balanced government and liberty," and inculcation of the virtues of "discipline, sacrifice, simplicity and intelligence" were essential for the creation of republican citizens (Kaestle, 1983, pp. 4–5).⁴⁸ It was

47 Valdes takes this to be the Chilean model, but it can be applied more generally to neoliberal programs.

48 Kaestle pointed to Jefferson, Noah Webster, Benjamin Rush, and George Clinton as holding these views but questioned to what degree these were put into effect, noting that the institution of property taxes for schools was widely opposed.

this virtuous citizenry who would maintain that liberty and virtues, in turn, depended upon the education of all so that not only could the best men refine and articulate the general will but so, too, would the general population see the wisdom of their decisions.

With industrialization and urbanization, business influence was reflected in the model of mass education that developed in the first third of the 20th century and became the norm, more or less, for the rest of the century. That model has not been phased out, but it has been challenged by a wave of business influence that is markedly different.

Moving away from heavy industry to lean production and emphasizing how the individual must prepare themselves to shift from one employer to the next, perhaps a dozen times in a lifetime, a new model of education developed that represented “a sea change from the traditional outlook American business leaders [had] brought to school reform: one that sought to sort students and select only a few for higher-education, while sending the rest to the manufacturing, agricultural or service sectors.” In contrast, business reformers now

coalesce around an agenda that includes implementing Common Core academic standards and tying teacher evaluation, job security, and pay to students’ test scores. The underlying idea is that extraordinary teachers, with high standards for all students, can prepare every child to attend and succeed in college, regardless of a student’s socioeconomic disadvantages. (Goldstein, 2013)

Merit, specifically honed to find its place under the new, neoliberal sun, was at the core of the model; at the same time, public asset privatization, sky-rocketing college tuition, wage stagnation, and lower salaries for public school teachers made the model seem disingenuous.⁴⁹

49 While different studies find different results on changes in teacher remuneration, when adjusted for inflation, salaries have gone down somewhat nationwide, but with a wide variation among states, with Indiana having a 15% decline since 2000 and North Dakota having a 20% increase. *Business Insider*, using data from the Department of Education’s National Center for Education Statistics, found that while nominal teacher salary has increased, when adjusted for inflation, it was “about 1.3% lower than the \$61,275 (in 2017–2018 dollars) average in the 1999–2000 school year” (Perino & Kiersz, 2019). The Rockefeller Institute of Government’s “Teacher Salary Trends, 2002–17” tells us “average teacher salaries have grown across the nation from 2007–17 [but] in a number of states these increases haven’t kept pace with the salaries of other occupations” (Malatras & Simons, 2019). It is not clear, however, whether their figures were adjusted for inflation, but it seems they probably weren’t. (They included one piece of information that was really instructive, a table listing “Median Teacher Salary by Wealth Category” in New York state. In the wealthiest, “Low-Need” districts, the median was \$113,164; in “High-Need Urban/Suburban” and “High-Need Rural”—the least wealthy—median salaries were \$71,092 and \$56,613 respectively; in “Average-Need,” the median was \$65,106.) EdSurge, using data from the National Education Association (NEA) and the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), claimed there was a drop of 1.6%, adding “pay adjusted for the cost of living . . . decreased

While it is beyond the scope of this article, it helps to put these developments in historical context. We will look briefly at the conditions that made possible the advent of neoliberalism through several pathways: by force of arms in Chile, through the ballot box in the UK and the U.S., and with the aid of International Financial Institutions, such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), in much of the developing world. To focus specifically on education, one should then go on to look at how public K–12 education in the U.S. has been affected.⁵⁰

As Slavin (1999) once noted, education in the U.S. has been in “an uninterrupted state of reform . . . since the publication of *A Nation at Risk*” in 1983 under the Reagan administration and then continuing into the first of the Bush administrations. While he made this comment two decades ago, reforms have continued apace and uninterrupted reform continues. As just indicated, Slavin went on to note that “throughout that time, the main focus of reform has been on school governance and accountability” (p. 325). The link between governance and accountability—how they have shaped one another—may be the key to understanding the reform process.

A Nation at Risk (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), like other influential documents before it, linked the nation’s temporary failures in international competition to the supposed and systematic failures of the school system. All in all, the purposes of education were narrowed, with civics, art and music, and physical education being marginalized and science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) programs expanded.⁵¹ The emphasis became job and college readiness; “accountability” became a watchword of those who called for systematic reform; and a single metric of “achievement”—achievement as measured by standardized tests—became ascendant.

as much as 15 percent between the years 2000 through 2017” (Abamu, 2018). Finally, the NEA itself announced, “Average Teacher Salary Down 4.5 percent, NEA Report Finds,” based on its annual “Rankings of the States 2018 and Estimates of School Statistics” (NEA, 2019).

50 Again, this is something I work to do in both *Social Learning and Hegemony* (Ford, 2016a) and *Democratic Education and Markets* (Ford, n.d.). The two works are interconnected.

51 As an almost embarrassed afterthought, some STEM programs added the letter “A” for “Art,” to become STEAM in about 2014. STEAM is a movement championed by the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD). It nonetheless still has an economic motivation:

In this climate of economic uncertainty, America is once again turning to innovation as the way to ensure a prosperous future. Yet innovation remains tightly coupled with STEM to STEAM Science, Technology, Engineering and Math—the STEM subjects. Art + Design are poised to transform our economy in the 21st century just as science and technology did in the last century. We need to add Art + Design to the equation—to transform STEM into STEAM. (STEM to STEAM website, accessed June 2016, <http://stemtosteam.org/>)

If it works, maybe we will all see the clouds move across the sky and get to pick the building that we want to live in.

One must also consider whether, in supporting both free market orthodoxy and the idea that schools be reformed on a market emulation model, reform has made room for those who would privatize, profit, and at the extreme, engage in predatory corporate behavior (see, for instance, Faux, 2012). This is a systematic issue—in opening public education to private enterprise, inevitably there is a systematic effect as individual incentives aggregate and become a political force.

These numerous and parallel efforts do have substantial effects, so this does not necessarily mean that we must resort to “conspiracy” theories. “Movement” might be a better word, or we could speak of it as a reaction to circumstances. A blackout and an electrical outage are not part of a conspiracy among looters to create the conditions possible for looting, but when the conditions are right, then people will step in—it is predictable, and sociologists presumably can pretty much tell us with a reasonable degree of accuracy which situations are more likely to result in looting (Genevie et al., 1987; Leverentz, 2012; Rosenfeld, 1997).

Economists presumably can make similar predictions about markets—that, since a market with minimal regulations will have actors who are less than high-minded, some unsavory things will result. But here the analogy breaks down, for presumably the looters do not have any influence on the electric company. Those engaging in predatory practices and profiteering, however, do have political influence and therefore may very well have effects on policy.

I don’t want to be as alarmist as the sometimes literally inflammatory looting analogy suggests—this is the extreme end of things. But it is also worse than looting (and closer to a conspiracy) in that the parallel efforts at reform have as a goal opening up the public education system to private enterprise. These include presumably nonpredatory, but profit-making, enterprises—“good corporate citizens,” such as Microsoft and Facebook—that engage in broad philanthropic endeavors but also have agendas, in terms of both their core businesses and creating a business-friendly environment overall (see Greene, 2015; Reckhow & Snyder, 2014; Snyder, 2015).⁵²

Here the prestige of innovation is used in order to appropriate authority, but instead of pursuing that path, let me for now just mention that the reputation of being the new thinkers who will “lead us to a better world” is counter-balanced by some more typical business leanings. Microsoft was long famous for short-term contracts and the use of temporary workers; they were not

52 More accurately, it is the Gates and Zuckerberg foundations rather than Microsoft and Facebook themselves. I tend to think that distinction is not all that important. Even if there is a wall between the mother corporation and the philanthropic foundation similar to the wall between the business, news, and editorial sides of a news organization, one would be surprised to find that the offspring foundation had markedly different views than the founders who started the companies. While that is not as likely to be true of older foundations, such as Annenberg or Ford, it would be true of newer ones, which invoke “venture philanthropy” and “social entrepreneurship” and claim to be innovative, ambitious, and strategic—in short, more like a business.

only a leader in technology, they were also a leader in the implementation of many neoliberal business practices, including hiring so-called “perma-temp,” long-term temporary employees who work for an extended period for a single staffing client.⁵³

Outsourcing to business service providers potentially allows for reductions in wages for the contracted-out jobs (Houseman & Heinrich, 2015). In particular, the word “perma-temp” refers to a form of domestic outsourcing that reduces wages and contributes to worker insecurity; in contrast with “offshoring,” the service provider is located in the same country.⁵⁴ Like outsourcing, offshoring is one of multitudinous global processes of neoliberalism and market orientation in which increasing pressure is put on local labor markets and on individuals to be flexible. As Bourdieu (1998) stated, “competition is extended to individuals themselves, through the individualization of the wage relationship.”

This makes social logic subservient to business imperatives—businesses must compete; society must adapt to business necessities. There is little room for deliberation and democratic outcomes because the market allows few and limited options.

The analogy is with Darwin: You must find your niche in the supposedly natural world of economic competition. As Harvey (2005) argued, what is left is only a core economic logic based on competition and efficiency—the well-being of individuals can best be advanced “by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade” (p. 2). Conceptions that are at the center of liberal democracy, such as conceptions of fairness and liberty—the Rawlsian essentials that we find in Gutmann’s work—are de-emphasized and redefined in business-friendly terms.

Anti-union arguments are a chief example of this. Because they do not accept the outcomes of the market, the labor organization is derided as the formation of distributional coalitions that are somehow thought corrupt. But this is a more general phenomenon. Fairness is not the chance to follow a path that leads to self-realization—it is to have equal access to the limited opportunities the market provides.

Education is a chief example. It is reconfigured; “the fatal obstinacy” of the discipline of economics “plays a determining role in the production of goods and services as in the production of the producers themselves” (Harvey, 2005, p. 2). In this framing, education is never taken on its own terms. Beyond that, the imperatives of education in general—building community, looking to the well-being of future individuals—and of democratic

53 In 2000, Microsoft Corp. paid

\$97 million to settle a federal lawsuit from employees who claimed the software giant classified them as “temporary” workers for years to deny them standard benefits such as health insurance and the lucrative employee stock purchase plan, thereby saving the company millions. (D. Wilson, 2000)

54 The term seems first to have arrived in print with Eisenberg, 1999. See also Houseman and Heinrich, 2015.

education in particular, what Gutmann calls “conscious social reproduction,” are explicitly rejected.

The justificatory discourse presents

the economic world [as] a pure and perfect order, implacably unrolling the logic of its predictable consequences, and prompt to repress all violations by the sanctions that it inflicts, either automatically or—more unusually—through the intermediary of its armed extensions, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the policies they impose: reducing labour costs, reducing public expenditures and making work more flexible (Bourdieu, 1998; see also Blyth, 2013a, 2013b; Stark, 2006).

Given this background of ideological (and real) struggles,⁵⁵ we should not be reprimanded for thinking there was an effort to reform the education system that had to be politically organized and institutionally secured. Could this include a refutation of Gutmann’s work? While it does require one to include events, such as the 1983 issuance of *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform*, that predate the 1987 publication of *Democratic Education*, this is a case that is not hard to make.

For one thing, previous to the book, Gutmann published articles on democracy and education (Gutmann, 1982a, 1982b, 1983a, 1983b), and it is highly likely that there were drafts of the book in limited circulation. But I remind the reader that the argument is not that neoliberal education reformers actually sat down and read Gutmann’s book and only then decided on a strategy to reshape the schools. Rather, I find it really curious that one could read the reform movement in that way and make sense of it.

In this way, the “conceit” I spoke of was preceded by puzzlement. What such a reading would reveal is not merely differing opinions but a fundamental opposition between those who want the schools to develop and implement programs promoting

55 Advocates of the market often claim that they are “without ideology.” “End of ideology” (e.g., Bell) and “end of history” (e.g., Fukuyama) arguments depict the liberal order—the combination of liberal democracy and mostly self-regulating markets—as the culmination of human history, an institutional end point. I am instead using “ideology” in a nonpejorative sense, as descriptive and conveying foundational understandings, much in line with the way an anthropologist or sociologist would use “culture.” As Geuss (1981) has pointed out, the use of the term “ideology” differs depending on research context. In the context of social anthropology (i.e., the study of human social organization), ideology can be used in a “purely descriptive sense” that “is non-evaluative” in that one neither praises nor blames those who have an ideology (pp. 4–5). In other words, calling something an ideology means the question of whether it is good, bad, too simplistic, or too complex is held in abeyance. Indeed, my assumption is that everyone has an ideology—less biased, more biased, whatever. To criticize someone for having an ideology would be like criticizing someone for breathing. While that doesn’t mean the air we breathe isn’t sometimes bad, the holding of an ideology is a necessary element, and we will breathe whatever is there. (Someone has suggested that I should quote David Foster Wallace on fish and water; instead, but I think I will stick with just this.)

deliberative democracy and those who want schools shaped to meet economic ends. It may even call for a great work of synthetic political theory that would bring these two different approaches together, but that is hardly what I am trying to do here.

Rather, at the risk of repeating myself, this is a heuristic approach—a practical method of discovery that makes no claim that it is optimal or perfect or true. The comparison is meant to show that opposition in detail and how the education reform movement in the U.S. since the 1980s has both changed the basic structure of our public education system and given insufficient weight to its democratic purposes.

Both came after the 1970s, when the locus of global power shifted. Individual national economies, all with their own national bourgeoisie, become increasingly integrated, forming “historic blocs”—dominant configurations of material capabilities, ideologies, and institutions—forged by elites and that transcend territorial boundaries.⁵⁶

In the post–World War II period, national bourgeoisies competed with one another in a manner different than in the period after the 1970s. There was a shift in hegemony not so much from one state to another as from state *organizations* to a transnational *system of organization* emanating from the ensemble of institutions which comprise private enterprise. States are important organizations in this depiction but hardly the only organizations and not necessarily the dominant organizations. Smaller states, such as Honduras or Guinea, might be best described as nodes on the international system.⁵⁷

To put this simply, instead of competing *national bourgeoisies*—which I prefer to call a national investor class—there is a *transnational assemblage of investor classes* that is networked and interlinked. Enterprises might be dominated by investors from one nation, but they made connections with economic actors from multiple nations. From a world that could be best described as consisting of national investor classes who saw it was to their advantage to enter into alliances or arrive at class compromises with labor so as to decrease the possibility of social and economic disruption, we entered into a world in which investor classes were increasingly transnational and competed with each other less on the basis of national cohesion and more on their ability to develop a global supply-and-distribution system that took advantage of wage differentials and moved employment to those locations that came closest to the perfect combination of highly skilled, highly compliant, and low-wage workers.⁵⁸

56 The term “historic bloc”—sometimes “historical bloc” (but never “historic block”)—has its origins in Gramsci.

57 This view was suggested to me by Doug Chalmers of Columbia University during his office hours many years ago.

58 This is hardly an original analysis. For an extended treatment with draws on Gramsci, Robert Keohane, John Lewis Gaddis, Robert W. Cox, Giovanni Arrighi, Stephen Gill, Michael Mann, Adam Prezworski, and others, see Ford, 2017, 2018. (I am working on a volume on this as well.) To anticipate a question, I would guess that the current president’s efforts to use tariffs to reshape the global system and create a more cohesive national investor class will not succeed; there is too much in

This is, I hope, obviously an oversimplification, but we see results that tend to confirm the description. Income inequality in the U.S., which had been decreasing steadily until 1973, began widening in a process that has kept steady pace with declining union membership and increased ratios of CEO-to-worker pay, from about 20:1 to 350:1 (Keizer, 2018). Interestingly, this is also the time period in which the U.S. adopted policies that caused it to go from being a creditor to a debtor nation (Cline, 2005, ch. 1; Kilborn, 1985).

A Nation at Risk brightly reflects these changes. While Gutmann's work is principally normative and does not attempt to grapple with the politics around *A Nation at Risk*, it nonetheless anticipates the change in education by outlining precisely what *A Nation at Risk* is not—*A Nation at Risk* is not an effort to change the system in order to sustain democracy in the long run. Instead, from *A Nation at Risk* onward, most education reform was explicitly oriented toward economics.

The National Commission on Excellence in Education, commissioned by Reagan's first secretary of education, Terrel Bell, came out with *A Nation at Risk*, which embodied a results-oriented orientation that was meant to supplant input-based measures.⁵⁹ While labeled a "report," *A Nation at Risk* looked much more like an advertising insert in a Sunday paper. It did not have a "white paper approach" with full attributions; instead, it was presented as a glossy brochure without much support for its assertions and no consideration of research that would point in different directions. Indeed, there was not much reference to research at all.

It did, however, have among its most famous lines, "If an unfriendly foreign power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war" (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983, p. 5). From here the die was cast—the link between our economic performance and our educational system was at center stage of education debates. Of course, the question was what to do with it.

A Nation at Risk did take a long-term perspective on how to build the institutions of public education, but it also made what

the way of sunk investment in the global assembly-line version of free market enterprise. [Note: Written pre-Covid. Pandemics may change this calculation, for instance, in favor of regional autarky.]

⁵⁹ It is commonplace of conservative critiques to dismiss the importance of inputs and to instead focus on outcomes. Such approaches, sometimes labeled "outcome-based education," are usually coupled with an attack on unions as rent seekers:

The education system still measures its performance primarily by inputs, not by results. Its bureaucratic management structure insists that schools comply with uniform rules and policies and track resources with precision. But it has no capacity to encourage and reward good teaching, to weed out incompetent principals, or to ensure that children actually learn. (Finn, 1997)

Of course, such views are in harmony with neoliberal programs that seek to cut back on social expenditures and programs that redistribute wealth and income.

seemed to be deliberate efforts to avoid addressing social causes of school failures. It then pinned the blame for economic and educational failures on educators. While there was no suggestion of introducing vouchers or tuition tax credits, both of which had been advocated by Reagan during the 1980 campaign, that was because they were considered nonstarters politically—neither was popular with the broader public, and Democrats had a significant majority in the Houses of Representatives. Instead there was an emphasis on two elements: rigorous teacher training and a common and traditional educational core that would be the basis of a state-by-state patchwork quilt that would cover the nation in nearly uniform, and presumably higher, standards. Thus, the standards movement became the main avenue of education reform just prior to the publication of *Democratic Education* (Gutmann, 1987).

Despite the fact that the education reform movement had already begun, Gutmann's book is almost a handbook, helping to catalogue elements of the business-oriented conservative program. We can identify three main trends:

First, efforts to offer alternatives to traditional public schools, which eventually primarily manifested not in vouchers but in school-choice options, especially the enormous growth of charter schools from the late 1990s onward. This co-opted parental authority.

Second, the standards movement and calls for rigor and "excellence in education," which throughout the 1990s increasingly became linked to the use of standardized tests to evaluate student performance and to hold districts and schools "accountable" for student performance. This limited the role of the state by narrowing the curriculum.

Third, changes in school organization and labor relations that allowed for greater discretionary power for administrators and cut back on the autonomy of teachers, eventually reflected in changes in teacher evaluation systems that linked a teacher's rating to the same standardized tests that assessed student performance. This shifted the authority from classroom educators and principals to administrators outside the school and outsource suppliers of data systems, assessment systems, and curricula.

These three elements are not separate, but interlinked, with the system of examinations at the center. It is the instrument used to implement changes, define new goals, and determine if they have been attained. The overarching premise was that the identified "achievement" problems, even if they were socially rooted, could be solved by changing the schools.

This can be placed within the framework of a powerful and influential critique—the critique of public enterprise that is nearly omnipresent and from which comes the belief that business management can bring about untold efficiencies, fire the incompetent, and thus use the same or fewer inputs to get better results. It really isn't all that complicated; the theory goes, it isn't that there are deeply ingrained social pathologies—it's just a management issue.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ As Andrew Rice (2011) pointed out, "this idea gets a lot of traction on Wall Street." He quotes Brian Zied, a hedge fund manager who tutored at

Testing used for evaluation is the indispensable element of the system and is the lynchpin of educational reform. Once “rigor” and metrics of student performance were established, schools and teachers could be ranked and could be found wanting. Once traditional public schools were labeled somehow wanting—as “failing”—there was a justification for revamping their organization and for expansion of school choice. Once “standards of excellence” and their measurement were widespread, the teachers’ position in this new system—especially teachers in schools that had a record of falling short of that standard—could be redefined so as to more closely resemble an at-will employee dependent on their supervisor’s goodwill than a professional whose expertise and experience were a source of authority.

“Authority” is the key word in this account, and the main question concerns how business interests organized politically and institutionally secured their position. There was a political movement to implement measures in the school system that would emulate the market, especially increased competition and more power for administrators to hire and fire whomsoever they pleased. Thus, there was an authority shift away from teachers to administrators. In addition, the purview of parents’ authority was circumscribed, focused on choosing among school options; instead of a citizen acting to best improve the schools, the parent became a consumer choosing a school. Finally, state authority was not conceived expansively to provide a broad education that includes arts, music, physical education, and civics but narrowed to focus on academic achievement and primarily academic achievement in terms of future economic outcomes.

Business influence is most effective not when it is direct but when it transmutes other sources of authority. The three sources of

a charter school in Harlem and has become a donor:

You interact with the kids for a few minutes, and it immediately hits you that, wait a minute, these kids can learn like any other kids. They just need to be put in an environment with high-quality teachers who care about outcomes. Frankly, it’s the same incentive system that works in 99 percent of all businesses. You reward the people that do well, and part ways with the ones that don’t. (para. 16)

What Zied did not seem to realize was that he was *already* dealing with a select group of students: the ones who show up for tutoring. They differ considerably from those who do not. This is akin to mentoring schemes in business where you select promising candidates to fill a role in your organization; my guess is that such programs were a model for many business-influenced education reforms. In my own experience, teaching at schools in the Bronx that are challenged to meet academic standards, the students who stay after school for tutoring are the ones who least need it. The ones who attend do need extra help—they are often a few years behind in reading and math—but they are usually our more diligent students, and others could use that help more. It is the students who have spotty attendance records who are most at risk, and they tend not to show up for after-school tutoring programs. However, programs that emphasize arts, music, or sports and have a social component have more success.

authority in Gutmann’s (1987) account have been transmuted in substance by the politically organized and alchemical influence of business, but it goes beyond that. As its aim seems to be to refute the other premises and principles of Gutmann’s work, Gutmann’s analysis can serve as guide to the conservative program. First, it counters Gutmann’s principle of nonrepression by asserting the primacy of the market and calling for society to be modeled by an entrepreneurial ethos. Second, it disavows Gutmann’s principle of nondiscrimination in favor of school choice and a system of selection by supposed merit.

Most striking is the method—this fourth source of authority seeks to co-opt, alter, or attack the other three and channel them to its purpose. Parental authority is no longer pointed to the citizens’ task of ensuring the good of the system as a whole. The focus of state authority is narrowed to “student achievement” as defined by measures that are linked to economic success and a monitoring system to ensure “accountability” is implemented. The authority of professional educators is attacked, and a radical reform of the teaching profession based on “best practices” in business is proposed and advanced.

Generally, the goal of creating a deliberative democracy engaged in conscious social reproduction is eschewed in favor of accepting the outcomes of the market as dictated by the march of great leaders of talent pursuing simultaneously their own self-interest and their own idiosyncratic vision. This is the core of business influence and how it operates. It is no longer “the foremost role of public education is to foster basic democratic principles (such as equal opportunity and liberty)” (Ben-Porath, 2004), but education is an instrument to other ends. It advocates the pervasive theory that, if not the family, then the state and educational professionals might in fact be the source of a problem that could be solved by applying common sense—the common sense of what works in business.

The Common Sense of Segmentation

There is a grave danger here, for what works in business is not always something that works in democracy. In business, inequality, class, and stratification are not necessarily concerns—in fact they may be seen as opportunities. For instance, one business strategy is to see stratification as a fact and to employ segmentation as a business strategy. In so doing, there is little room for the goal of enabling democracy or promoting empathy or self-realization in other than business-oriented terms and what is likely to result is a string of oxymorons. Stratification is not to be *addressed*—it is to be *accepted* as the normal consequence of the market system.

Moreover, many of the reforms, even while claiming to close the achievement gap, are likely to build on and increase social stratification. Let us then, at the risk of sounding polemical,⁶¹ further examine this connection between business influence and education reform. While on the surface we see arguments about fairness and improving educational opportunities for all children, the underlying mechanics of business point elsewhere. The public

61 Of course, engaging in polemics is hard to resist when one is at the same time examining polemics.

face of education reform, for all its seemingly cogent arguments, serves to conceal a business-oriented agenda of privatization, state retreat, and restructuring of labor relations so as to be more in line with at-will employee/contract-worker models. To put it another way, it is informed by the eye of the profit hunter.

The question then becomes, what happens to education when the primary ethos of a society is acquisitive, grasping—in short, monetary?

Looking at the dynamic of stratification, it points to something new that, while it is not so neatly delimited, we can nonetheless see clearly in the institutional forms of publicly funded education. While stratification itself is not new, business strategies that aim to segment the market in education have shown robust growth. Since the 1980s, marketers have used economic and behavioral theories combined with data heavy analytical techniques to identify “market segments and product differentiation opportunities” (Dickson & Ginter, 1987, p. 1).

What private business strategies do is “segment the market.” This involves the subdivision of a market or population into segments with defined similar characteristics—dividing a broad target market into “subsets of consumers” who have common needs and priorities and then designing and implementing strategies to target them:

Knowing your target market is the first step in selling your products and services. A marketing segmentation strategy further divides your target market into subgroups that are easier to manage. Customized customer experiences lead to higher customer loyalty and better-focused marketing campaigns. A market segmentation strategy organizes your customer or business base along demographic, geographic, behavioral, or psychographic lines—or a combination of them. (CMG Partners, n.d.)

There are many aspects to this. “Five major segmentation strategies are (1) behavior segmentation, (2) benefit segmentation, (3) demographic segmentation, (4) geographic segmentation, and (5) psychographic segmentation.” Sometimes the strategies combine different elements, such as selling snow gear to winter-camping enthusiasts in Idaho. But “demographics are the most common form of segmentation. They divide customers by the structure of certain population traits: Age, Gender, Income, Occupation, Marital Status, Social Class, Religion, Education” (*Business Dictionary*, n.d.). You’ll notice “race” is not explicitly listed as a category, but there are proxies.

In education, we’d have to add “parental status,” but the other factors are nonetheless operative and have become more operative as the school choice movement has advanced. Part of this has to do with the neoliberal hegemony we have experienced for nearly half a century, but as Campi argued, the school choice movement is not merely a reflection of abstract “hegemonic rationalities” that are “rooted in the elite intellectual belief in the efficiency and innovative force of the competitive market form”—it is also rooted in a disparate coalition of “tactical actors seeking paths to agency amid a field of political possibilities” (Campi, 2018, pp. 401, 399). It is also rooted in business opportunities, and these two converge in the

process of segmentation, for these disparate groups create a segmented market.

While “hegemony” might be described in part as that which shapes norms and limits what is considered possible, thus placing constraints on politics (the so-called art of the possible), hegemony is also more than that. Whatever hegemonic rationality there is does not float down from the clouds but must be realized in specific situations—in other words, hegemony is not just a set of ideas and norms but must be implemented and instituted in concrete situations and continuously reinforced.

In the case of school choice, Campi (2018) identified three groups in an unstable alliance: parents of minority students (specifically Black and Latinx parents) in urban areas, Christian parents, and advocates of education reform who argue the schools are the chief terrain of the struggle for “new civil rights.” One is reminded that George W. Bush, in promoting No Child Left Behind, called education “the civil rights issue of our time.”⁶² Stirring as that rhetoric may be, one may still wonder to what extent some of these are true grassroots movements and which are shell organizations funded by those who have other agendas as well.

Undoubtedly much of the support for school choice comes from parents who are dissatisfied with the offerings of public education. Campi (2018) mentioned, for instance, the Christian Right, and the example is illustrative. First, it shows that politics does make unlikely bedfellows, as there is a significant element of the Christian Right that is segregationist, and yet they seem to be in alliance with those saying, “Education is the battleground for civil rights.” But the Christian Right is hardly a grassroots movement, or if it is, it is a carefully cultivated one.

Campi (2018) pointed out that in these circles “parental control became synonymous with market-based reform [emphasis added]. . . . A range of libertarian, conservative, and free-market foundations . . . provided the bulk of funds and organizational force to school-choice campaigns at the local level . . . funding private schools and [providing] massive flows of grants to support city-based voucher school campaigns” (p. 415). Other groups, such as the Walton Family Foundation, the K&F Baxter Family Foundation, the Wasserman Foundation, the Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation, and the Gates Foundation, are strong supporters of charters. Their activities are wide ranging, and they seek to influence opinion and policy; for example, three of them—the Baxter, Wasserman, and Broad Foundations—also financed the *LA Times* coverage of public education while Broad also backed “a

62 See Ravitch’s (2009) discussion of “the faux-Education Equality Project (EEP), now headed by former New York City’s Schools Chancellor Joel Klein and the Reverend Al Sharpton, with the assistance of former House Speaker Newt Gingrich.” “Education is the civil rights issue of our time” is a popular phrase, variations of which have been used by Barack Obama, Arne Duncan, Mitt Romney, and DT and Frank Luntz (see E. Brown, 2017).

proposal to convert nearly half of Los Angeles's public schools into charter schools" (Farhi, 2015).⁶³

Thus, while school choice has some reason to be thought of as a "grassroots movement" instead of an assemblage of Astroturf groups, the grass is tended much like the fairways and greens of a country club's golf course. The parents who benefit are a significant force,⁶⁴ but they are only one element, and their tactical moves are generally limited by other players—they do not have the reach to change the limits of the possible by themselves.

Interested parties include not just those who would benefit directly from school choice programs, such as charter school operators, but those who want to see the "hegemonic rationalities" of market-based norms, such as cutbacks to public enterprise, reductions in transfer payments, and the structuration of employment on an "at-will" employee model, to predominate. As for those who are actively in the business of education, school choice leads to segmentation.

The consequences are evident in school reforms that use market-style mechanisms of parental choice and competition between schools. The argument is such systems will "leverage change by compelling schools to diversify options, develop innovations, and increase effectiveness," but the effect is quite something else; "rather than promoting diverse curricular options for a wide range of potential students, schools often adopt marketing strategies . . . designed to attract 'better' students, often from schools that are already considered to be successful" (Lubienski, 2003).⁶⁵

And that threatens democracy. At least in part it threatens democracy because charters and other privatization measures are not scalable. Rather, they tend to create concentrations of students who have advantages, either in terms of income and wealth or in terms of parental education and involvement.

To put it bluntly, they cherry-pick; many children are left behind, and public schools are left to take care of them. As Ravitch (2010) has put it, "charter schools siphon away the most motivated students and their families in the poorest communities from the regular public schools" (p. 227). Ravitch also pointed out that Albert Shanker, who in 1988 was one of the first to propose

63 The *Los Angeles Times* Editorial Board (2015) endorsed the Broad plan in an editorial.

64 I should point out that as a public school parent, I have taken advantage of school choice nearly every time I have had the opportunity to do so. While I have limited myself to public school choice, navigating the systems in Washington, D.C., and New York to find the best education possible for my child, if the best option were a charter school, I would have considered it. It seemed to me that my duty as a parent obligated me to do so, but I should also note that to some extent it diverted my attention from improving the public schools. Finally, even as I was working within the public school systems, I found it abundantly clear that public school choice programs also create problems of inequity.

65 Lubienski's work was based on an examination of school responses to competition in two local education markets, so it is rather small-scale, but it indicates that "schools often act in ways that reflect contradictory incentives for how schools might engage the marketplace."

charters, thought of them as "a school within a school [created by teachers], where they could develop innovative ways to teach dropouts and unmotivated students." But, as she recounted, by 1993, "Shanker publicly renounced his proposal. The idea had been adopted by businesses seeking profits, he said, and would be used, like vouchers, to privatize public schools and destroy teachers unions" (Ravitch, 2018).⁶⁶

Having had my daughter go to just such a "school within a school" for two years, I would like to share two anecdotes. The school, which we absolutely loved, was considered very successful. It was in a large urban district, however, and the area in which it was located had started to gentrify a while back. While it was a public school (not merely, as charter schools are, a publicly funded school), the demographics changed over time, even more so than those of the neighborhood. It became a school educating children of mainly upper-middle-class parents.

One point of that anecdote is to point out that public schools are not immune to the effects of demographic shifts or the concentration of more affluent students in one school and less affluent students in another. But that only came about because of the institutional structure of the district—it allowed for a degree of public school choice, so parents could seek out the school instead of attending the local, zoned school. I do not blame the parents—after all, I was one them, seeking out the best education for my child—but rather, point out that school choice programs have some less-than-palatable consequences.

The same can be said about how we draw district boundaries, especially how urban districts and suburban districts are divided. One reason for this was well put by Katz, who said in 1975 that he expected "that any serious effort to equip poor children as effective competitors for the well-to-do will meet enormous, and probably successful resistance" (Katz, 1971/1975, pp. xviii, 152).

Charter schools are peculiar, however, because they combine two elements. They are both an example of public asset privatization (Goodman & Loveman, 1991, pp. 26–28, 32, 34–36), and they are concentrated in poor, urban areas—you do not find them in affluent suburban enclave districts (see, for instance, Mckenna, 2015). The asset in this case is to receive public funds in order to run a school. Charter schools generally receive public funding but have their own management and governance structure, so they're free to adopt different disciplinary rules, a separate selection process, or other policies. Charter schools open up mainly in poorer districts, however, and tend to separate out the kids who seem to have the most potential and most supportive parents. Thus, the siphoning effect, in Ravitch's phrase, or the culling of students, in mine, both pose "the problem of replicating a model that depends on concentrating promising students" (see Ford, 2012, p. xxxvi).

While charters account for only about 5% of students who are publicly funded, they are polarizing because they take money from public schools, which can't easily lower their costs as they lose per-pupil budgetary allotments and lack access to additional sources of funding through private donors (Kardish, 2013; Mead et

66 The article provides a brief summary of her critique.

al., 2015).⁶⁷ Moreover, they are part of an increasingly stratified system. For Ravitch, “American education seems to be evolving into a dual school system, one operated under democratic control . . . the other under private control” (Ravitch, 2018).

I would disagree (quibble?) that it is not merely a dual system—it has more than two aspects when you consider public school choice, magnet schools, home schooling, private schools, and the like—but she is absolutely correct in emphasizing the contrast: While public schools districts are “required to find a place for every student who shows up, no matter that student’s academic skills, language or disability,” the same is not true of a “privately managed charter [school, which] can limit its enrollment [and] exclude students it doesn’t want” (Ravitch, 2018).⁶⁸ Some state charter laws (and they do vary drastically) limit the freedom of charters in hiring uncertified teachers and in rejecting students because they have special needs, but by no means are all limited in this way.⁶⁹

The second anecdote concerns how the central district treated my favorite daughter’s school. The local educational authority was in favor of expanding charters—at the moment roughly a third of the districts’ students go to charters. At one point, when my daughter’s “school within a school” came to a bureaucratic hurdle—its student body size did not fit into any of those approved by the central district—the school administration was faced with a choice: either embark on an expansion plan or “turn charter.”

The second option was brought up constantly. Why the central district did not just say the school could continue in its present form was never clear, but they would not waive what were newly established size restrictions even for a school that had been exemplary for nearly 20 years. The school eventually decided to expand, adding not only additional classes but grade levels. Part of this was because parents wanted the school to add the grade levels, part of it because the teachers wanted a challenge, and part of it was because space was available, but the end result is that the old school ceased to exist—

67 Kardish used a 4.6% figure; an “almost 6%” figure comes from Mead et al. The updated version from January 2019 still had the same figure and reported that charter school growth has slowed recently.

68 She added that charters can target particular grade levels, for instance, not running high schools, which are more expensive. She also noted that “charters can even close school for the day to take students to a political rally for the school management’s financial benefit. That is not fair competition, and it is not healthy for democracy.”

69 Comparisons of state laws usually have criteria that are often chosen for political purpose—that is, they are either advocates, such as the Center for Education Reform, or detractors, such as the Citizens for Public Schools. Two less politically charged comparisons include “Charter Schools in the States—A Series of Briefs,” by the avowedly bipartisan National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) (<http://www.ncsl.org/research/education/charter-schools-in-the-states.aspx>) and “50-State Comparison: Charter School Policies,” by the Education Commission of the States (ECS), <https://www.ecs.org/charter-school-policies/>.

a different school took its place, and the previous remains in name only.⁷⁰

So that leads to the question of what happens to the public system re-concocted under business norms. It is not to say there are things the public schools could do better, but it is to question whether we have lost sight of what public schools are supposed to do.

One of those things is to train future citizens so they can contribute to a democratic polity. This is the issue of deliberative and participatory democracy. Another is to ensure that we have a system that provides a way to meet one’s individual goals regardless of one’s background. This is the issue of egalitarian democracy. That the public schools have not always been successful in these areas is not sufficient reason to dismantle the system unless there is another system that can perform those functions. This is especially the case when the system works reasonably well—and often quite well—for 80% of the population, with its failures largely found in areas of concentrated poverty. One must question the motives of those who want to overhaul the entire system when the parts of the system that do not work as well are for the most part found side by side with multiple social pathologies that also go unaddressed.

Another anecdote, this one about the use of a metaphor: at a recent parent meeting at a public school on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, a well-spoken father, who was also an advocate, spoke out against plans to change the selection process for a set of magnet schools. He used this metaphor: “We need to create the lifeboats to get the kids off a sinking ship.”

I don’t know how many lifeboats he had in mind, or whether the kids would stay in the lifeboat or be transported to another ship that presumably wasn’t sinking, but this really bothered me. Maybe it was because I was thinking of when the *Titanic* went down, and there weren’t enough lifeboats to get everyone off. The man was talking about tracking and magnet schools and, while maybe this is something I inferred, saying “deserving kids” needed to be saved. But what about the other kids? Were they undeserving?

The promise of egalitarian democracy is largely based on the promise of public education—that it function to educate the vast majority of citizens so that they may aspire and succeed, to participate in politics, to help to shape the future.⁷¹ At least that is

70 Based on interviews with teachers at the “school within a school” and observations at parent-teacher conferences, spring 2011. I do not want to identify the school. It should be noted that since I did not have full knowledge of all interactions and that I was not an insider, the choice among options may not have been as stark as I have portrayed it, but one thing I know for sure is the teachers in the school told me that the central district was constantly asking, “Why don’t you go charter?”

71 While I do not want to try by myself or in this article, the difference between egalitarian democracy and deliberative democracy is relevant. One way of approaching it might be through a Rawlsian lens, invoking the original position, that while deliberation might lead to a consensus (with the emphasis on “might”), what is desired is a generally egalitarian outcome. The question of how much inequality the original position would allow is, of course, one that can be argued about just about forever (see, for instance, Wolff, 1977).

one of the major theories in support of universal and compulsory education in the U.S. As Horace Mann put it, “Education then, beyond all other devices of human origin, is the great equalizer of the conditions of men, the balance-wheel of the social machinery” (Mann, 1848). The argument is that, without a public education system that works, in effect, to redistribute economic opportunity to the next generation, democracy under a free market system is much more likely to result in a stratified society with limited social mobility. Whether democracy can still function under such conditions is left an open question.

One essential question we need to work to answer is whether contemporary education reform is leading our national education system off in directions seemingly far removed from our shared understandings of what is necessary for a democracy to function. The stratification and segmentation of the public system has followed a period in which the problems of education have been articulated in economic terms. Among many consequences of the economic patterns we have been following—and which have greatly influenced the national educational system—is that public education seems not to be working as a leveling device, certainly not in outcomes and not even in terms of creating a level playing field and equal opportunity.

What is common sense in business does not necessarily lead to the common good. Public goods are more than aggregations of private goods. They require not merely the aggregation of individual interests and desires but an understanding of what a public shares in common.

While I was not aware of it until recently and was taken aback when I first heard it, this now seems to be a point of some contention. Pointing out that there has been a shift in the way some practitioners typically define the concept in the field of economics, Abowitz and Stitzlein (2018) argued it is no longer merely that a “public good is available for all individuals to freely share and virtually impossible to exclude others from enjoying” but that “many economists go further, claiming that public goods are *aggregations of private goods* [emphasis added]—things that serve the needs, desires, and interests of individuals. In other words, public goods are those items that are preferred by and benefit the largest group of individuals.”⁷² This would be a huge change in the normative aspect of economics, for a new definition creates new norms.

While I have not read all the original articles and am not prepared to fully enter the discussion at this point, two points should be made. First, the change in definition is a potential foundational shift as it changes a fundamental definition that is central to the discipline of economics and public policy; by so doing, it skews economic analysis and argumentation in a new direction. Thus, it is potentially a major change.

Second, such a shift in definition within an academic discipline is one of the leading indicators of a shift in hegemonic rationality. That shift can be considered as a shift away from Keynesian understandings to those that wound up with Hayek and Friedman. From a Keynesian perspective, this is dangerous, for when each individual pursues their own interests without regard to

72 For the first quote, they cite Anomaly, 2018.

the interests of others, the results can be disastrous, such as falling wages in a competitive labor market, which lead to lower consumer demand, which leads to lower production, which results in even lower wages, and so it goes on. As one leftie Scottish academic put it, “Keynes’s central message is that individual rational action can be collectively disastrous” (Blyth, n.d.). The role of deliberation in a democracy might be considered, at least in part, an effort to keep the market from falling into such death spirals.

There is also a third point to be made regarding whether public education is a public good, but it comes from a different source. Many who embrace market-based education reform do strongly deny that it is a public good, but they do not, however, necessarily use this new definition. Instead, they suggest that education *should not* be treated as a public good as a matter of public policy. For instance, Corey DeAngelis (2018) of the Cato Institute sticks closer to the economics definition but claims that schools need not be public goods by raising the question of whether publicly funded schools should have the option to exclude. He has argued that

by the strict definition, schooling is not a public good . . . that cannot avoid the economic free-rider problem, in which it's impossible to exclude those who have not paid for a service. Schools can do this, if they choose, and that's precisely why private schools already function effectively today without government operation or funding.

Arguing somewhat differently on the public good and education, Kevin Currie-Knight has defined a public good as being non-rivalrous and non-excludable, arguing that “K–12 education has neither of these qualities. First, it is rivalrous,” making the argument that there will be rivalries over access to resources, such as smaller class size, and, second, “K–12 education is also excludable,” using the example of disabled children who were “quite easily excluded from K–12 education” until 1975 (Currie-Knight, 2017).

Both, along with other commentators who used some version of the traditional economic definition, usually are making the argument that public education is *not a public good* because it is *not good*. That public “goods” should result in private goods is not an argument without merit—for instance, a public park that became a toxic waste dump could hardly be thought of as a public good, and neither could air that, while non-excludable, was hazardous to health. However, that does not justify the converse, that something that results in private goods is therefore a public good.⁷³

73 I would hold that a public good still needs to be non-excludable. This is a point on which Currie-Knight agrees but which DeAngelis does not; they are, in fact, making quite different arguments. I would disagree with DeAngelis; the mere fact that something might benefit the largest group of individuals does not make that thing a public good. This is especially true if the benefit of the larger group is at the expense of the excluded group, an argument that I think one could apply to tuition tax credits, charters, vouchers, etc. (It could even apply to slavery, I guess, if you took seriously the antebellum writings on Locke and the Liberty of Plantation owners.) And, of course, they do not necessarily help the largest group of individuals but are more likely to divert resources to a select few. A

DeAngelis has said this is true “especially when the government often runs schools like they run the DMV.” He then promoted his forthcoming study

to calculate the net effects of government schools on U.S. society overall . . . by comparing the results produced by government schools to those produced by a feasible policy alternative: private schools. . . . I find that government schooling has huge negative effects on society overall. The preponderance of evidence suggests that government schooling—relative to private schools—reduces student learning and increases crime rates at a higher cost to the taxpayer.

While he said that he “make apples-to-apples comparisons [by using] the most rigorous private school choice evidence available on academic outcomes, criminal activity, and taxpayer costs” (DeAngelis, 2018), unfortunately, he is avoiding the central issue: His private “apples” can exclude, and his public “apples” cannot.

This is not to deny that there might be merit in the program DeAngelis advocated, “a universal education savings account program,” a voucher-type program that allows families to take their education dollars to the schools that work best for their children, but the funny thing about that is that most current supporters of such a program probably would not provide sufficient funds so that less affluent families would have a true choice.⁷⁴ I have speculated in the past that almost everyone’s position on the vouchers would switch if the voucher were equivalent to the tuition at elite private schools. Teachers and teachers unions would be happy about the additional resources for education and would probably anticipate higher salaries because of the additional revenues; those who worry about government expenditures would be against a voucher program with a high price tag (Ford 2003, 2004).

The overall point is that while it may not be *naturally* non-excludable and non-rivalrous, a government can decide that it can be made so in law and, by coming to a political decision, attempt to implement what it defines as a fair system, one that could include a principle of non-excludability. Similarly, after appropriate political deliberation, it can be proclaimed as a principle enshrined in law that we will not allow discrimination, either on the basis of intellectual choice or social, economic, and demographic background.

This statement of principle is possible within a democratic system after proper deliberation. While the federal government does not, many states do have rights to education within their state constitutions, including Massachusetts, which has perhaps the

main example is Chile, in which the educational opportunities are not equitably distributed.

74 Bella Rosenberg, former special vice president of the AFT, put it this way:

The pervasiveness of market metaphors is quite striking. Ed[ucation]. was one of the last holdovers; no more. And underlying the “choice” argument is this: the shift from collective to individual responsibility. Basically, vouchers say go choose (not that we’ll give you enough money to make REAL choices) and if you happen to choose wrong, tough. (Personal email, May 1999)

highest-ranked public system in the United States. Indeed, such a statement pretty much became a requirement for a territory to become a state (or for a state that had succeeded to be readmitted) by the late 1860s, and “all 50 state constitutions guarantee education today. . . . The reasoning of both Congress and the state conventions was clear: ‘Education is the surest guarantee of the . . . preservation of the great principles of republican liberty’” (Black, 2017).⁷⁵

There is, of course, the matter of the practical implementation of the principles, but while privatization and defunding public schools may make sense in some theoretical instances, I don’t agree that public education deserves the same reputation that the DMV does. To be sure, I’m not even sure the DMV deserves its own reputation. My bet about the DMV is that it works all right overall—well in some states, less so in others—and while it is true that going to the DMV may be inconvenient, they are pretty good with keeping track of records. Also, the DMV plays an essential role in making sure people comply with insurance and other regulations, and despite the fact that they can be used as a whipping boy for those who want to whip up emotions against bureaucracy and the state, DMVs all over the country perform at least an acceptable level given the conditions they perform under.

I hate going to the DMV, but it is not because they are incompetent; it is because they are overcrowded. It isn’t the service, but it is the *wait* for service, and that problem could be solved pretty easily by hiring more people. Should the state pay for more people? I don’t know—when I am waiting in line, I think absolutely yes, but if my taxes went up by \$100 to shorten my wait by 20 minutes, I would doubt it. Maybe at some level there are a lot of people at the DMV who accept that they will have to wait because they think it will keep costs down.

While there might be some corrupt or totally incompetent DMV in a few states, or in a few locations within states, but I don’t think that adds up to an urgent call to privatize the DMV. Similarly, I don’t think the public schools are corrupt or incapable; though there certainly are some historical examples, they do not add up to an urgent call to privatize public education. Besides, private corruption and incapacity has a long lineage as well, so privatization has its own risks. What I see all the time is that about 80% of the public schools are doing fine academically—that schools that are deemed “failing” are disproportionately, and maybe almost exclusively, found in areas of concentrated poverty.⁷⁶

75 Black’s is an opinion piece in favor of a federal right to education, which we do not have as yet, arguing, “Without a federal check, education policy tends to reflect politics more than an effort to deliver quality education. In many instances, states have done more to cut taxes than to support needy students.” There is a through line, which continues in an April 26, 2018, tweet by Black, “States cannot continue to ask public schools to work with whatever is left over and then criticize them for doing a poor job. This cycle creates a circular justification for dismantling public education when states should be repairing it.”

76 The rate of failure of American schools, while exaggerated, if it exists at all, is often supported by test data. Tests vary, but on international tests, basically, the U.S. is in the big bulge in the middle.

Private entities might even ask for extra incentives to work in such areas, perhaps labeling them “education enterprise zones.”

This does not fit with the monopoly model explanation of failed public schooling. It is widely argued that “government schools . . . because of residential school assignments . . . currently have a significant amount of monopoly power in the education market” and therefore have negative effects on the economy. The argument is that in education

as with any other industry, monopoly power—and lack of consumer choice—leads to a lower quality product at higher costs. Government schools are also strapped with heavy regulations such as teacher certification requirements, standardized testing mandates, the prohibition of admissions criteria, and severely limited principal autonomy.⁷⁷

This is another argument that eats its tail. There are actually two arguments. One is that an apples-to-apples comparison shows an advantage for private education. Another is—and it is true—that public schools have additional regulations, and it might well be true that this hurts “performance” as measured by some metrics. But if government regulation hurts public school performance, then it is not a fair apples-to-apples comparison at all, especially if the private schools are able to turn down students at the schoolhouse door, especially if they are high-poverty and/or high-needs schools.

Public schools may have the advantage of being quasi-monopolies in some residential districts, but it also may be that one unified school district may have distinct advantages over several competing private school options, that they might, in terms of offering diverse course offerings, special education programs, transportation, counseling services, extracurriculars, and other items, have an advantage. Their size may be a benefit.⁷⁸ They might even be compared to natural monopolies in many ways.

Taking the average scores and rankings for the eighth-grade Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) in 2006, the U.S. is ranked 18th out of 45 (10th out of 20 OECD countries), ahead of France, England, Austria, New Zealand, and Norway, among others; the 17 ahead of the U.S. include four Canadian provinces, so if Canada was listed once, the U.S. would be 14th. Just like the scores, explanations vary as to U.S. rankings. Steve Krashen said this is about what we should expect once we factor in poverty levels. Also, according to Iris Rothberg, in the United States, socioeconomic status accounts for close to 80% of the difference test scores (Rothberg, 2011). Supplemental educational services (SES) is also reflected in racial disparities (I doubt it is the other way around); in the 2006 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), “on the combined science literacy scale in the United States, Black (non-Hispanic) students (409) and Hispanic students (439) scored lower, on average, than White (non-Hispanic) students (523).” For comparison’s sake, South Korea ranked seventh among OECD countries with an average of 522; Finland was first with 563, Mexico dead last with 410 (see Baldi et al., 2007; Bybee, 2009).

⁷⁷ This comes from DeAngelis (2018), but it is a common enough theme in attacking public schools.

⁷⁸ This is much the same logic as employed by the Harlem Children’s Zone and the Obama administration’s Promise Neighborhoods program,

But I am not trying to come to a definitive resolution of the public-private question, just point out that there are other perspectives. On the one hand, the way the apples don’t line up should not be dismissed. On the other, it needs to be pointed out that public schools take on responsibilities that private schools don’t, and that is something we have decided is a good idea as a country.

Public schools have additional responsibilities. They could be cheaper if we did not impose those responsibilities on them. There was, however, a political decision that we would adopt certain regulations and certain principles. They were supposed to be worth the cost. To some extent, they line up with Gutmann’s (1987) two principles. We don’t exclude; we don’t discriminate—at least, those are our stated principles.

Private schools are not held to that. Private religious schools are sometimes explicitly discriminatory, based on faith.⁷⁹ It is not just that the apples don’t line up. The terrain of modern public education was built on these promises, on democratic decisions after some sort of deliberative process. Clearly there could be a different democratic decision after further deliberative process—clearly we could be in the middle of such a deliberative process now—but if that process is going to maintain deliberative democratic decision-making and, perhaps, advance egalitarian concerns, then it is going to put conditions on the institutions of education that are publicly funded.

For Gutmann (1987), the public shared in the deliberations that are the substance of democratic self-governance. Public education has been thought of as one of the bedrocks of a democratic republic since at least Adams’s and Jefferson’s time. Jefferson

the latter established under the legislative authority of the Fund for the Improvement of Education Program (FIE).

The vision of the program is that all children and youth growing up in Promise Neighborhoods have access to great schools and strong systems of family and community support that will prepare them to attain an excellent education and successfully transition to college and a career. The purpose of Promise Neighborhoods is to significantly improve the educational and developmental outcomes of children and youth in our most distressed communities, and to transform those communities.

It is, however, oriented to support and declare eligible entities only if they are other than public entities, “including (1) nonprofit organizations, which may include faith-based nonprofit organizations, (2) institutions of higher education, and (3) Indian tribes” but excluding public entities, such as school districts (US DOE, 2018).

⁷⁹ We should consider the religious aspect when deciding whether to expand the thumbnail sketch of true believers who firmly believe that research shows that we should adopt these measures to improve the system; political actors who want to adopt these positions for political advantage; and those who see the adoption as advantaging them economically. Religious communities wanting to bring up their children in religious schools are both true believers and political actors but of a different sort in each case—true believers in the value of religion and political actors who want parents holding those beliefs to influence their children. In terms of anti-public-school sentiment, religiously oriented parents are a large and significant group.

argued that there was a direct correlation between literacy—defined rather broadly—citizenship, and successful self-government (D. L. Wilson, 1999, p. 80). As Adams put it, “a general knowledge and sensibility have prevailed among the people, arbitrary government and every kind of oppression have lessened and disappeared in proportion” (Adams, 1765).

We should consider this as our educational system is increasingly influenced by business interests. Public education has many goals, but free societies require citizens who are self-governing, and we cannot allow public education to not serve those needs and merely function as a market. We can return to Adams, who had singular success in calling for assertive and energetic government intervention. He did so in his own state by drafting the Massachusetts Constitution, the one referred to previously, the oldest written constitution still in use today. While he expected it to be stricken, what he wrote remains in the constitution to this day:

Wisdom, and knowledge, as well as virtue, diffused generally among the body of the people, being necessary for the preservation of their rights and liberties; and as these depend on spreading the opportunities and advantages of education in the various parts of the country, and among the different orders of the people, it shall be the duty of legislatures and magistrates, in all future periods of this commonwealth, to cherish the interests of literature and the sciences, and all seminaries of them; especially the university at Cambridge, public schools and grammar schools in the towns; to encourage private societies and public institutions, rewards and immunities, for the promotion of agriculture, arts, sciences, commerce, trades, manufactures, and a natural history of the country; to countenance and inculcate the principles of humanity and general benevolence, public and private charity, industry and frugality, honesty and punctuality in their dealings; sincerity, good humor, and all social affections, and generous sentiments among the people. (“The Encouragement of Literature, etc.,” chapter V, section II of the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts)

Whatever his other faults, Adams should be given great credit, for his support for education was not limited to a privileged elite but was tied to conceptions of the mutual interdependence and the destiny shared by all members of a society: “Laws for the liberal education of youth, especially of the lower class of people, are so extremely wise and useful, that, to a humane and generous mind, no expense for this purpose would be thought extravagant” (Adams, 1776).

One hopes his words are not just a dead letter. One hopes that there will still be room for this type of serious and deliberative decision-making that is central to maintaining a democracy, that decision-making as it exists in consumer choice does not squeeze it out, and that decision-making as it exists in business practice and consumer choice will not deny its purpose. But we’ll see.

Note on Other Works to Which This Article Is Connected

This article is the first of four on the “Sources of Authority in Education,” all of which use the work of Gutmann as a heuristic device to describe and explain the prevalence of market-based models of education reform in the United States. The present

article, “Negating Amy Gutmann,” looks primarily at deliberative democracy. The next, “Neoliberalism and Four Spheres of Authority,” considers, primarily, the promise of egalitarian democracy and how figures such as Mann, Dewey, and Gutmann have argued it is largely based on the promise of public education. It thus begins with a consideration of what might be called a partial historical-materialist analysis—the growth of inequality in the United States (and other countries) since the 1970s that correlates with much of the basis for changes in the justifications and substance of Education reform. The third article, “The Odd Malaise of Democratic Education and the Inordinate Influence of Business,” begins by offering some historical background and comparisons and ends by considering what happens to the philosophy of education when democracy and capitalism are at odds. The fourth article is on changing notions of civics, “Profit, Innovation and the Cult of the Entrepreneur: Civics and Economic Citizenship.”

All are included together in a book manuscript, hopefully to see the light of day, *Democratic Education and Markets: Segmentation, Privatization, and Sources of Authority in Education Reform*. The book as presently planned begins with a theoretical chapter on paradigm change.⁸⁰ The book also includes a suggestive conclusion, “Robert Pirsig, John Dewey, and John Adams: Defining Quality, Efficiency, and the Benefits of Liberal Education.”

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⁸⁰ To consider paradigm change in education and its causes, I draw on both Peter Hall’s exposition of “social learning” and Antonio Gramsci’s conceptualization of hegemony. This pops up here and there, but I try to work this out at length in my *Social Learning and Hegemony: Comparing Paradigm Change in Education, Welfare and Economics (Education Reform in a Neo-Liberal Era)*, currently in process. Its focus is on policy and its ideological underpinnings, using Hall, Gramsci, and quite a few others. Gramsci’s views come from multiple sources, but I should mention that I am wary of treatments that refer to his as a theory of cultural hegemony without acknowledging both that it is steeped in historical materialism and that Gramsci’s contribution depends largely on understanding politics and political alliances. He does so, first, by employing the category of “political society,” which straddles both the state and civil society, as a terrain of conflict and resistance for the emergence not only of policy, but of common sense; and, second, by emphasizing that the distinction between state and civil society is merely an analytical distinction and not an organic one.

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