

THE 'ANTI-PUBLIC PUBLIC' AND THE TEACHERS' COUNTER-PUBLIC:
AMERICAN NEOLIBERALISM IN PUBLIC EDUCATION AT THE TURN OF THE
CENTURY

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This dissertation is dedicated to my daughter, Olivia Maureen Perruso.

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the emergence of neoliberalism in American domestic policy on the issue of education in the late twentieth century. It illuminates relationships between post-World War II American nation-state building, the repression of egalitarian social and political movements, and the construction of an ‘anti-public public’ around the ‘problem of education’ in the context of violent race-based conflict. This ‘anti-public’ discourse was initially constructed in the late 1970s and early 1980s primarily by publicists writing for, and helping to create, reading publics of three widely read American journals, *The New Republic*, *Commentary* and *Public Interest*, and was fundamentally shaped by the raging debates about race, segregation and affirmative action. The ‘anti-public’ discourse was more broadly publicized and its core ideas popularized with Milton Friedman’s PBS television series, “*Free to Choose: A Personal Statement*,” which first aired in 1980.

The impact of neoliberal ideology on public policy became more visible in both state and national legislation on the manufactured ‘problem of education’ in the late twentieth century, effected by neoliberal alliances across ideological and party lines. These neoliberal alliances were institutionalized in think tanks, governors’ organizations and corporate advocacy groups which worked to fundamentally reshape the American nation-state over the course of the last forty years. In the new millennium, a teacher counter-public has emerged to challenge this particular power formation, with ambivalent connections to historical unionism, creative uses of social media, and increasing attention to multiple modes of resistance. As these teachers and their allies develop a counter-public around the articulation of resistance, they do risk defining the counter-public in

terms of defiance rather than positive alternative vision. Political resources available to these teachers, however, include critical and futures-oriented pedagogical approaches that can help teacher activists design anticipatory, creative and democratic counter-public spaces.

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Chapter One: Introduction

American public policy, especially around education, has been designed since the Civil War to facilitate the development of industrial capitalism and the organization of a docile, compliant, and hierarchically organized work force. Recent sociological scholarship explores the ways in which students in public schools actually facilitate the implementation of this public policy approach by fashioning *themselves* into industrial and post-industrial workers, ironically, precisely through their rejection of authority and embrace of working class counter-school culture (Willis). This work suggests that while the processes by which social hierarchies are reproduced occur in complex ways in public schools, the pernicious connections between education and social inequality based on race, class or gender cannot be effectively challenged in isolation, in the microcosm of the schools. The American fixation on institutional and personnel-centered reform of public school education, ostensibly focused on providing equal educational opportunity, originates, ironically, in aggressive public policy work of neoliberals of the late 1970s and 1980s, public policy work that sought to naturalize and reinforce broader sources of social inequality.

While most academic investigation of the American neoliberal political formation has focused on foreign policy, I will argue that it is actually in the development of *domestic education policy* in the United States over the past forty years that the ideological, institutional and organizational parameters of neoliberalism can most clearly be traced. This dissertation will examine the emergence of a neoliberal consensus around the manufactured ‘problem’ of public education in the late 1970s and early 1980s with the construction of two different levels of neoliberal ‘*anti-public public*.’ I will then

explore the emergence of a more amorphous and less institutionally grounded teacher 'counter-public' that has emerged in resistance to the implementation of federal, state and local neoliberal educational policies.

In using the term 'neoliberalism,' I am referring to the set of political beliefs that rests on the premise that the only legitimate domestic purpose of the nation-state is to safeguard market-based liberty and private property rights. Here, the fully realized neoliberal citizenry is simply a privatized assemblage of individual entrepreneurs and consumers engaged in maximizing utility. While most academic investigation of neoliberalism has focused on the international arena, looking especially at the shift away from 'embedded liberalism' to 'neoliberalism' as the governing international economic philosophy, I will argue that it is actually in the development of *domestic education policy* in the United States over the past forty years that the ideological and organizational parameters of American neoliberalism can most clearly be traced.

In the larger context, the structural foundation of the neoliberal political project was laid by Nixon's New Federalism (devolution), but the most important 'conditions of possibility' for the birth of American domestic neoliberalism included recession and slowed profit rates in the 1970s, along with social and political movements which posed clear political threats to the hegemonic position of American socio-economic elites. It was in response to these perceived threats that elites began to mobilize intellectual, institutional and cultural resources to advocate not only that economic enterprises be deregulated but also that many ostensibly public services and functions be placed in private, profit-making hands. The politics of racial backlash, the revival of social and religious conservatism, and the revitalization of conservative populism fueled the

rejuvenation of ‘traditional’ economic celebration of ‘free markets’ and idealization of ‘small business’ in an age of growing corporate power of the 1980s. Conservative and neoliberal leadership, especially from the South, successfully manipulated identity politics to obscure upwardly redistributive aims and policies designed to shrink the semi-welfare state by the mid 1990s. Simultaneously, these same political actors further militarized the nation-state in their adoption of race-based mass imprisonment as a heightened means of discipline and control.

After an examination of the changing relationship between public education and the federal government in the post-World War II period in the context of the repression of egalitarian social and political movements, I delve more deeply into the construction of the ‘*anti-public public*’ discourse in three prominent journals in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The development of a shared narrative on the ‘problem’ of American public education enabled emergent neoliberals to articulate a common ‘*anti-public public*’ dream, because the ‘public,’ especially as evidenced in public schools, was increasingly depicted as site of social disorder and dis-ease. All three journals (*Commentary*, *The New Republic* and *Public Interest*) were fairly academic and scholarly in approach, and although the audiences addressed in these core journals varied, the views expressed began to coalesce around a core set of concerns regarding education in this time period.

In the middle of the 1970s, the attention of writers and the editorial staff at both *TNR* and *Commentary* were focused on bloody conflicts over race, equality and education. Racial inequality became the Achilles heel from which the more liberal publications, *The New Republic* and *Commentary*, would not recover, while the assertion of the importance of freedom and individualism over substantive racial equality in public

education from the outset inured the writers and editors of *Public Interest* to similar internal conflict. These were, however, all ‘rightward-moving publicists’ who ultimately sought to marginalize and dismiss the widespread social movement for racial equality. The key contributors were rising neoliberal stars in the Democratic Party in the late 1970s, and their political and professional careers were being built on constructing any ‘crisis’ in public education as originating from the problem of race and not class difference. The development of a sympathetic ‘*anti-public*’ reading audience was actualized through the circulation of texts that increasingly identified the health and growth of the economy as the sole basis of nation-state legitimacy. These circulating texts reduced the purpose of education to that of providing access to the set of skills necessary for a person to strategize for her or himself among various social, political and economic options, i.e. to the creation of savvy individual entrepreneurs and consumers, as the publications moved into late 1970s and early 1980s.

The second stage of my analysis looks at the ways in which twentieth century technological innovations, especially television, added a hitherto unexplored intermediary level of public-ness. Milton Friedman, in a competitive response to the John Kenneth Galbraith’s BBC series on the broad sweep of human economic history, brazenly appropriated the space of public television (PBS) to create a widely viewed documentary series, “Free to Choose” in 1980 to attack the very notion of a legitimate, shared public space and interest, and specifically, the institution of public education. It was only then that American neoliberal discourse on public education became more hegemonic. Throughout the series, Friedman uses various rhetorical practices to recirculate the argument that ‘free market’ capitalism is inextricably connected to

individual freedom, devices and tactics that were striking and even artful in their simplicity and directness. Each episode was carefully structured so that Friedman narrated an analysis of ‘free market’ issues in locations around the world; the second half involved controlled debates between Friedman and other scholars and ‘experts’ on the content of the film of the first half of the segment. While the participants in Friedman’s series were nominally engaged in public discussion on critical issues, including public education, Friedman used his ‘authorial power’ to silence dissent and marginalize challengers so as to more effectively stage his neoliberal arguments.

Corporate executives, southern governors, a range of conservative intellectuals, and disaffected liberals all began to identify the American public education system as the central source of their discontent, and in the early 1980s, began to appropriate Friedman’s language and ideas, by this time circulating through think tanks and business organizations and lent legitimacy by a new Reagan administration. These actors brought formidable resources together, deploying financial, institutional, and social capital to center education and the redefinition of the relationship between education and labor as the basis of a new domestic political agenda. Increased interaction around the ‘problem’ of education, brought these elites together across traditional state-federal government divides, especially after initial failure at state-level reform, to create policies that allowed for increasing federal and state intrusion into local educational matters of standard-setting, testing, accountability, and teacher quality. More importantly, these nodes of discursive production also brought socio-political elites together across traditional political party lines to redefine the nature and purposes of public education for the working classes. Neoliberal ideology became the basis for a new ‘educational nation-

state,’ expressed most clearly in the landmark *No Child Left Behind* legislation.

The neoliberal agenda in education has been pursued relentlessly by the Obama administration. ESEA, under Obama’s “Blueprint for Reform,” has been completely transformed from a compensatory education program that targeted resources to disadvantaged students into a powerful neoliberal mechanism for ‘raising educational standards for all students’ *and* for ‘holding schools accountable’ for results, i.e. creating and reproducing a hierarchically organized, docile and compliant workforce, and privatizing or marketizing the social spaces occupied by public educational institutions. The deployment of competitive federalism under his modification of NCLB (Race to the Top), ironically, has intensified the negative impact of NCLB on communities of color and disadvantaged students. However, it was not only the coercive and manipulative ways in which competitive federalism was deployed but also the administration’s explicit renewal and development of ‘public-private partnerships’ that created new possibilities for hollowing out and privatizing the public space of all levels of public schools. This intensification of the neoliberal approach to public education has contributed to the further devastation of the public education system in Hawai‘i, in ways to contribute to a larger geopolitical mosaic of ‘educational deformation.’

In the new millennium, a teacher counter-public has emerged to challenge this particular power formation, engaging in uneasy alliances across important political divides and maintaining tenuous and ambivalent connections to unionism. Over the past fifteen years, and more particularly within the past five, American public school teachers and their allies have used newly available communication technology and innovative ‘textual’ forms to launch an increasingly profound critique not only of NCLB but also of

the historical formation of neoliberalism. Teachers *as* teachers occupy a complex social position. To resist the current demonization and vilification of teachers, they are increasingly acting on a felt need to create and support various connected sites of resistant identity, to nurture alternatives to the marketized and commodified subject of globalized capitalism, and to do the hard work of sustaining some critical and political agency in their work, i.e. to develop understandings of teachers as critically reflective practitioners. But this struggle over agency has not been constrained to the classroom or even the school. Teachers have been connecting with ‘sites of resistance’ and continue to develop counter-publics that aim to find ways of democratizing the state and civil society.

Teachers and their allies have availed themselves of critical rhetorical strategies and new forms of media to produce temporary, fragile collective identities, through the construction of meaning, negotiation of their proximities to power, enrichment of their networks of social bonds, and the enhancement of their political capacities. At the local level, they have created mini-series and full series, on public radio and public television, interviewing teachers, their allies, and their community members to broaden the dialogue about public education. These productions are reproduced for indefinite access through website posting, creating a new kind of circularity and something of an intermediate level of [counter]publicity or publicness, between the circulation of texts (third level) and physical witnessing (second level). Documentary cinema is also being reclaimed in promising and organic examples of emergent teacher counter-public documentary work that captures teacher resistance, including tense negotiations with unionism and experiments in civil disobedience. Some teachers use the space of the Internet to express

personal feelings of marginalization and erasure as teachers: A group calling themselves the “Badass Teacher Association” (BAT), originating on the Internet site Facebook on June 18, 2013, went viral almost instantly as teachers from around the country began discussing, online, all of the ways in which the neoliberal approach to education degraded and debilitated them as professional, active and committed teachers. The organizers moderated the site as debate and discussion became heated, and it quickly became apparent that teachers within the group felt a strong need to move to political action. Their preliminary actions were powerful in that they provided public space for discussion and development of shared political analysis and political critique of the status quo

With this development of a counter-public built around the articulation of resistance, however, this group does risk defining itself in terms of defiance rather than positive alternative vision. While the reiteration of “Badass Teachers will fight against...” throughout the mission statement does convey unity, strength of conviction, and willingness to act, its use contributes to a sense of political reactivity rather than creativity, and could limit the efficacy of the group in that it does not inspire non-teachers with a vision of a future for which they would be willing to act as teacher-allies. This preliminary sketch of the contours of the emergent teacher ‘counter-publics’ suggests a few directions for further consideration. First, there seems to be a shared language developing, with a range of connotations and interpretations within the circulating ‘texts,’ that challenges the neoliberal historical formation. Second, while there is important work being done within the teacher counter-public challenging the “perversion of democratic attention” and the “representative thinking” involved in the demonization and vilification

of teachers, it is still nascent (Hancock). Finally, however, if publics and counter-publics are ultimately about “poetic world-making,” circulating [counter]public discourse that not only calls a counter-public into existence, and restructures the character, language and vision of the world, there is still work to be done (Warner, 114). To the extent that there is ‘visioning’ and ‘imagination of political possibilities’ within the emergent teacher counter-public, it is generally somewhat flat and one-dimensional, in the sense that most of the participants share a very similar vision of the conflated possible, probable and preferred futures, that of ‘continued growth’ (Dator 2009; Candy). There is, however, in the most recent work of the Badass Teachers and ‘Reclaiming the Conversation’ conference, the promise of creativity, vision and energy necessary not only to catalyze but also to sustain a teachers’ movement that can reclaim the conversation and the public social, political and cultural space of education in the United States.

Chapter One: Neoliberalism and American Public Policy

"Neoliberal democracy in a nutshell: trivial debate over minor issues by parties that basically pursue the same pro-business policies regardless of formal differences and campaign debate. Democracy is permissible as long as the control of business is off-limits to popular deliberation or change; i.e. so long as it isn't democracy. The neoliberal system therefore has an important and necessary byproduct - a depoliticized citizenry marked by apathy and cynicism" (Chomsky 2012).

Neoliberalism: A Sketch

Neoliberalism as a historical formation is neither widely understood nor critically discussed in contemporary American debates about public policy, yet it is nearly impossible to make sense of the political present without a basic understanding of neoliberalism. Neoliberalism is a loosely demarcated set of political beliefs which rests on the premise that the only legitimate purpose of the state is to safeguard individual, especially commercial, liberty, as well as strong private property rights (Thorsen; von Mises). This conviction is coupled with the belief that the nation-state ought to be minimalized or at least drastically reduced in strength and size. These beliefs apply to the international level as well, where a system of free markets and free trade are mythologized and celebrated; the only acceptable reason for regulating international trade, for neoliberals, is to safeguard the same kind of commercial liberty and the same kinds of strong property rights which they believe ought to be realized on a national level (Friedman 1962).

Neoliberalism also generally includes the belief that market mechanisms provide the optimal way of organizing all exchanges of goods and services (Friedman 1962; 1980). Free markets and free trade will, it is believed, liberate the 'creative potential' and the 'entrepreneurial spirit' which is built into all human societies, and thereby lead to

more individual liberty and well-being, and a more efficient allocation of resources (Thorsen).

Neoliberalism, signifying the approach to governance based on these underlying principles that has underpinned American foreign and domestic policy since the 1990s, is an existential threat to institutions essential to a healthy democratic republic. Primarily, it provides for the radical redistribution of wealth upward precisely by attacking the welfare state, unions and social movements as sources of social solidarity (Birchfield 2008; Choate 2008). One of the most visible areas of attack in the past thirty years has been public education.

Secondarily, this political formation also rests on a problematic political rationality that exceeds particular positions on certain issues, joining the late 20th century instantiations of the Democratic and Republican parties in common purpose and reflecting a new kind of 'governmentality.' Governmentality here can be understood as a mode of governance "encompassing but not limited to the state, and one that produces subjects, forms of citizenship and behavior, and a new organization of the social" (Brown, 37).

Under neoliberal governmentality, the health and growth of economy is the basis of state legitimacy, and political citizenship is reduced to an unprecedented degree of passivity and political complacency. According to Brown, a "neoliberal is one who strategizes for her or himself among various social, political and economic options, not one who strives with others to alter or reorganize these options," so that the "fully realized neoliberal citizenry would be the opposite of public-minded - would barely exist as public" but becomes a "group of individual entrepreneurs and consumers" (43).

Neoliberalism here would seem to involve a perspective on moral virtue: the “good and virtuous person is one who is able to access the relevant markets and function as a competent actor in these markets. He or she is willing to accept the risks associated with participating in free markets, and to adapt to rapid changes arising from such participation” (Thorsen 2011, 3; c.f. Friedman 1980). Individuals are also seen as being solely responsible for the consequences of the choices and decisions they make: inequality and social injustice are morally acceptable, at least to the extent that they can be interpreted as the result of freely made decisions (Hayek 1976). If a person demands that the state should regulate the market or make reparations to the unfortunate who have been caught at the losing end of a market transaction, the person in question is viewed as morally depraved and underdeveloped (von Mises 1962).

Seismic Shift: ‘Embedded Liberalism’ to ‘Neoliberalism’

David Harvey provides a clear historical overview of the global seismic shift from ‘embedded liberalism’ to ‘neoliberalism’ in the second half of the twentieth century largely in terms of global political economy. He argues that although ‘embedded liberalism’ delivered high rates of economic growth in 1950s through most of the 1960s, ‘neoliberalism’ emerged victorious in the 1970s and 1980s (Harvey, 13). Other scholars are also interested in examining new political formations as redefinitions of liberalism, suggesting that

In a larger political, historical, and philosophical frame, the ‘liberalisms’ and ‘conservatisms’ of the 1950s and 1960s were variants of Liberalism - of the kind that has defined the American political project since its inception. But during the 1970s and 1980s, the ‘liberalism’ of the 1950s and 1960s became ‘old liberalism’, ‘tax and spend liberalism’, ‘welfare state liberalism’ or ‘civil rights and entitlements liberalism’ (Duggan, 9).

Neoliberalism can best be described, according to Harvey, as a "political project to reestablish conditions for capital accumulation and to restore power of political elites" (Harvey, 19). This early neoliberalism, on the international level, involved the development of institutions "promulgating solutions to global problems [that] have advanced specific interests of Western financial, commercial and trade centers with coercive tools - especially through offering conditioned loans to needy nations, and by negotiating and imposing biased trade agreements" in the pursuit of an essentially neocolonial agenda (Duggan, 11).

Contextualizing the rise of the American neoliberal movement in a global climate defined by the Cold War, Joseph Pescheck explores the role of American policy-makers in shaping that climate. He examines two national security tales, those involving Soviet 'threat inflation' in two periods of Cold War mobilization: the onset of Cold War under Truman in 1940s and return to Cold War tensions under Carter in 1979-1980. Pescheck's analysis suggests that the assumptions that shaped American foreign policy and public opinion, sidelining alternative approaches to national security, were clearly contestable and constructed. By contrasting these assumptions and explanations with other official public explanations of policy involving competing facts and assessments put forth by other nation-states at the time, he finds that the official Cold War paradigm prevailed because it was functional to global neoliberal projects of U.S. policy planners. He suggests that these national security tales bolstered a system of power critiqued by C. Wright Mills, as the American neoliberal power structure functioned to shrink the democratic public sphere because public discourse was "manipulated by elites and colonized by market," and that these narrative deformations of the Cold War intensified

in the 1980s under Reagan (222).

There are critical linkages between foreign policy formulations and domestic political culture, such that: "American experiences from slavery, colonialism, and segregation, as well as civil rights activism, shaped attitudes toward Africa and joined with strategic decisions and commitments embodied in the Cold War to supply the foundation of policies" (Culverson, 199). Exploring presidential responses to decolonization movements in Africa, Donald Culverson focuses on the Carter and Reagan administration's storied constructions of apartheid and the problems they posed for policy makers. His analysis shows that these constructions relied heavily on ideals and myths nourished within American exceptionalism, invoking notions of domestic race relations and political reform as appropriate models to guide reforms in South Africa. These stories were structured around three core elements: global political climate, its opportunities and limitations; race relations; and identification of appropriate mechanisms for guiding political change. Designed to distance new administrations from the failures of their predecessors, and to define a distinctly American role in transformation of Africa, these 'stories' worked as instruments of engagement and evasion in United States- South Africa relations and may actually have "camouflaged the South African state's pathology and delayed the full impact of international sanctions" (210). The nature of the stereotypes and myths that shaped American foreign policy towards South Africa with respect to apartheid should remind scholars to be cognizant of the interplay between domestic and foreign policy, and between narrative and policy.

There were those, in the 1990s, who rose to challenge the neoliberal narrative of the "globalization of national economies" in the 1990s. Frances Fox Piven, one of the

foremost labor historians of the twentieth century, argued that the neoliberal explanation for ‘globalization’ had become a force in and of itself, driving change, and creating institutional realities it purported to explain. She suggested that capital exit was not new in the 1980s, nor was the rise of ‘globalization’ significant relative to an increase in economic activity. Moreover, the federal government still retained the capacity to regulate economy, in principle. Rather, it was institutional changes such as the dismantling of Bretton Woods and the creation of the International Monetary Fund which facilitated international capital mobility and the development of new institutions like General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and encouraged a certain kind of expansion of trade. A "hegemonic ideology supporting the necessity and inevitability of the free movement of capital and goods helped to create the institutional conditions that then contributed to making the free movement of goods and capital a reality” (Piven, 232). Neoliberal institutions and policies such as NAFTA, in restructuring Third World economies, are more properly understood as a form of neocolonialism, because they have often sustained or deepened local poverty, destroyed local institutions and social formations, and ultimately subordinated ‘developing’ nations to the developed countries controlling the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank through financing packages that quickly become impossible to recompense (Mushita and Thompson; Harrison; Leys). Argentina, Malaysia, Thailand, Korea, and Brazil generated daily headlines two decades ago, detailing IMF- sponsored economic disasters and crises caused by the same financial liberalization and economic deregulation that ultimately laid the foundation for the current global economic crisis.

The American faith in 'free trade' that undergirds and mystifies the neoliberal global project is rooted in a set of stories about post-industrialism, technology and progress, stories themselves that are rooted in the Industrial Age. Neisser argues that the United States has been constituted as a nation in part “by means of tales that link spirituality, redemption, and virtue with sacrifice, suffering and material progress” tied to free trade and economic growth (223). The structure of the NAFTA agreement performs two critical neoliberal functions, in Neisser’s view: it “facilitates inequitable forms of economic growth and shrinks the space people have to speak up regarding the impact of economic change,” both solidifying the neocolonial hold of Western countries over those receiving aid (224). NAFTA reflects the successful domination of specific assumptions that emanate from the field of Chicago School economics, i.e. that “humans are self-interested bargaining creatures, human wants are virtually unlimited, freedom is the range of choices available to people, equity is fairness with regards to satisfaction of universal wants and universal desire for freedom, and scarcity is the basic economic problem” (225). These premises give rise to the neoliberal tale of lost American national sovereignty combined with an insistence on American exceptionalism, i.e. “once we were independent but now we are part of a game of international competition.... and we need to make rules (free trade) fair not only because it’s right, but so we can win” (Neisser, 227).¹ This is a neoclassical tale of “history as a struggle of economic maximizers, post-

¹ The NAFTA story is fascinating: “Once upon a time rulers and other special interests combined with superstition to severely limit the range of free exchange and so the acquisition of wealth that by definition benefits all. Then revolution of ideas supported liberation of entrepreneurial energies. Nonetheless, defenders of free trade have had to continuously struggle, against communists, misguided special interests (those who fight for trade barriers), and paternalistic do-gooders who want to use government to 'help' others. These groups cause the overuse of government, distorting exchange and making the world poorer and more unfair. The situation is worsened by the fact that the government was just the right size, but thanks to democracy, political ambition, and foolish ideas, we now have 'big government'” (Neisser, 233).

industrialism as product of technology and progress to which we must adjust, and national success linked to victory in struggle of independent and sovereign nations, each of which charts its own path” (Neisser, 234).

From Foreign to Domestic Policy

A critical transition to an early neoliberal paradigm of domestic governance was effected within the United States in the late 1970s. Economic recession and slowed profit rates, along with social and political movements, posed clear political and economic threats to the hegemonic position of ruling elites and classes around the world (Harvey, 16). The resistance of elites was given theoretical shape and policy form by a small but important group of neoliberal thinkers, including Friedrich von Hayek, Ludwig von Mises, Milton Friedman, and Karl Popper, who had originally organized the Mont Perelin Society in 1947 (20). This society was supported by “a powerful group of wealthy individuals and corporate leaders who were viscerally opposed to all forms of state intervention and regulation, and even to internationalism” (22). Nurtured in various well-financed think tanks, as well as through its growing influence in academic circles (especially the University of Chicago), neoliberal theory began to exert influence on public policy in the United States.

Although the election of Margaret Thatcher in Britain and her abandonment of Keynesianism in favor of monetarist ‘supply-side’ solutions to stagflation was critical in legitimizing neoliberalism, it was the work of Paul Volcker, influenced by policy

Neisser’s counter-story rings more true, that “economic growth and economic security depend more and more on government subsidy and government regulation. Corporate sector workers used to have more power, but with globalization (control and profit-driven technological and political transformation), there was deskilling of the less educated, capital was rendered more mobile, and government and workers were weakened” (234).

recommendations being developed by the Heritage Foundation and other similar think tanks, that proved decisive in the United States. Volcker, Chairman of the Federal Reserve Board under President Carter, initiated a draconian shift in U.S. monetary policy, changing the policy direction from the Keynesian focus on full employment to a focus on one designed to quell inflation, raising the interest rate to 20% (23). This radical shift, the adoption of monetarism and unfolding related government policies in other areas, was rationalized as the only possible and effective response to stagflation (24). Ronald Reagan's election to the presidency sealed the possibilities of the moment, as he used the 'long deep recession' to aggressively seek further deregulation, tax and budget cuts and ferociously attack trade unions and professional power (25; Bivens).

Reagan was neither isolated nor alone. His election represented what most historians call a significant conservative turn in American history (Schulman). In this, the traditional conservatives were joined by the new 'neoconservatives,' former self-identified liberals and leftists themselves, who "attacked the Civil Rights movement, black radicalism, the growth of the welfare state, the countercultures of the 1960s, the post-1968 new feminism and gay liberation, the New Left, and the Democratic Party, from which many had bolted by 1980" (Duggan, 9).

Some, like Thomas Frank in *What's the Matter with Kansas*, have suggested that this political shift was effected through 'sleight of hand' over several election cycles, as the Republican party's candidates constructed their campaign themes mainly around social and cultural issues such as abortion, homosexuality, crime, drugs, permissive sexual behavior, and religious expression in public life. The Republican party's consistent platform appeals to moral traditionalism are said, in this analysis, to have

yielded a harvest of voters acting against their self-interest, who would have chosen Democrats had the campaign environment not made culture its centerpiece. The Democrats, meanwhile, failed to redirect people's attention to economic concerns on which the party has consistently held a clear advantage in the electorate. After winning office, this argument suggests, conservative politicians implemented a policy agenda that differed greatly from what they had promised the electorate. With the public's gaze diverted elsewhere, the GOP made far-reaching legislative and administrative decisions on the very economic issues it downplayed during campaigns (Frank).

While this argument is compelling on many levels, it does not adequately address the ways in which the shift in political terrain was made possible precisely by a re-centering and redefinition of economic issues by this emerging neoliberal elite, who reshaped the public sphere and built an elite consensus across party lines in ways that deeply privileged the neoliberal economic agenda (Smith). Maximizing the opportunity provided by widespread insecurity of the early 1970s, this small group of men began to radically reconstruct political rhetoric around the ideas of Hayek and Friedman. In speeches, party platforms, campaign advertisements, and opinion journals, neoliberal thinkers created an 'anti-public public' (see Ch. 2). Making the economy a clear focus across party lines, they reframed issues such as taxation, labor, regulation, energy, education, the environment, government spending, and international trade in ways that made the 'free market utopianism' of Friedman and the 'Chicago School' the new 'common sense' (Smith; Gramsci).

This political shift had enormous structural implication for economic organization and, ultimately, public education. The privileges of ownership and management of

capitalist enterprises fused, and large corporations became more deeply involved in the world of finance, as “mergers across sectors conjoined production, merchandizing, real estate, and financial interests in new ways to produce diversified conglomerates” (Harvey, 32). A wave of innovations in financial services led to “far more global interconnections and new kinds of financial markets based on securitization, derivatives and all manner of futures trading” (33). And CEOs became a substantial core, reasserting class power as “key operators on corporate boards, and leaders in the financial, legal and technical apparatus that surround this inner sanctum of capitalist activity” (33). Even in the 1980s, these elites were international, so that with this radical reconfiguration of class relations, most exerted significant class power in more than one nation-state simultaneously (36).

During the 1990s, neoliberalism, defined in part against the 'old' liberalism, was embraced by the New Democrats of the Democratic Leadership Council and led by Bill Clinton – with a political position defining itself as 'third way' - “combining pro-market, pro-business, 'free trade' national and global policies with shrunken remnants of the social democratic and social justice programs” (Duggan, 10). The convergence of the liberal centrism of 1990s with 1980s conservatism meant an approach to governance advocating a leaner, meaner government, a state supported by 'privatized' economy, invigorated and ‘socially responsible’ civil society, and a moralized family with traditionally gendered marriage as center (Ibid). But this did not happen overnight: the “capitalist world stumbled toward neoliberalization through a series of gyrations and chaotic experiments that really only converged as a new orthodoxy with articulation of what became known as 'Washington Consensus' in the 1990s” (Harvey, 13). Lisa Duggan argues that “the

overarching Liberal distinction between the economy, the state, civil society and the family consistently shaped, and ultimately disabled progressive-left politics by separating class politics - the critique of economic inequality- from identity politics - protest against exclusions from national citizenship or civic participation, and against the hierarchies of family life," so that the logic of liberalism itself proscribed effective resistance to this process (7). This separation of class politics from identity politics effectively removed economic inequality from the national debate about the sources of educational inequity, and heightened the focus on social and political 'identity' as a critical source of educational outcomes.

Roots of Domestic Neoliberalism

There has been a great deal of scholarship over the past thirty years that allows us to more fully understand the roots of this new neoliberal 'anti-public public.' Stimulating only a limited collection of book-length work in the 1980s, the 'rightward turn' in American politics saw a dramatic expansion of scholarly and popular treatment in the following two decades.² Some work examined the issues, organizations, and ideas informing the conservative movement.³ There has also been a great deal of historical analysis of the conservative movement, most of it quite sympathetic, in the last half of the

² Influential works from the 1980s include Paul Gottfried and Thomas Fleming, *The Conservative*

³ Jonathan Schoenwald, *A Time for Choosing: The Rise of Modern American Conservatism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); Matthew Dallek, *The Right Moment: Ronald Reagan's First Victory and the Decisive Turning Point in American Politics* (New York: The Free Press, 2000); Rick Perlstein, *Before the Storm: Barry Goldwater and the Unmaking of the American Consensus* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2001); Mary C. Brennan, *Turning Right in the Sixties: The Conservative Capture of the GOP* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995); Gregory L. Schneider, *Cadres for Conservatism: Young Americans for Freedom and the Rise of the Contemporary Right* (New York: New York University Press, 1999); Niels Bjerre-Poulsen, *Right Face: Organizing the American Conservative Movement, 1945-65* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum, 2002); W. Wesley McDonald, *Russell Kirk and the Age of Ideology* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2004).

twentieth century.⁴ Some of these scholars have researched the current strategies, institutions and politicians of the movement.⁵ But it is hard for any scholar to avoid the “twisted roots” of modern conservatism, which in turn provides the bedrock for ‘neoliberalism’: the politics of racial backlash, the revival of social and religious conservatism, revitalization of conservative populism, and rejuvenation of ‘traditional’ economic ideas, as evidenced in conservative organizational development.⁶

Defining Elements of Domestic Neoliberalism

One critical element of the neoliberal ideology celebrates ‘free markets’ and the concomitant deflective idealization of ‘small business’ in an age of dramatic corporate power. The narrative produced by neoliberal think tanks since the 1970s asserts that small businesses create the majority of American jobs and will constitute the majority of job base of the future, and that small businesses are and have been the engine of economic growth. At the cutting-edge of the economy, these businesses supposedly drive

⁴ Lee Edwards, *The Conservative Revolution: The Movement that Remade America* (New York: The Free Press, 1999); William C. Berman, *America’s Right Turn: From Nixon to Clinton* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998); Godfrey Hodgson, *The World Turned Right Side Up: A History of the Conservative Ascendancy in America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1996); Godfrey Hodgson, *More Equal than Others: America from Nixon to the New Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004); Thomas M. Keck, *The Most Activist Supreme Court in History: The Road to Modern Judicial Conservatism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004); Jerome L. Himmelstein, *To the Right: The Transformation of American Conservatism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); J. Richard Piper, *Ideologies and Institutions: American Conservative and Liberal Governance Prescriptions since 1933* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1997); Clyde Wilcox, *Onward Christian Soldiers? The Religious Right in American Politics* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2000); Dan T. Carter, *From George Wallace to Newt Gingrich: Race in the Conservative Counterrevolution, 1963-1994* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1996).

⁵ John Micklethwait and Adrian Wooldridge, *Right Nation: Conservative Power in America* (New York: Penguin Press); Thomas Byrne Edsall and Mary D. Edsall, *Chain Reaction: The Impact of Race, Rights, and Taxes on American Politics* (New York: Norton, 1991); Dinesh D’Souza, *Ronald Reagan: How an Ordinary Man Became an Extraordinary Leader* (New York: The Free Press, 1997); Amy E. Ansell, ed., *Unraveling the Right: The New Conservatism in American Thought and Politics* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1998); Nina J. Easton, *Gang of Five: Leaders at the Center of the Conservative Crusade* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000); Sara Dimond, *Roads to Dominion: Right-Wing Movements and Political Power in the United States* (New York: Guilford Press, 1995).

⁶ Carmines and Stimson; Carter; Lowndes; Schulman and Zelizer; Diamond; McGirr; Critchlow; Smith; Blyth; Edsall; Kuttner; Teles; Schoenwald; Brennan; and Hacker and Pierson.

technological dynamism, change, and innovation (Sandro, 163-174). The policy recommendations and implications that flowed from these narrative elements were and are that planners should promote the startup and retention of as many small businesses as possible by 'getting government out of way,' deregulating and cutting taxes, and eliminating other barriers to free flow of capital, trade, information, investment and people.

These elements undergird a larger meta-story, making it clear that while traditional liberalism is centered on concerns about the freedom of the individual, neoliberalism is concerned with the emancipation and liberation of both corporations and markets from the ties that bind and oppress. 'Free markets' here create a "rising tide of economic growth that lifts the boats of the least of us," while big government, unions, welfare rights advocates, environmentalists and numerous other groups rigidify and limit markets (166). This particular tale, as Sandro elucidates, functions to rationalize a set of economic and social policy changes sought by major transnational or multinational corporations (TNCs or MNCs) for the purposes of their enhanced accumulation (profit). This kind of tale gives rise to mystifications that rationalize dramatic and inequitable economic change: the "tallness of the small business tale overcomes the difficulties of distinguishing between factual and narrative knowledge" (164).

In the 1970s and 1980s, deregulation originating with policy grounded in this ideology facilitated capital mobility, and the 'New Federalism' allowed firms to whipsaw state and local government leaders for a 'better business climate,' driving people into ever-increasing number of low-wage jobs. The National Labor Relations Board was reconstituted into labor-hostile entity, striker replacement bills were passed, and

corporate tax rates and income tax rates for wealthiest decreased. When NAFTA and GATT were sanctioned by Congress, undermining local, state and federal sovereignty over health, safety and environmental regulations, the neoliberal domestic agenda was well on its way to being realized (169). This economic policy foundation was solidified by transformation of the terms of democratic debate about domestic policy: Sandro argues that the corporate sector has spent the last thirty years systematically undermining the influence of all potentially anti-corporate or critical groups because they are elements of 'inflexibility,' and this particular small business tale plays important role in manufacturing consent by undermining legitimacy of role of state in economic affairs and privatizing political discourse on economic policy (171).

Corporate liberation, in a neoliberal claims-making context, is contingent on cheap, skilled and widely available labor, but this seemingly purely economic, hyper-rationalistic and culturally blind political orientation is, in fact, deeply rooted in notions of race, class and gender. With the Reagan Department of Labor *Workforce 2000* report, neoliberals misused a statistical reporting error to argue that multiculturalism (with immigration and affirmative action gone 'out of control') could have catastrophic, divisive consequences, because women and minorities were ill-equipped to fill the jobs of the future.⁷ In this projection of dramatic transformation of the US workforce, in which the white man 'vanishes,' claims-makers suggested that "female, immigrant and minority workers are fundamentally different from (less qualified, competent and desirable) than

⁷ The specific error was embedded in the following text: "The small net growth of workers will be dominated by women, blacks, and immigrants. White males, thought of only a generation ago as the mainstays of the economy, will comprise only 15 percent of the net additions to the labor force between 1985 and 2000" (Johnson and Packer 1987, 95, qtd. in Best, 178). The relative decline of white male workers in the statistical data, contrary to the suggestion of analysis provided, was due not to falling numbers of white male workers but the "discrepancy between the populations entering and leaving the workforce" (Ibid). White male workers were not 'vanishing.'

white males” and that Americans should be fearful, that "our glass is not just half-empty; it is leaking - probably though a big crack" (Best, 183). Neoliberal claims-makers, working out of a small group of interconnected think tanks, presented figures of dubious validity using apocalyptic rhetoric, the mass media repeated those numbers uncritically, and policy makers and the public responded to imagery in those claims (Best, 174-183).⁸

Globally and domestically, the cultural projects of neoliberalism involve transforming cultures into 'market cultures' through privatization and 'personal responsibility.' Privatization, or the transfer of wealth and decision-making from public, more-or-less accountable decision-making bodies to individual or corporate, unaccountable hands, is central to this process. Neoliberals advocated not only that economic enterprises be privatized but also that many ostensibly public services and functions also be placed in private, profit-making hands. This is accomplished ideologically by "recycling and updating 19th century liberalism's equation of economic activity with voluntary, uncoerced private freedom and with productivity, expansion, and wealth production" (Duggan, 13).

Devolution and Cultural Politics

Because neoliberals "promoted private competition, self-esteem, independence as roots of personal responsibility and excoriated 'public' entitlement, dependency, and irresponsibility as the sources of social ills," they proposed and supported policies that reflected and enacted identity and cultural politics invested in race, gender, and sexuality

⁸ The rapid move from 'counter-public' to hegemonic source of policy-informing ideals by the neoliberals was facilitated by think tanks, which are thus far inadequately theorized in relation to contemporary 'publics.' This problem will be addressed further in the full development of the third section of this dissertation. Additionally, this case study highlights elements of statistical exaggeration, innumerate manipulation, and uncritical repetition in contemporary discussions of the changing American workforce that are central to the misinformation campaign launched about American public education, and will be discussed in the full development of the second section of this dissertation.

as well as class and nationality in the 1980s and 1990s, to devastating effect (Duggan, 14). This story about cultural politics is also necessarily a story of devolution, as neoliberals simultaneously made a call for both "privatization of public services and a 'return of power to states,'" invoking a sense of "how ordinary Americans have lost control of the conditions of their lives, and how dismantling of federal regulations of the marketplace, including the reduction of social services, will restore that control" (Kling, 150-1).

For many scholars, the puzzle is not that neoliberal elites resisted economic and social democratization in the 1960s and 1970s, but that, after thirty-five years of "support for welfare state policies, large numbers in working and lower middle class began to question efforts designed to equalize American society and to involve poor in the process of reshaping their circumstances" (Kling, 151). Neoliberals argued for and developed a broad-based constituency for New Federalism around the concerns of administrative efficiency and race. Both of these were grounded in the cultivated sentiment that federal antipoverty policy "discriminated against hardworking, savings-oriented, middle-income white people, and favored undisciplined, present-oriented, lower-class black people in inner-city ghettos" (152).

All three aspects of devolution under Nixon's New Federalism - regulative devolution, fiscal devolution, and functional or administrative devolution - were "carried out within the new incontestable assumption - incontestable in the sense that there is no longer any language available with which to contest it - that that government governs best which governs least" (Kling, 153). The emergent neoliberal vision of public policy embodied in devolution "revived the myth that the virtuous individual will succeed and

prosper, and that the irresponsible will fail and fall to the bottom of the social ladder" (155). This rhetoric of "small government," realized in part through devolution, had an ironic effect on the federal government's apparatus of social repression and control, as it went hand and hand with tremendous growth in spending on the vehicles of militarization to be mobilized at home and abroad. This historical moment provided a litmus test for the Democratic Party, which it failed. Democratic Party officials at the federal level succumbed to pressure from local Democratic officials, who were under pressure from middle-class constituents to curb expensive, racially oriented programs, control unruly behavior in the ghettos, and stop rising crime rates. These officials, frustrated by lack of direct access to antipoverty funds, wanted federal resources in their own hands. Congressional Democrats, rather than insist that centralized policy setting was necessary to extend democratization, and that uniform standards of social equity could only be developed and maintained at federal level, yielded to their colleagues' demands to support revenue sharing (State and Federal Local Fiscal Assistance Act of 1972), thereby weakening political ideals that had given Democratic Party its identity in the post-WWII period (161).

From Roosevelt's election in 1932, Democrats had stood for the ideal that "under democratic capitalism, there was a federal responsibility to guarantee to all citizens access to those life necessities that workings of the market failed to provide" (Kling, 161). The Nixon Democrats thereby helped reopen the (previously considered resolved) political question of the legitimacy of the minimalist New Deal welfare state, and "with Reagan's election in 1980, the conservative movement, held in check for a few years by Nixon's fall from grace, unleashed a full assault on the welfare state" (Ibid).

Generating Economic Sources of Racial Tension

In comparison with mid-twentieth century Western welfare states that expanded state action to provide a 'social safety net' and new support for public institutions, “neoliberalism shrinks the scope of equality and democratic public life dramatically, in all areas of material production and distribution” (Duggan, 13). America’s semi-welfare state was increasingly undermined by neoliberal policies in the 1980s and 1990s, through domestic and foreign policies interconnected by both Republican and Democratic presidential administrations. While Johnson's escalation of the Vietnam conflict fiscally and politically undermined the ‘War on Poverty’ efforts, the 'Star Wars' initiative and the massive military spending of the Reagan administration further diverted funds away from welfare state (Katz, 18). In these same years, the economic stress felt by ordinary workers fueled hostility toward welfare and the dependent poor, driving politics in a conservative direction. As income inequality widened after the early 1970s, workers found themselves running harder just to stay even.

With their real wages falling, families needed multiple jobs and income from both husbands and wives. Hundreds of thousands found themselves laid off as a result of downsizing and restructuring....[jobs migrated]. Women forced by economic necessity to work, even when they had young children, could not understand why their taxes went to support women [on AFDC] who stayed at home (19).

With desegregation and affirmative action adding race to the "brew of resentments," conservative and neoliberal politicians played on the fears and anger of blue-collar workers, using a fusion of race and taxes, deflecting the hostility of the lower and hard-pressed middle class Americans away from the sources of their deteriorating economic position (neoliberal trade policy) and toward disadvantaged minorities, thereby

eroding support for the semi-welfare state (Ibid; c.f. also Schram, Nitz, and Krueger). The implications of this approach to politics grew more intense with the increasing prominence of the Sunbelt in electoral politics, defined by conservative leadership that also benefited from corporate interests alienated by Democratic economic and natural resource policies. Neoliberal Democrats, especially in the South, "acquiesced in, and in many cases helped promulgate, the right turn in public policy," as they helped bankroll the movement through PACs (political action committees soliciting funds to be used in elections, referenda, lobbying) and nonprofit research centers (think tanks that used funds for production and dissemination of ideas) (21).

The Robert Taylor Homes housing project of Chicago provides a compelling example of the impact of these political efforts. This mammoth social-engineering project built in early 1960s to provide the overcrowded African American population in Chicago with affordable, decent housing, was, according to Venkatesh, doomed from the beginning. Its construction in the heart of the inner city reinforced the concentration of poverty in city's segregated black neighborhoods (Venkatesh, x). The fate of this project and the prospects for life of its inhabitants were inextricably linked to economic and social transformations of the larger society, which were moving in unfortunate directions by the 1970s. The struggles by the tenants of RTH to create a safe, habitable community involved coping with crime, socioeconomic hardship, and local government agencies' inadequate service provision. But the steps CHA officials, urban designers, service providers and politicians could take to improve conditions were limited, by local forces that stymied efforts (such as law enforcement agencies' failure to police and secure project) and national political shifts (dramatic federal cuts in funding to public housing

program since mid-1960s with devolution), and the disappearance of job opportunities for black workers with the decreased relative demand for low-skilled labor in the late 1970s and 1980s (xi). The fate of this and other similar housing projects contributed to the realization of the political priorities of the neoliberal project, reflected the increased marginalization of those already disempowered on the basis of race and gender, marginalization reflected in the public school systems, and laid the foundation for a broader attack on the semi-welfare state.

Welfare, in the New Deal era, signified a broad and progressive program with wide public support: "welfare state embodied a generation's hopes and aspirations for universal economic security and protection from worst consequences of life's ordinary hazards" (1). However, by the end of the 1960s, welfare had become the code word for public assistance given mainly to unmarried mothers (of color), with AFDC carrying a particular stigma and eliciting attacks from across political spectrum. By 1996, the neoliberal attack on the welfare state moved further forward with the Clinton 1996 welfare reform bill. This legislation, the culmination almost twenty years of hard political labor on the part of neoliberals, "ended the sixty year old entitlement of poorest Americans to public assistance, put time limits on benefits, tied aid closely to work, transferred the authority to set benefits and administer programs from federal government to the states, and greatly reduced or eliminated eligibility for legal immigrants and the disabled" (1). This signaled the political victory of three interrelated neoliberal moves: the application of market models to public policy, the 'war on dependency,' and the devolution of public authority. Tightening the links between benefits and employment, stratifying Americans into first and second-class citizens, it also undermined the effective practice of democracy by

showcasing cynical and malicious narrative and discursive political strategies (2).

"Welfare has served as a convenient site for symbolic politics that reinforces dominant norms about work and family via the ritualization of punitive treatment of recipients" (Schram, Nitz, and Krueger, 139).

One of the tales circulating in policy circles about welfare migration in the years prior to the "end of welfare as we know it" suggested that "welfare recipients are economically rational but in illegitimate ways," that they are "coldly calculating nomads of self-interest who try to maximize their personal utility by trying to get the best welfare package" (140). Depicted as ill-informed, undereducated, irresponsible "benefit-maximizers exhibiting high levels of 'bureaucratic competence' and crafty capacity for economic calculation" by 'scholars' embedded in neoliberal think tanks, poor single mothers (of color) become the bait as "states were tempted to enter into a 'competition to the bottom'" (140-41).⁹

The public identity of welfare recipients, created from the disinformation provided by neoliberal think tanks, i.e. that these AFDC recipients were all or mostly single and African American women, combined with a rhetorically generated 'politics of disgust' to generate procedurally and substantively generate undemocratic legislative outcomes (6).¹⁰ This required the use of the political strategy of silencing. PRWA reflected strong

⁹ That this kind of argumentation reflects an explicit and deliberate set of rhetorical and academic assumptions and choices is apparent when alternatives become apparent. As Schram, Nitz and Krueger point out, "Once we see poor single mothers as working towards having access to the same things most people want [safety, economic opportunities, better housing and better schools], an alternative logic that better explains the data of welfare migration becomes available....Challenging the power of the welfare migration story is more than an empirical exercise; it also involves contesting politically convenient assumptions about what is rational for the poor and everyone else" (149).

¹⁰ While Hancock's work will be discussed in more depth in the third section of the dissertation on publics and counter-publics, it should be noted here that her work has inspired the redirection of this overall project.

bipartisan consensus around neoliberal norms and values, and an even more fundamental consensus about who welfare recipients *really* were, based not on listening to them, but rather on misinformed projections. “Policy options were discussed, selected, and implemented with no effective contributions from those affected most” (115).

There are dense interconnections between neoliberalism's economic vision and its cultural projects, so that the "goal of raising corporate profits has never been pursued separately from rearticulation of hierarchies of race, gender and sexuality in the United States and around the globe" (Duggan, 15). The 1996 welfare ‘reform’ legislation provides a clear example of neoliberals’ manipulation of identity politics to obscure redistributive aims and investments in identity-based hierarchies. The underlying assumption of 1996 TANF is that "sexual practices and household structures of poor women, especially black women, are the central causes of poverty and of associated social disorder and criminality" (16). It took decades of effort to erode welfare programs through the deployment of images of “sexually promiscuous, lazy welfare queens breeding for the profit of an ever-enlarging welfare check,” and the reinforcement of marriage as a coercive tool enabling the “privatization of social costs” (17). The ‘success’ of neoliberal welfare reform points to a simultaneously successful racist, classist and sexist political agenda (Ibid).

Race, Incarceration and the Neoliberal Attack on the Welfare State

The rise in race-based mass imprisonment in the U.S., leading to the highest incarceration rates in the world, proceeded in two waves connected to the emergence of neoliberalism. The first, under President Richard Nixon, began as a response to

widespread political rebellion and the perceived precariousness of the social, racial and economic order; the second, under President Reagan, was designed as a minimalist response to the poverty and dislocation created through neoliberal economic restructuring. Both were focused primarily on black males concentrated in federal housing projects. Once corporate profits began slip during the 1960s, political rhetoric and favored modes of social control got harder and meaner, and “neoliberal policy makers turned to policing and imprisonment as central regulatory and disciplinary institutions” (Duggan, 18). Jonathan Simon makes a compelling argument that between the late 1960s and the first decade of the twenty-first century, Americans built a new civil and political order structured around the problem of violent crime, with three important corollaries: crime had become a significant strategic issue; the political elite began to deploy the category of crime to legitimate interventions that had other motivations; and the technologies, discourses, and metaphors of crime and criminal justice became more visible features of all kinds of institutions, which contributed to opportunities for new forms of governance. Public education would become central to this political order, as elites fashioned what would come to be called the ‘school-to-prison pipeline’ (Perkinson; Kim and Rosen).

Conclusion

Critical scholarly attention to neoliberalism has focused primarily on foreign policy, with inadequately systematic attention paid to the ways in which domestic policy in overlapping issue areas reflect the realization of a neoliberal agenda. The neoliberal economic vision has been intertwined with the rearticulation of race, sex and gender hierarchies in the United States and around the globe since the late 1960s. However, the

next chapter will continue this exploration of neoliberal domestic policy to focus specifically on the genesis of *No Child Left Behind*, federal education legislation that reflects the twin neoliberal themes of corporate freedom and social control. Without this contextual understanding of the overarching framework of neoliberalism, it is impossible to make sense of the deformation of American public education since the late 1970s.

Chapter Two: American Neoliberalism and the ‘Anti-Public Public’

Naomi Klein’s bestseller, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*, opens with a discussion of the wholesale elimination of the public school system in New Orleans in the wake of Hurricane Katrina in 2005, and its rapid replacement with a system of largely private, for-profit charter schools using young, non-unionized and underpaid teachers, as the quintessential use of what she calls the ‘shock doctrine’ by ‘disaster capitalists’ to orchestrate predatory raids on the public sphere (Klein 3-6). While her overall argument stands up to scrutiny, this vignette points to an area that requires more explication. The bulk of Klein’s scholarship in this particular work is concerned with the ways in which American foreign policy, clandestine and overt, is conducted and the ends to which it aspires. But this moment in *domestic* policy was opened up in a very particular way by thirty years of ‘hard labor’ in the area of education policy-making by neoliberal intellectuals, corporate leaders, politicians and allies. This chapter seeks to make sense of that ‘hard labor,’ and to contextualize changes in American domestic policy, specifically education policy, within the rise of neoliberalism.

Education policy is a unique policy area within the neoliberal paradigm, as its framework has paradoxically and fairly successfully fused privatization and marketization of the means and ends of public education with penalization of this same system to control for the socially dangerous effects of broader neoliberal economic policy.

Context: Post-World War II American Educational Policy-Making

In terms of American federalism, public education was a matter generally reserved to the states by the Constitution, and was largely left in the hands of localities: until the

1950s, involvement of the state and federal governments were delimited by various factors. The intertwining forces motivating the Cold War and the civil rights movement engendered a new move towards nationalization of education, leading to a tighter ‘nesting’ relationship between state and federal governments (Anderson; Manna; McGuinn). Although the first major modern federal initiative in education, the National Defense Education Act of 1958, was motivated by fear of the growing power of the Soviet Union, white resistance to the intensifying civil rights movement in the post-war period also led to increased involvement of the federal government in American public education (Rudy, Ch. 11; Spring, Ch. 4-5; Klinkner and Smith; Dudziak).

The Supreme Court’s 1954 decision in *Brown vs. Board of Education*, the fruit of a well-developed NAACP legal strategy, struck down segregated schools as inherently unequal. The court was silent, however, on the critical issue of how desegregation was to be accomplished. *Brown II*, appearing a year later, also failed to establish clear deadlines or methods for desegregating the schools. Over the next ten years, massive white resistance to desegregation, along with the Eisenhower administration’s unwillingness to vigorously enforce the ruling, limited full and effective desegregation of Southern schools (Riley, Ch. 6). However, the dramatic expansion and radicalization of the civil rights movement in the early 1960s, along with the assassination of President John Kennedy and the rise of Lyndon Johnson to the presidency, laid the foundation for passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibited the provision of federal aid to segregated institutions (Orfield).

Combined with the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, which provided federal resources to local education agencies serving concentrations of poor

students, and tough enforcement guidelines issued by the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, this prohibition provided a powerful lever for desegregating southern schools (Orfield, Ch. 2). In subsequent years, court decisions and federal mandates reflecting the logic of the Brown decision and other civil rights rulings extended new educational rights to women, disabled students, and limited English-proficient students, dramatically altering the relationship between the federal governments and the states in education and engendering resistance and backlash in their implementation (Davies).

These developments at the national level catalyzed a range of state action and set into motion a new dynamic within the American federal system. Litigation following from *Brown vs. Board of Education*, in which states became co-defendants in segregation suits, drove some state political and administrative leaders to take a greater interest in how schools treated disadvantaged students. As federal regulations on the use of ESEA funds tightened during the 1970s, states and localities began to attend more closely to issues of equity in the public schools. Title I of the ESEA required state departments of education to oversee implementation, and provided new resources for staffing, thus encouraging greater state involvement in the equity movement (Manna). Beginning in the late 1960s and early 1970s, many states began to mirror the activities of Congress, creating categorical education programs that assisted particular groups of students (Hill). This mid-twentieth century transformation of the relationships between state and federal governments around the issues of public education laid the groundwork for neoliberal work in the second half of the century.

The Neoliberal Move From 'Equity' to 'Excellence' in Education

Neoliberal interest in public schools was articulated as early as the 1950s by Milton Friedman, “the nation's leading post-World War II guru of free markets, non-union labor, deregulation, overseas investment, industrial outsourcing, and reduced tax rates for wealthy individuals and corporations, to whom America's entire public school system ‘reeked of socialism’” (Munn, 3). Friedman advocated applying business concepts, such as free market competition, to public schools. Voucher experiments and charter schools would have the power to fix ‘failing’ schools because competition would drive out schools that were not performing adequately. Because attendance at poorly performing schools would not be compulsory, these schools would fade away as they were denied funding (Enright). But Friedman’s ideas did not begin to gain wider circulation and political traction until the late 1970s.

Friedman’s work, in conjunction with other academics within conservative think tanks, not only facilitated the neoliberal reconstitution of the global political order, but also *initiated and furthered* the restructuring and marketization of the public education system in the United States. American conservative intellectuals in the last half of the twentieth century were successful in creating a powerful neoliberal *anti-public ‘public’* centered around the creation of a new ‘neoliberal’ subject. The ‘concatenation of [conservative intellectual] writing over time’ led to American neoliberal public policy on education that is hollowing out and privatizing the conception of citizenship embedded in public education, much as it is hollowing out and privatizing the actual physical spaces of public schools, and that these processes are mutually interdependent. Moreover, the process of hollowing out and privatizing was delivered through the creation of political

fear, a fear of the educational crisis manufactured by these ‘intellectuals’ and intimidation of teachers and their unions through demonization and vilification.

A Note on Publics

While Habermas’ conception of the public sphere has been critiqued as either utopian or as ideological masking by American scholars from various disciplines over the course of the past twenty years, his work remains remarkably productive in terms of the questions it continues to pose for American politics. In the recent scholarship on publics, there seems to be some consensus on terms that can be used for historical or contemporary analysis: “‘public’ is taken to mean a ‘body’ of people either literally or figuratively assembled to ‘discuss’ matters of ‘public concern’ or ‘common interest,’ holding the ‘state’ accountable to ‘society’ via ‘publicity’” (Fraser, 56).

But Habermas’ argument is primarily a historical one: he saw the erosion of the public sphere as “resulting from the intrusion of the non-bourgeois strata, forcing ‘the social question’ to the fore,” polarizing society into class struggle, and fragmenting ‘the public’ into competing interest groups (Ibid). As society and the state became mutually intertwined in the ‘modern welfare state,’ in Habermas’ account, and publicity moved away from critical scrutiny of the state to become a matter of public relations, mass-mediated staged displays, and the manufacture and manipulation of public opinion, the public sphere eroded further (Habermas; Fraser 56-58).

While Habermas seems to have been idealizing the past to critique his present, it would have been interesting to see what he would have made of the conservative elite elaboration of a very unusual kind of ‘public’ beginning in the 1970s (Boggs). That there was increasing conservative awareness of a transformation of the American political

terrain in the 1960s and 1970s, to the detriment of elite, especially corporate, interests, is evident in Lewis Powell's 1971 memo to his friend Eugene Sydnor, Jr., the Director and head of the Education Committee of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. Powell, writing two months prior his nomination to the U.S. Supreme Court by President Nixon, entitled the memo the "Attack on the American Free Enterprise System" (Powell).

The Powell memo is important here for three reasons. First, it outlines a very clear and comprehensive picture of the ways in which the prerogatives or 'distinctions' of (corporate) elites were being challenged by the political work of a wide array of social movements and counter-publics.

[W]hat now concerns us is quite new in the history of America. We are not dealing with sporadic or isolated attacks from a relatively few extremists or even from the minority socialist cadre. Rather, the assault on the enterprise system is broadly based and consistently pursued. It is gaining momentum and converts (Powell, 2).

This memo also strongly suggests, through thematic reiteration, the power that conservatives attributed to the political nature of public education, arguing that, "The assault on the enterprise system was not mounted in a few months... (and) there is reason to believe that the campus is the single most dynamic source" (Powell, 4). This view permeated the long-term education policy strategy conservative elites began to shape in the 1970s to wage "an ideological war against liberal intellectuals, who argued for holding government and corporate power accountable as a precondition for extending and expanding the promise of an inclusive democracy" (Giroux 2009, 1). And, finally, the Powell memo outlines the need for an organized, systematic, collaborative and powerful response to this array of perceived threats to late capitalism:

The overriding first need is for businessmen to recognize that the ultimate issue may be survival -- survival of what we call the free enterprise system, and all that this means for the strength and prosperity of America and the freedom of our people.... If our system is to survive, top management must be equally concerned with protecting and preserving the system itself. This involves far more than an increased emphasis on 'public relations' or 'governmental affairs' -- two areas in which corporations long have invested substantial sums... Strength lies in organization, in careful long-range planning and implementation, in consistency of action over an indefinite period of years, in the scale of financing available only through joint effort, and in the political power available only through united action and national organizations (6).

This might easily be dismissed as proposed organization on the part of the hegemonic elite to buttress their social status, having nothing to do with 'public sphere' analysis, if these men were not clearly speaking from outside the political mainstream of American-style post-New Deal welfare state politics, and from outside of the seat of power at the time. Powell approvingly cites Milton Friedman, leader of the neoliberal Chicago School of Economics, even before Friedman had publicly redefined freedom in order to rationalize the economic and political strategies he helped to develop in Pinochet's Chile. Insisting that "economic freedom is an essential requisite for political freedom," Friedman contributed to the rehabilitation of conservatism in the 1970s by equating 'capitalism and freedom' and celebrating the 'free market' as a venue of creativity and liberty (Grandin). While this formulation lies at the heart of the current neoliberal movement, accepted as common sense by mainstream politicians and opinion makers both left and right, Friedman's ideas were still very much on the fringe in the 1970s.

Recent work on publics contributes additional theoretical complexity to our investigation of the neoliberal *anti-public public* by describing three kinds of publics: a

social totality, a concrete audience assembled in common visibility and in common action, and a reading and listening audience centered on texts (Warner, 65-66). The first type refers an abstraction of a collective that must be imagined into existence, imagined communities, collectives, nations, etc. (c.f. Anderson). The second type is characterized by physicality, visibility and witnessing: this “sense of ‘public’ can mean a more concrete and located audience, one that can ‘witness itself in visible space,’ as in the audience for a theater production, sporting event, or concert” (Ferguson, 196). Warner’s third type of public is “the kind of public that comes into being only in relation to texts and their circulation” (Warner, 66). These publics are text-based, either oral or written, and “exist by virtue of being addressed” (67). While Warner does achieve some important analytic distinctions by separating out these different levels or types of publicity, it is perhaps in their interrelatedness and connectedness that we can most clearly understand the dynamics of these ‘publics’ (Ferguson, 196-197).

At the first level, conservative intellectuals in the 1970s did speak into existence, or imagine into collectivity, a ‘true American nation’ based on the principles of ‘fiscal responsibility, limited government, and free markets’ (Lepore). The third level of analysis, however, will be the primary focus of this section, as it examines the social space these conservative intellectuals “created by reflexive circulation of discourse,” as the “concatenation of [their] texts over time” went beyond the scale of conversation or discussion to “encompass a multi-generic life world organized not just by relational axis of utterance and response but by potentially infinite axes of citation and characterization” (Warner, 90-91). And it is precisely this third level of articulation that shapes the development of the second level, the creation of the physical, visible, and witnessing

space wherein social movements are further cultivated. The rhetoric and ideology developed in the textual production of the third level contributed to its further distribution in spaces where political understandings were shared physically.

The first constitutive principle of ‘publics’ is that that they are self-organized, that is, not organized by the state or any other superordinate socio-political organization, and that they establish a relation among strangers, organized through participation alone. In the late 1970s, there were three overlapping conservative social movements that would eventually connect to, and provide the basis for, a coherent neoliberal ‘anti-public public’ in the 1990s. The first is conventionally considered to be the far right (also called the New Right, the Radical Right, or the Reactionary Right). This group was distinctive at the time for, among other things, blaming the federal government for the problems of the nation’s public schools, and arguing that all educational decision-making should be radically decentralized. The second group is the religious right (including those involved with the Religious Roundtable). The members of this group were primarily concerned that the federal government had ‘denied’ students the ‘right’ to pray in school, unfairly restricted the teaching of ‘creationism,’ and encouraged the appearance of ‘dirty,’ ‘anti-family,’ ‘pro-homosexual,’ ‘anti-American’ books along with the evils of ‘cultural relativism’ and ‘secular humanism.’ The most influential group, the neoconservatives (working with the American Enterprise Institute, and writing in publications like *Public Interest*, *Commentary*, and *The New Republic*), not only incorporated many of the above arguments but also generally argued that public schools were faced with two fundamental problems, i.e. a distracting history of social experiments, and excessive federal interventions to promote educational equity (Nash; Robinson).

Publishing the 'Anti-Public Public'

Developing a shared narrative about the 'problem' of American public education enabled various groups to articulate a common 'anti-public public' dream through a multi-pronged attack on American public education institutions. This attack was articulated and effected from the pages of key publications from the mid-1970s to mid-1980s, which were in turn later connected to and sponsored by key think tanks. While the audiences addressed in three core journals of neoliberalism varied widely, the views expressed began to coalesce around a core set of concerns regarding education in this time period. All three journals are fairly academic and scholarly in approach, and have been influential beyond what their small and fairly exclusive circulation might suggest.

Commentary is a monthly American magazine on politics, Judaism, social and cultural issues, founded by the American Jewish Committee in 1945. By 1960, its editor was Norman Podhoretz, originally a mainstream liberal Democrat who had flirted with the margins of the New Left but moved the magazine sharply to the right in the 1970s and 1980s, so much so that the magazine had become a leading voice of neoconservatism by 1976. Podhoretz overtly and heavy-handedly used the forum of the *Commentary* to argue that the New Left was a dangerously anti-American, anti-liberal, and anti-Semitic force (Abrams, Ch. 2-3). Articles in the journal attacked the New Left on questions ranging from crime, the nature of art, drugs, poverty, to the new egalitarianism. The shift that Podhoretz effected in the contents of this journal helped define the emerging neoconservative movement and gave space to disillusioned liberals. The "Contentious Magazine That Transformed the Jewish Left Into the Neoconservative Right" is unique in the late twentieth century in that "no other journal of the past half century has been so

consistently influential, or so central to the major debates that have transformed the political and intellectual life of the United States” (Balint; Friedman).

Similarly, *The New Republic* shifted from a largely progressive, liberal orientation to a more neoliberal set of positions with new ownership in 1974. In March 1974, the magazine was purchased by Harvard University lecturer Martin Peretz. Peretz, like Podhoretz, was a veteran of the New Left who had broken with that movement over its support of various Third World liberationist movements, particularly the Palestine Liberation Organization and transformed *TNR* into its current form. On domestic policy in the 1970s and 1980s, it advocated a self-critical brand of liberalism, taking positions that ranged from traditionally liberal to increasingly neoliberal positions. By the 1990s, the magazine's outlook was strongly associated with the Democratic Leadership Council and ‘New Democrats.’ It advocated some policies that, while seeking to achieve the ends of traditional social welfare programs, often sought to use market solutions as their means, and were consequently considered very ‘business-friendly.’

The *Public Interest*, born in 1965, was a leading neoconservative journal on political economy and culture, aimed at a readership of journalists, scholars, and policy makers. Described by one of its journalists as “heavy on empirical data, short on polemics and always lively,” its editors took pride in “challenging conventional wisdom on all the great domestic issues of our time” (Krauthammer). The journal included a notable group of writers, including Irving Kristol, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Robert Solow, Jacques Barzun, Daniel Bell, Nathan Glazer, Milton Friedman, James Q. Wilson and Peter Drucker. The magazine's sub-editors were considered apprentices, and were seeded into high journalism, academia, and government staff posts, which provided

pathways for many policies forwarded by the magazine to be absorbed into the mainstream of public policy. This was one way in which the magazine's increasingly neoconservative bent over the years quietly shaped, and then came to dominate, political discourse in America (Krauthammer). These three journals were critical in framing the public conversation on primary and secondary public education in the mid to late 1970s.

Context: Violent Reactions to Desegregation and Busing

In the middle of the 1970s, the attention of writers and the editorial staff at both *TNR* and *Commentary* were focused on bloody conflicts over race, equality and education. Joseph Featherstone, writing “Thoughts on a Bicentennial City: Boston Desegregation”, focused his reading public’s attention on the violent resistance that desegregation had engendered, not just in the South, but also in Boston (*TNR*, Jan. 1976). Seeking to make sense of the ways in which the second phase of desegregation “touched off demonstrations, boycotts and bloodshed” in 1974 and to explain why “resistance to busing continues strong in white neighborhoods,” Featherstone connects this struggle to the history of public education in Boston for immigrants in an ironic fashion (24). Similarly, Edward Zuckerman examines in a fairly detached but critical way, the violent anti-busing backlash that put two people in hospital in Boston, as well as political establishment behind this movement, including elected officials with southern and western European immigrant background (“Landsmark and Poleet: Beaten Up in Boston,” *TNR* May 22, 1976).

If authors in *TNR* were speaking to and cultivating a critical public concerned to address the issue of backlash against the push for race-centered educational equality, those at *Public Interest* sought to legitimize the backlash. Thomas Sowell, a black

economist who had just completed graduate work with Milton Friedman at the University of Chicago, argues in “‘Affirmative Action’ Reconsidered” that:

If the ‘affirmative action’ program were merely inane, futile, and costly, it might deserve no more attention than other government programs of the same description. But it has side effects which are negative in the short run and perhaps poisonous in the long run. While doing little or nothing to advance the position of minorities and females, it creates the impression that the hard-won *achievements* of these groups are *conferred* benefits. Especially in the case of blacks, this means *perpetuating* racism instead of allowing it to die a natural death or to fall before the march of millions of people advancing on all economic fronts in the wake of ‘equal opportunity’ laws and changing public opinion (63: Winter 1976).

James Coleman, another conservative black academic, does the same kind of legitimizing work in the following edition of *Public Interest*, but following a different tack in “Rawls, Nozick and Education Equality” (PI, Spring 1976). His widely cited report of 1966 (actually referred to as the ‘Coleman Report’) found that, on average, black schools were funded on a nearly equal basis by the 1960s and suggested that socially disadvantaged black students profited from schooling in racially-mixed classrooms. This report provided a catalyst for the implementation of desegregation busing systems, ferrying black students to integrated schools (Coleman 1966). In 1975, Coleman published the results of further research into the effects of school busing systems intended to bring lower-class black students into higher-class mixed race schools, concluding that white parents moved their children out of such schools in large numbers, coining the term “white flight” (Coleman 1975). His 1966 article had argued that black students would only benefit from integrated schooling if there was a majority of white students in the classroom; the mass busing system had failed.

By 1976, James Coleman was using the pages of *Public Interest* to explain this failure in terms of an ‘inherent’ conflict between freedom and equality. “The most direct clash of the principles of liberty and equality has occurred over the imposition of compulsory busing within school districts; and an even more intense clash appears ahead with the possibility of compulsory busing across school district lines within a metropolitan area” (125). Like many attuned to the central debates in liberal political philosophy of the mid-1970s, he contrasts the work of John Rawls and Robert Nozick, “showing the inherent conflicts in educational policy between equality (which Rawls elevates to supremacy) and liberty (which is supreme for Nozick)” (128). He argues that, ultimately, because “for certain policies (such as school desegregation), children themselves are regarded as resources implies that however centralized the financial resources of the schools are, these human resources - not centrally held, but rather products of individual families - will offset the centrally held resources, thus providing the context in which natural rights theories (like that of Nozick) are persuasive” (Ibid). Here he is supporting a Nozickian libertarian and free-market argument, over the Rawlsian position which would advocate the redistribution of social resources that affect democratic participation. Coleman is, like Sowell, trying to make the disconcerting argument that the implementation of affirmative action is actually contrary to the interests of black America.¹¹

This problem of equality was also taken up by Eugene McCarthy, former Senator from Minnesota and former Democratic presidential candidate, in the pages of *Commentary* a few months later. Attacking President Carter’s assertion that Americans

¹¹ It is fascinating that it is this line of argumentation upon which both of their academic careers are built.

were at that moment “struggling to enhance equality of opportunity,” McCarthy argues in 1978 that a new dominant conception of equality of outcomes is riven with dangers, including the “weakening of institutions that are expected to give form and direction to society, such as professional and educational institutions” with significant impact on the “individual’s conception of his place in society” (55). He argues that the “deceptively angelistic conception of man” upon which this new conception of equality is based will “in all likelihood move persons in search of security, if not identity, to accept greater and greater socialization in politics, in economic and in culture” (Ibid). His articulation of the implications of this ‘socialization’ for education are worth quoting at length, echoing as they do many of the arguments previously found only in more conservative publications like *Public Interest*:

A similar drive to realize the new idea of equality has marked educational development in recent years. The standardized curriculum, quota admissions, and free college education are all manifestations of this drive. Full application of the principle could lead to compulsory college education, with the level of education so reduced that all who enter do so with assurance of successful graduation. With no possible abandonment of hope at any point, they could forward to something like the judgment of Dodo after the caucus race in Alice in Wonderland: ‘*Everybody* has won, and *all* must have prizes’ (54).

McCarthy, in adopting such a heavy tone of derision and sarcasm, and by suggesting that the demand for broadened equal educational opportunity leads inevitably towards educational mediocrity, facilitated a national shift in the education discussion on ‘equity’ and ‘excellence.’

Racial inequality became the Achilles heel from which the more liberal publications, *TNR* and *Commentary*, would not recover, while the assertion of the importance of freedom and individualism over substantive racial equity in public

education from the outset inured the writers and editors of *Public Interest* to similar internal conflict. Irving Howe, writing with *TNR*, addressed the issue in “The Right Menace: Why People Are Turning Conservative” (12-22). The author of *Leon Trotsky*, Howe was one of the few writers still working at *TNR* or *Commentary* in the mid-1970s who could have been identified as sympathetic in any way to the New Left. Howe argues that many of the conservative themes first announced in the 1950s are being reintroduced by “rightward-moving publicists,” and that this publicity work is generated not simply by generating fear of Communism and the growth of the ‘welfare state,’ but also by tapping into a “new feeling about blacks” (5). This ‘new feeling’ comes from the sense that

many blacks seem lost in demoralization, pathology, crime [and that the] black community seems leaderless – the self-destructive ideology of ‘black power’ has come to little, and the expectation, perhaps foolish, that blacks would simply adapt to the styles and manners of middle class whites has been dashed....the black problem is beyond solution (12-13).

However, this ‘sense’ is actually being constructed by these ‘rightward-moving publicists,’ as they seek to marginalize and dismiss the widespread movement for racial equality.

Race, The Courts and the Public Circulation of Ideas

The challenge of race politics in education is highlighted in the response of these publicists to the seemingly expanded role of the courts in public policy. Those seeking to engage their readership on the question of the legitimate role of the courts and social science in effecting desegregation began the discussion in *Public Interest* in 1976.

Eleanor Wolf, in her piece entitled “Social Science and the Courts: The Detroit Schools Case,” writes that “The growing reluctance to use research findings and scholarly opinion as grounds for desegregation orders seems a proper recognition of the “revisionist”

character of scientific knowledge” (35: Winter 1976). The basis for her argument is that some of the most important re-analyses of the data used in the study by Coleman, as well as other research on the effects of pupil heterogeneity on achievement, for example, appeared *after* the Detroit trial she was covering. She seeks to challenge the reliance on social science as the basis for legal decisions on racial inequality and education *only* when it undermines public policy designed to improve equality:

In the future, new knowledge may support, question, or reverse earlier findings. Social science testimony performs a useful and necessary function when... such material reveals erroneous assumptions and conclusions by disclosing the inadequacies or insufficiencies in method, looseness in reasoning, or paucity of evidence relied upon to construct the causal model upon which a policy rests....The removal of these insubstantial foundations should compel greater judicial reliance upon clear constitutional principles (113).

In the spring of 1977, David Kirp likewise looked askance at the increasing importance of the courts in determining public policy in his *Public Interest* piece, “School Desegregation and the Limits of Legalism.” The past “teaches us,” he argues, “if we had not already learned from the decade between the *Brown* decision and the passage of the Civil Rights Act, that questions of race and schooling can only be confronted with some hope of ultimate success if the will to do so is shared by the several branches of government and not confined to the courts” (24). He points out that it was through “the combined efforts of Congress, the Executive, and the judiciary that made possible the dramatic desegregation of Southern schools during the Johnson Presidency” (23).

The case of *Bakke v. University of California*, however, was not generally critiqued on these grounds when the Supreme Court decision was handed down in 1978. The decision in *Bakke*, a case in which the charge of ‘reverse discrimination’ in

educational access achieved some limited legal legitimacy, was met with hostility by writers in *Public Interest*, *TNR* and *Commentary*. However, the sources of hostility differed in important ways, and *Commentary* took the lead and set the tone. John Bunzel, the president of San Jose University writing in *Commentary* in March 1977, depicted the case as legitimately challenging the “use of race as a qualifying standard” that itself is “racially discriminatory and a violation of the principle of equal treatment under law” (59). Bunzel argued that Americans were “willing to pay for an educational program that will benefit the victims of discrimination” but “will engage *that* fight not by granting special privileges to some groups at the expense of others, but by providing tangible assistance” (60). What is necessary, he argues, is a “state and national search program at the high school level, where talented young people – blacks, Chicanos, poor whites, and all those disadvantaged who otherwise become locked into a lifetime of inequality- can be found and helped” (Ibid). About a year and a half later, in September 1978, *Commentary* published a special edition dedicated largely to the question of the implications of the Bakke decision.

The two central pieces in this special edition of *Commentary* were designed to answer the same question: “Why *Bakke* Won’t End Reverse Discrimination.” William Bennett and Terry Eastland, who were writing a book together called *Counting by Race: Equality from the Founding Fathers to Bakke and Weber*, and known to be strong opponents of affirmative action, agreed in Part I with those who thought the decision and the constitutional standard imposed by the decision did not go far enough to address the ‘injustice’ of admissions systems based on racial standards. They ridiculed Justice Powell’s reasoning on the issue of race as a criteria of admission: while Powell’s

argument that “the goal of attaining a diverse student body is a matter of academic freedom and a compelling and constitutionally protected end” escapes explicit criticism, it is his willingness to accept the Harvard system, rather than the Davis system, as an exemplar that is problematic for these authors because they argue that both systems are based on numbers and quotas. Bennett and Eastland assert that “*no such rough equality*” (italics added) exists between applicants of different races *such that* race could simply be given ‘tipping weight’ and lead to the desired numerical and statistical outcomes. They quote Thomas Sowell’s article, published in the previous edition of *Commentary*, to the effect that the decision was not compassionate because “it is the opposite of compassion to mismatch students with institutions that have standards too severe for them: this is to patronize, to condescend, and to do them harm” and suggest that George Will is correct to assert that “*Bakke* will not impede the drive to transform the concept of American justice from ‘equal opportunity’ to ‘statistical parity’”(34-35).

Similarly, Nathan Glazer, professor of education and sociology at Harvard who wrote *Affirmative Discrimination*, *Remembering the Answers*, and, with Daniel Moynihan, *Beyond the Melting Pot*, before weighing in on the *Bakke* decision on the pages of *Commentary*, is troubled by the outcome but for different reasons. The central problem for Glazer is that “all the nine Justices agree that deference is due to existing legislation, and the executive and administrative action that implements it – action which has already saddled us with many requirements to take race and ethnicity into account” (36). However, like Bennett and Eastland, Glazer also hones in Justice Powell’s argumentation, although in a far more complementary way, suggesting that “Justice Powell takes up a more sophisticated and complex position on the ethnic character of the

country” than he had seen before in any opinion of the Supreme Court, a position that is particularly important because “Powell attacks the theory that only ‘stigmatized groups,’ groups thought inferior, deserve the protection of the Constitution” (38). The key here, for Glazer, is that the theory that Powell is attacking is “remarkably dangerous in a world in which educationally and economically successful minorities have met... the fiercest discrimination” (Ibid). “Are we to believe [based on this theory],” he asks, “that discrimination against such [successful] minorities – Jews, for example, or Chinese – is lawful under our Constitution?” (Ibid). Set to defend the prerogatives of his own group, Glazer uses the notion of ‘proportionateness’ to attack the educational gains of Asian Americans, arguing that if ‘proportionateness’ is the standard, then “groups like the Jews, drawn to medicine, adept at science and math, motivated to become doctors, will suffer, while others less suited by training or motivation will become doctors because quotas make it easier for them” (41). Glazer favors a total prohibition on the use of race as a qualifying factor, arguing that, “If we want a society in which individuals are treated as individuals by public bodies, and as far as possible in private life, then we cannot get there by allowing or prescribing public action in the opposite direction, even on a temporary basis” (40).

It is not simply the content of their arguments about *Bakke* and the centrality of racial issues to their political positions that is important here. It is also the nature of the ‘participants’ or authors shaping this public discussion about race and education. Not only were William Bennett and Terry Eastland rising neoconservative stars in the Democratic Party in the late 1970s, but their political and professional careers were being built around precisely this constructed notion of a crisis in public education. Bennett

would later become Secretary of Education under Ronald Reagan, with his nomination marking a watershed moment in the rise of ‘neoconservatives’ over ‘paleoconservatives’ in the Republican Party, which Bennett officially joined in 1986. As Secretary of Education, he developed public policy from the conservative positions on affirmative action, school vouchers, curriculum reform and religion in education that he had articulated in the 1970s in the publications discussed above. Terry Eastland would ultimately become the publisher of *The Weekly Standard*, an American neoconservative opinion magazine, a "redoubt of neoconservatism" and "the neo-con bible" (Boot). Like *Public Interest*, *Commentary* and *The New Republic*, many of the articles in *The Weekly Standard* were written by members of conservative think tanks such as American Enterprise Institute, the Ethics and Public Policy Center, the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, and the Hudson Institute. Nathan Glazer, who remained a nominal Democrat throughout his career, was actually the co-editor of *Public Interest* and was so at the time when he contributed critical articles on public education to *Commentary*. He is generally considered neoconservative in terms of domestic policy, and agreed with Moynihan that the "disproportionate presence of Negroes and Puerto Ricans on welfare" was a primary racial problem in the urban areas. He argued that "the breakdown of traditional modes of behavior is the chief cause of our social problems" and he did not think that breakdown could be addressed by government. Glazer's view was an example of the ‘culture of poverty’ arguments that were gaining traction by the mid-1960s as explanations for social inequalities.

Yet, in the same time frame in which the content of *Commentary* is dominated by the *Bakke* case, public discussion generated by writers in *The New Republic* is still

framed by more traditional liberal or progressive concerns. These writers, in 1978, are more focused on challenges to desegregation and *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education* rather than *Bakke* and the limited success of charges of reverse discrimination. Anne Witte, editor of *People and Taxes*, a newsletter of Ralph Nader's Tax Reform Research Group, examines the backlash to the IRS' proposal of new rules to "assure that private schools set up following court-ordered desegregation for a community's public schools are not using tax-exempt funds to continue segregated education" (11). Situating the controversy in the historical context of the Brown decision and the subsequent Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, which "banned federal assistance to private educational bigotry," she argues that the more than 100,000 letters against the proposal and the extension of public hearings due to the numbers of people who want to defeat it make it seem "almost as if the whole civil rights movement had never taken place" (Ibid). Her tone is wry and sarcastic when she states that:

The IRS isn't interested in changing people's beliefs, however misguided. It is simply attempting – finally – to enforce the tax law. As a court has noted, 'Perhaps those who cling to infantile and ultimately self-destructive notions of their racial superiority cannot be forced to maturity. But the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments do require that such individuals not be given solace in their delusions by the Government.' Or as one black man at the hearing succinctly put forth on a cardboard sign: 'Jim Crow with your own dough' (13).

In the late 1970s, moves to resegregate and popular resistance to desegregation, evident in widespread efforts to protect the tax privileges still afforded to racially discriminatory educational institutions, were still a major source of concern for writers in *The New Republic*.

Diane Ravitch, a professor of history and education at Columbia Teachers College, focused even more tightly on the long-term implications of the Brown decision in her May 1979 piece entitled “Color-Blind or Color-Conscious?” for *TNR*. She argues that the power of the Brown decision lay in its establishment of a fundamental principle around which a “broad alliance composed blacks, liberals, organized labor, Catholics, Jews, and others who perceived that the black cause was the common cause of everyone who wanted to eliminate group bias from American life” (15-16). This coalition was powerful enough in the mid-1960s to win passage of the Civil Rights Act, federal aid to education, the Voting Rights Act and the anti-poverty program, but she argues that a “shift in focus from anti-discrimination to group preference” had rent this alliance asunder. The “complicated” and divisive nature of issues such as “racial balancing, busing, affirmative action and quotas” for the civil rights alliance, from Ravitch’s perspective, stem from an “essential dilemma: the group-based concepts of the present are in conflict with the historic efforts of the civil rights movement to remove group classifications from public policy” (16). She argues that this division has come to pass because of a misinterpretation of the Brown decision as a legitimate basis for “a host of color-conscious and group-specific policies” (17). The trends that converged to “undermine the color-blind principle” included white southern intransigence that preserved segregation despite *Brown*, the Civil Rights Act of 1964’s authorization of federal officials to cut off federal funds for districts that failed to desegregate, and the black power movement with its open advocacy of black self-interest. Her answer to continued racial inequality, like that of her peers at *Commentary*, is to “overcome the effects of past discrimination by supplying the skills and motivation to achieve without

regard to race or social origins” because the “trend towards formalizing group distinctions in public policy has contributed to a sharpening of group consciousness and group conflict” (20).

The linkage between *Brown* and *Bakke* is made explicit for this increasingly interconnected public in C. Vann Woodward’s *TNR* review of J. Harvie Wilkinson’s book entitled *From Brown to Bakke: The Supreme Court and School Integration, 1954-1978*. Woodward seems captivated by the apparently surprising attitude of the white southerner who had previously served as Justice Powell’s clerk: he quotes Wilkinson as writing:

Brown may be the most important political, social and legal event in America’s twentieth century history. Its greatness lay in the enormity of the injustice it condemned, in the entrenched sentiment it challenged, in the immensity of law it created and overthrew.... It was a crossroads, not just for an outcast race, but for an outcast region, a testing ground for liberal values and theory, and challenge for the rule of law and the authority of the Court. The story of *Brown* is the story of revolution: a thousand tales of human suffering and sacrifice subsumed in the winning of a principle. So also was the triumph in *Brown* the triumph of revolution, the witness to both the end of an old order and the advent of an uncertain perceptibly better, though unmistakably imperfect, new (16).

Woodward summarizes Wilkinson’s argument nicely, the first half of which is legal history, essentially tracing the arc of school desegregation in the South through five stages: absolute defiance, token compliance, modest integration, massive integration, and resegregation. But it is Wilkinson’s focus on the work of Judge John Minor Wisdom in the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals and his analysis of the emergence of busing in the early 1970s (with the *Swann* decision) as the hottest issue of national politics that captures Woodward’s imagination, “for suddenly the entire nation, not merely the backward South, was summoned to sacrifice for integration” (28). Wisdom’s premise

was that “school boards had a positive duty to integrate, not merely to stop segregating...(and) the purpose of desegregation was nothing less than to redress the wrongs inflicted on an entire race, not merely individuals, down through the generations” (Ibid). Woodward, following Wilkinson, calls this “compensatory justice on a grand scale” which made federal courts the “bold architects of school desegregation policy and opened the way to the broad discretion exercised by courts in student busing” (28). School suits erupted across the North in the middle 1970s as opposition to busing spread, and the Supreme Court decision in 1974 on *Milliken v. Bradley* was widely seen, Wilkinson points out, as a sharp reversal on school desegregation, and was referred to as the second *Plessy v. Ferguson*. Wilkinson’s historical and constitutional analysis of this series of Supreme Court cases on race and education, and Woodward’s ability to condense and synthesize this analysis, contributes further to the development of the public discourse on education by making the Supreme Court deliberation and decision-making subject to critical analysis by citizens. And it contributes in a particular way, one that examines the painful expansion of American democracy without feeding and breeding fear about race-based conflict.

It is the manufacture and celebration of potential conflict between different ethnic or social groups that is one central factor in the development of the *anti-public public*, because this approach creates divisions between ‘us’ and ‘them,’ those who are understood to be legitimately worthy of equal treatment and equal opportunity and those who are not. It is precisely this tact that the editors at *Commentary* take with respect to the issue of race and education in late 1979.

While all three journals entered this particular public discussion at different moments in the 1970s and from slightly different points of view, by 1979, the authorial voices featured in these publications shared some views about public education that structure a ‘story’ with common narrative elements. These unifying narrative elements enabled these groups to first overlook and then overcome critically divisive issues. The emergent narrative enabled a diverse array of groups to articulate a common ‘anti-public public’ dream or vision through a multi-pronged attack on American public education institutions.

Circulation of Texts: Creation of Consensus on ‘The Problem’ of Public Education

Through the circulation not only of texts but also of authors’ bodies through institutions, a consensus slowly developed over the course of the second half of the 1970s. These authors were all more or less offended by recent changes in public schools and wanted a return to the mythic ‘golden years’ of American education, identifying education as a site of social, political and moral decay. The development of a consensus on the ‘problem’ of public education was somewhat uneven but already showed lines of cohesion in the late 1970s.

While *Public Interest* was the first publication to delineate the parameters of the ‘problem,’ all three journals described historical deterioration in public schools in the post-World War II period. Most of the discussion in *The New Republic* and *Commentary* on public education in the 1970s focused on issues of desegregation, busing, and continued evidence of inequality. However, while these issues were standard fare for liberal publications of the time, authors and editors in *TNR* and *Commentary* slowly moved the analysis into a terrain landscaped with the vocabulary and concepts of their

more conservative counterparts. Joseph Featherstone's early (1975) piece entitled "Children Out of School: The Expendables" in *TNR*, for example, opens with a sympathetic description of the work of a new organization, the Children's Defense Fund, to identify children excluded from school (13). The initial arguments suggest that the author is writing from an equity-centered point of view, with his attention on the disproportionate numbers of poor, minority and rural children within the ranks of the excluded, and his keen interest in the plight of students with special needs. However, it is when the author moves from description of the 'problem' to analysis of its sources that readers can hear the echoing concepts developed and mobilized by conservative commentators: while the CDF report "quite sensibly focuses on exclusionary practices that are unconscionable by any standard: kids kept out of school because they are poor, or labeled retarded because they are black, or suspended for wildly capricious reasons," beneath the straightforward abuses "lurk more complicated issues" like "discipline" and the enormity of the demands that integration places on public resources (14). Sounding like a writer in *Public Interest*, he argued that the newly emergent "lack of discipline" in the public schools emanated *from* abuses of new legal protection against exclusion and *from* the expansion of student rights, especially for those classes of students who are newly protected (13-16). The expansion of rights and protections, to the extent that they are being *used*, actually damage the entire system.

By 1977, Eleanor McGowan and David Cohen were reiterating previous historical arguments about the plight of public education in the post-WWII period in *Public Interest*:

To judge from recent developments, America's long romance with schooling is on the wane. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, reformers attacked schools for not trying to do the things they should - integration, better science education, and compensatory training for the poor. The schools then took on these tasks, but by the late 1960s the reformers complained that they were not executing the reforms properly. Critics and social scientists questioned the efficacy of schooling.... rather than picturing schools as a refuge, the current wisdom portrays them as pathologically isolated products of the failure of primary institutions to socialize the young and of economic pressures to keep youth out of the work force. School children are said to be walled off from healthy social realities by irrelevant compulsory attendance and school-leaving laws, and by an unwise professional devotion to book learning (28-30).

In an editorial entitled “Kissing Off the Public Schools” in March 1978, the leadership at *TNR* expressed the clear view that “American Public Schools Are In a Bad Way.” This position is based primarily on a particular reading of statistical data, which demonstrated a sharp decline in the SAT scores of American high school students from 1963 to 1977 that required explanation. The author also focused on the 1975 NAEP finding that “more than 12 percent of the nation's 17-year-old high school students were functionally illiterate” and “only 53 percent of these 17-year-olds were aware that each state has two senators and that members of Congress are not appointed by the President” (5). Critical of the ‘educational establishment,’ the author argues that while “the education establishment—notably the National Education Association—has asserted that the problem lies with testing and not with teaching”... “the public is not accepting the argument, nor should it” (Ibid). For the author, the “test results merely confirm what citizens see with their own eyes. Virtually anyone who can afford to has abandoned the nation's big city school systems for the suburbs or for private schools. Even in the suburbs, parents increasingly are opting for private schools” (Ibid).

However, the anonymous editorial author of this March 1978 *TNR* article dismisses the recent findings of a national panel established to explore the root causes of the deterioration of student performance and decline in test scores: while the panel found that “relaxed teaching and learning standards, television, changes in the American family and ‘unprecedented turbulence in American affairs’ during the 1960s and 1970s” contributed to the situation, the author is much more interested in the effects of race and desegregation. At this moment in the late 1970s, the *TNR* editorial position is still firmly rooted in the issues of educational and racial equity, arguing that “The United States Constitution, morality, and good educational policy all dictated that the schools should be integrated” (5). He or she is extremely critical of the Packwood-Moynihan proposal for tuition tax credit, the anticipated effect of which would be to encourage further white flight from public schools. This kind of analysis of ‘the problem’ in public education is echoed in the April 1978 *TNR* article entitled “The Other Side of the New North” by Nick Kotz. Kotz, the author of *A Passion for Equality*, is also attentive to the issue of exclusion of black children and the effects of ‘tracking’ on black children. The analysis of the educational issues facing the rural South in this article, which reflects the strong liberal focus on equality of *TNR* even in early 1978, still highlights “how much progress today is dependent on federal civil rights laws, federal court orders, and federal assistance programs – ones that the neoconservatives today tell us did not work” (23).

For writers and the editorial leadership at the conservative *Public Interest* magazine, the ‘new’ approach to moral education in the schools was a key source of the ‘problem’: “more and more in recent years, and especially now, in the aftermath of Watergate and accounts of corruption in government and business, there has been a call

for reemphasizing moral education in the schools” (Bennett and Delattre 1978, p. 81).

The new approach framed by Simon and Kohlberg and identified as ‘values clarification’ was first critiqued by these writers in *Public Interest* for its dangerous tendencies towards the worst kind of "indoctrination" (82).

To them, goodness simply does not exist: People press for their wants or their rights and are continually at each other's throats. Although Simon and Kohlberg dislike authority, each offers a program that would impose on students an authority much more malevolent in its consequences than any traditional form of authority or ‘indoctrination.’ The tyranny of the passions and of minorities and majorities - the arbitrary exercise of power by special groups, be they advantaged or disadvantaged offers not more freedom, but less, and a far less attractive world. Subjected only to one's wants or to the whims of special groups wielding arbitrary power, the individual and his life and moral relations are much bleaker than they actually are, or than they have traditionally been represented to be by the old to the young. In Simon and Kohlberg, responsibility and love are missing; life and man are oppressive; and the world is cold, ugly, brutish, and lonely. In this distorted view of life and morality, they fail to recognize the significance of what is possible among people across generations (98).

Similarly, Jacqueline Kasun wrote in 1979 in *Public Interest* that while “[s]chools have traditionally been entrusted with the task of "molding character"...this responsibility offers as well an opportunity for ideologues to propagandize. Clearly, the emerging sex lobby is making every effort to use the schools to mold minds in the direction of a new morality which claims that though sex should be freely and widely enjoyed, the principal human responsibility is to limit human numbers” (13). She argues that “parents have the right to demand that the schools *not* be used to induce guilt in children and young people for aspiring to become parents [and] that sex be taught as a biological science, with the permission of parents... [with] the teaching of values be

regarded as a family responsibility primarily,” with the schools teaching “respect for the traditional moral values shared by most groups in our society” (14).

The problem was not simply that traditional values were no longer being transmitted in the public schools, but more broadly, that the unified national culture from which those values used to emanate was being undermined: “In schools across the nation, the type of instruction a child receives frequently depends on that child's ethnic origin. The public school no longer functions to transmit a common culture. Children from different ethnic cultures are taught differently” (Thernstrom, 3). For these authors, it was becoming clear that while “[i]n a morally unified and harmonious era, the schools can serve the public intention readily...[i]n an era marked by multiplicity of aims, or by competing aims, the schools tend to become ambivalent, or confused, or inhibited – often all three at once” (Adelson, 39).

Conclusion

Although it is in their interrelatedness and connectedness that we can most clearly understand the dynamics of these kinds or levels of ‘publics,’ it is still a useful and important intellectual endeavor to tease out the historical and structural distinctions between various levels or types. The emergence of this neoliberal *anti-public public* was initially facilitated by the creation of the third type of public discussed by Warner, a reading audience centered on texts (Warner, 65-66). The active and conscious development of a sympathetic reading audience was actualized through the circulation of texts that identified the health and growth of economy as the basis of state legitimacy, and reduced the purpose of education to providing access to the set of skills necessary for a person to strategize for her or himself among various social, political and economic

options, i.e. to the creation of savvy individual entrepreneurs and consumers. The emergent neoliberal textual public was one of the conditions of possibility for the popularization of these ideas on education in the second type of public discussed by Warner. The second type of public, characterized by physicality, visibility and witnessing, involves a more concrete and located audience, one that can ‘witness itself in visible space’ (Ferguson, 196). But twentieth century technological innovations, especially the advent of television, added an intermediary level of publicness that has not yet been conceptualized in our modern discussion of publics and counter-publics. It is the very effective neoliberal appropriation of this tool, ironically through the forum offered by publicly owned television corporations, to continue to attack the public, and most notably, the institution of public education for the purposes of privatization, that will be explored in the next chapter.

Chapter Three: Milton Friedman's *Free to Choose* Popularization of the 'Anti-Public Public'

While the literature on counter-publics has focused on those organized by marginalized groups, there has been little analysis of counter-publics created by those who are otherwise socially, politically and economically powerful or those who organize for anti-democratic and non-emancipatory purposes. Moreover, there have been few analyses of counter-publics whose discourse has effectively become accepted as the dominant and hegemonic set of ideas ('public'), or work that has examined the processes by which this can occur. This chapter explores the emergence of the powerful neoliberal 'anti-public [counter]public' responsible for the passage of the landmark *No Child Left Behind* legislation, and suggests that the stories told within this 'anti-public public' have fundamentally altered the terms of the American debate about education, citizenship and governance in the United States through the deployment of very specific rhetorical strategies.

Neoliberalism can be delineated as a political and ideological project that has taken advantage of a profitability crisis in global capitalism since the 1970s to assert corporate class power, providing a new ideological rationale for capital accumulation and global inequality (Steger and Roy; Harvey). It can also be described as the "extension of governmentality through the advent of neoliberal forms of subjectification," where political and social domains are 'economized' through the elaboration of new, individuated, marketized subjectivities (Brown; Saad-Filho). However, it may be most useful for our purposes to conceptualize neoliberalism as a *hegemony* that connects these levels of analysis, an "ongoing, incomplete political project that continues seeks to shape

the path of statecraft and economic/cultural production” (Ruben). And it is critically necessary to attend to the moments at which the practices and technologies of a hegemonic neoliberalism began to become ‘visible.’ Focusing on the intersection of new mass media institutional formations and international public debate over economic ideas, this chapter will identify, thematize and critique specific rhetorical practices of neoliberalism that began to operate through cultural texts, public discourse, and apparatuses of entertainment to socially reproduce neoliberal ideas and institutions around the manufactured crisis of public education in the late 1970s.

Neoliberal Colonization of the Public Mass Media to Publicize the ‘Anti-Public Public’

The previous chapter briefly described three kinds of publics: a social totality, a concrete audience assembled in common visibility and in common action, and a reading and listening audience centered on texts (Warner, 65-66). These ‘types’ may also be also be usefully conceptualized as levels. At the first level, conservative intellectuals in the 1970s did speak into existence, or imagine into collectivity, a ‘true American nation’ based on the principles of ‘fiscal responsibility, limited government, and free markets’ (Lepore). The third level of analysis, the primary focus of the last chapter, examined the social space these conservative intellectuals “created by reflexive circulation of discourse,” through textual production and reproduction and the development of institutional homes for such circulation in neoliberal think tanks (Warner, 90-91). And it is precisely this third level of articulation that shaped the development of the second level, the creation of the physical, visible, and witnessing space wherein social movements are further cultivated. The rhetoric and ideology developed in the textual production of the third level contributed to its further distribution in spaces where

political understandings were shared in a ‘removed’ physicality through the medium of television.

An important principle of recent thinking on ‘publics’ is that ‘publics’ exist, or come into being by virtue of being addressed. This imagined relationship is one between the ‘writers/speakers’ and ‘readers/listeners.’ In the second half of the twentieth century, our conception of this relationship has to be broadened to include the still mediated but seemingly more intimate relationship between writer/speaker/producer and reader/listener/viewer facilitated by the technology of television. The address of public speech in this form is still both personal and impersonal, in that "it gives general social relevance to private thought and life" so that "subjectivity is understood as having [immediate] resonance with others," and the two central figures battling for hegemonic status in the late 1970s, John Kenneth Galbraith and Milton Friedman, understood well the potential power of the medium to shape public discourse (Warner, 77).

Much of the recent work on media and American neoliberalism focuses on the ways in which television news outlets operate as critical political institutions even as they wear the mantle of ‘objectivity’: mass media has played a significant role in the neoliberal push against the U.S. welfare and regulatory state in the late twentieth century (Guardino). The American government has consistently regulated media in one form or another, especially in the twentieth century— through subsidies and tax provisions as well as through formal rules that directly affect content or shape the operation of media markets, and the owners of large media companies have been some of the most important players in the resistance to the Keynesian state (Cook 1998b; McChesney 2004). However, the direct and decisive role that *public* media played in emptying out the

‘public’ sphere has not been explored. Public television corporations in England, Canada and the United States not only contributed to the development of the new form of the ‘documentary series’ so critical at this moment in the struggle for neoliberal hegemony, but also dramatically expanded the media space available to those involved in the neoliberal project. There is more than a twinge of irony in the fact that PBS itself, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, as this chapter will show, provided neoliberals with the necessary tools to attack the basis for its existence, the ‘public’ citizen. This approach, using public resources to attack the material and ideological basis for the public sphere and the foundation for common action, actually constitutes one of the most important rhetorical practices of neoliberalism.

The Age of Uncertainty: A Personal View, a fifteen part British television series written and presented by Harvard economist John Kenneth Galbraith and co-produced by the public television companies BBC, CBC, KCET and OECA, seems to have been the first strike in the late 1970s ideological struggle between ‘new socialism’ and ‘neoliberalism’ (Galbraith, 7). Primarily in response to this landmark series, Rose and Milton Friedman, affiliated with the Hoover Institute and Stanford University, created the ten part American television series, *Free to Choose*, between 1977 and 1980. The *Free to Choose* series was designed, as a whole, to build upon the work in the journals discussed in the last chapter to restructure public discourse around the neoliberal premise that free market principles are the optimal basis for social design and organization (Friedman 1980).

The Provocation: John Kenneth Galbraith’s *Age of Uncertainty*

In the midst of the Watergate scandal in the summer of 1973, John Kenneth

Galbraith was called by Adrian Malone of the BBC and asked if he would be interested in doing a television series on the history of economic or social ideas. Galbraith was asked to write a series of essays, examining these economic ideas and the ways in which social understandings of the workings of markets and their relationship to the state shapes history through the legal structures (Galbraith). These essays, within the course of three years, were developed into a fifteen part television documentary series, which emerged as a sweeping, comprehensive and critical history of economic and social ideas meant to challenge the emergent neoliberal ‘consensus.’ This series provided the impetus for the creation of *Free to Choose*, as Friedman was summoned by British conservatives to engage in a public lecture tour against *Age of Uncertainty* in England (Galbraith 7).

While the title of Galbraith’s production was meant to reflect the sharp contrast between the great certainty in 19th century economic thought with the much less assured views in modern times, it also captures an important element of the rhetorical approach of the series. The tone of the series was established in the first episode, as Galbraith explicitly recognized and publicly acknowledged the position of social power from which he spoke: his first words to the audience quote John Maynard Keynes to the effect that

The ideas of economists and political philosophers, both when they are right and when they are wrong, are more powerful than is commonly understood. Indeed, the world is ruled by little else. Practical men who believe themselves to be quite exempt from any intellectual influences are usually the slaves of some defunct economist (Ep. 1).

Galbraith is also quite explicit about the ways in which his production would be based on the premises of the theatre:

The illusions of the theatre and film have long been used to give substance to abstraction, visual form to ideas. And we’ll use them here to give form to the march of economic ideas and institutions (Ibid).

The main participants in his parade, as he identifies them, these abstractions (Capitalism, the Marxist Dissent, Politicians, Colonialism and Imperialism, Carnival of Boom and Slump (Inflation, Unemployment and Depression), Money, Food and Famine, Land and Hunger for Land) “always march in the economic parade” (Ep.1). He begins his examination of the controlling economic ideas in the last half of the eighteenth century, when the “Western world was transformed by a succession of mechanical inventions; along with the Industrial Revolution, went another [revolution] in economic ideas” (Ibid). The tone throughout his historical analysis is relentlessly critical and sardonic, as the rhetorical approach of *Age of Uncertainty* reflects Galbraith’s immersion in the cultural milieu of post- WWII England (Rawlings). For example, in Episode 2, entitled ‘The Manners and Morals of High Capitalism,’ he seeks to explore the “enjoyments of the rich in the last century, and how these were sanctified. By what moral code did the rich live? By what ideas did they defend their affluence?” This is not a futile or empty exercise in revisiting the past, as he asks his audience to consider that “remembering that ideas, like old soldiers, never die, how do these ideas still affect our lives and our moral tone” (Ep. 2). His disdain and contempt are reserved for those who rationalized their exploitation of others: describing the Carnegie-connected wealth that made possible Edward Burwind’s ostentatious estate, Galbraith argued that “back of this wealth were the ideas that justified it, ideas of which the rich, who were not a bookish lot, were sometimes only vaguely aware. These ideas depended a little on economics, a little on theology, and a great deal on biology ” (Ep. 2).

The reliance of the production on artifice is not only made plain, but is also itself

mocked, so that the tone and staged imagery of the production pulled from a rich tradition of popularized high culture satire (Rawlings). He juxtaposes the actual language of apologists of social hierarchy, like Herbert Spencer and the American William Sumner, with imagery of lions and tigers devouring raw meat in a zoo beneath a sign that read ‘Beware: The Animals Are Dangerous’ (Ep. 2). Later in the same episode, when describing the ‘Last Supper,’ the famous banquet in New York in late November 1882, at which scores of America’s leading men jammed into Delmonico’s Restaurant to officially declare Herbert Spencer the greatest thinker of the 19th century, the ironic contradictions are highlighted through text and image in an absurdist fashion. Most participants were wax figures, seated around the few speaking actors wearing make-up approximating the pallor of death and engaging in bizarre commentary on their own gluttonous consumption and their need to move away from the “gospel of work” as it was “time to preach the gospel of relaxation” (Ibid). This iconoclastic approach shaped the entire series. His characterization of the mythology surrounding the ‘Big Corporation’ is typical: “There’s the corporate myth, which is carefully, assiduously propagated, and there’s the reality, and they bear little relation to each other” (Ep. 9). The corporate myth, according to Galbraith, is of a “disciplined, energetic, dedicated, but well-rewarded, body of men, serving under a dynamic leader. The leader leads, is *always* dynamic, and his men carry out his orders, or transmit them on to the minions below” (Ibid). These men are simply “messengers of the market” or “servants of the sovereign consumer”: the consumer, depicted in tawdry caricature, is clearly here an unconscious, unwitting slave to corporate advertising (Ep. 9).

Popularizing the ‘Anti-Public Public’: Milton Friedman’s *Free to Choose*

Free to Choose (1980) is a ten-part television series broadcast on public television by University of Chicago economist Milton Friedman that advocated free market principles. A calculated and strategically designed response to the earlier landmark television series *The Age of Uncertainty* discussed above, deliberately and explicitly rejected both the form and content of Galbraith's BBC production. Throughout the series, Friedman uses various rhetorical practices to recirculate the argument that 'free market' capitalism is inextricably connected to individual freedom, devices and tactics that were striking and even artful in their simplicity and directness. Each episode was carefully structured so that Friedman narrated an analysis of 'free market' issues in locations around the world; the second half involved controlled debates between Friedman and other scholars and 'experts' on the content of the film of the first half of the segment.¹² This chapter seeks to explicate the rhetorical strategies used in Friedman's segment on public education, "What's Wrong With Our Schools?" by grounding these strategies both in the larger narrative developed throughout the *Free to Choose* series and through close examination of the language and imagery used in both parts of the segment itself.

Neoliberalism and "What's Wrong With Our Schools?"

It is in the segment on public education that the neoliberal position is most effectively reinforced both through the particularized narrative about the problems and preferred solutions provided in the pre-filmed first segment and in the discourse practices that structured the discussion that followed. Milton Friedman begins the education

¹² In 1990, the series was rebroadcast with host Linda Chavez moderating the episodes. In this reboot, Milton Friedman debated a single opponent rather than holding a group discussion. This will be discussed at more length towards the end of the chapter.

segment of his widely viewed PBS *Free to Choose* documentary series, “What's Wrong With Our Schools,” with narration and imagery that provides a particular portrayal of one of Boston’s most troubled public high schools, Hyde Park High School. The imagery resembles that of a prison, with students, mostly black, entering the school by going through a security check, not only of their belongings but also, for some, their bodies:

They [black students] have to pass through metal detectors. They are faced by security guards looking for hidden weapons. They are watched over by armed police (Ep. 6).

The problem, from the neoliberal perspective, is ultimately not simply that learning is difficult in an environment where students have to “go through metal detectors and to be searched,” but more importantly, that these circumstances frustrate ‘taxpayers,’ because “[t]his isn’t cheap education. After all, those uniformed policemen, those metal detectors have to be paid for” (Ep. 6). He goes on to begin the construction of identity of parent-as-taxpayer, critical to his narrative:

the parents - they are the ones who get the worst deal - they pay taxes like the rest of us and they are just as concerned about the kind of education that their kids get as the rest of us are. They know their kids are getting a bad education but they feel trapped. Many of them can see no alternative but to continue sending their kids to schools like this (Ibid).

Friedman structures the parental dilemma as an economic one, in that parents of children in inner city schools are the ones “getting the worst deal,” and in describing the projected feelings of entrapment and frustration of the parents as if parents are not also in the audience establishes Friedman’s persona as one who sides with the victims, and who will seek to help parents find [economic] justice (Ibid).

Friedman framed his historical analysis of the American public education system in this segment in ways that reified a particular historical moment and recreated

traditionalist nostalgia to appeal to American nationalism and narcissism. Seating himself on a stool outside a red one-room schoolhouse in Vermont with a huge American flag flying outside, and describing the way in which all of the fifteen students, grades 2 through 12, often come outside to do their studies ‘when the weather is nice,’ recuperating the educational patterns and processes of the past, Friedman’s discourse here reflected ‘restorative nostalgia’ (a wish to return to that past) more than ‘reflective nostalgia’ (which is more critically aware) (Boym). And it is this vestige of a very particular moment in American history that Friedman wants to recapture, in large part because it ‘does work’ for his overall mission of resituating and *privileging parents* as those empowered to design public education. Parents here become the historical source of agency and legitimacy of public schools:

That is the way it used to be. Parental control, parents choosing the teacher, parents monitoring the schooling, parents even getting together and chipping in to paint the schoolhouse as they did here just a few weeks ago. Parental concern is still here as much in the slums of the big cities as in Bucolic, Vermont. But control by parents over the schooling of their children is today the exception, not the rule (Ep. 6).

The historical source of the central problems in public education, the object of his attack, are the professional educators:

Increasingly, schools have come under the control of centralized administration, professional educators deciding what shall be taught, who shall do the teaching, and even what children shall go to what school [desegregation] (Ibid).

His identification of the victims of the systems, the “people who lose most from this system are the poor and the disadvantaged in the large cities” allowed him to create the illusion of connecting across class lines with a particularly conservative-populist type of compassion: “They are simply stuck. They have no alternative” (Ibid). Wealthier parents

(and here the imagery shown is of all-white upper middle class communities, with well-dressed, clean-cut, athletic, musical and inquisitive young people) can:

move to an area where the public schools are excellent, as the parents of many of these students have done. These students are graduating from Weston High School in one of Boston's wealthier suburbs. Their parents pay taxes instead of tuition and they certainly *get better value for their money* than do the parents in Hyde Park. That is partly *because they have kept a good deal of control* over the local schools, and in the process, they have managed to retain many of the virtues of the one-room schoolhouse (Ibid).

In this way, obfuscating the relations between class and race in shaping disparities in American public education by redirecting the audience's attention to the issue of parental control and simultaneously evoking nostalgia for the 'one-room schoolhouse,' Friedman reframed the entire discussion around public education to further neoliberal interests. The issue or problem becomes the 'fact' that "most parents have lost control over how their tax money is spent" (Ibid). He even goes so far, with 'conservative-populist compassion,' to extend the message across racial lines, recruiting the frustration and anger of an inner city black single mother, Caroline Bell. She laments that:

I think it is a shame, really, that parents are being ripped off like we are. I am talking about parents like me that work every day, scuffle to try to make ends meet. We send our kids to school hoping that they will receive something that will benefit them in the future for when they go out here and compete in the job market. Unfortunately, none of that is taking place at Hyde Park (Ibid).

For Friedman and other neoliberals, the only legitimate way to address this frustration with problems in public education is to empty out public space and replace it with the energy of the 'free market,' in particular to make space for a return to private volunteerism. He is filmed attending a fundraising evening used as evidence of the continuity of a "long American tradition," an art show for a school supported by a

voluntary organization, New York's Inner City Scholarship Fund. The prints that the wealthy white elite of New York paid to see were loaned to the Fund by a wealthy Japanese industrialist, and through events like these, this Fund "helped raise two million dollars to finance Catholic parochial schools in New York... the results of their private voluntary activities have been remarkable" (Ibid). The footage then moves the audience to St. John Christian School in the Bronx, one of the parochial schools supported by the fund, which Friedman claims is a success

because parents have picked this school and parents are paying some of the costs from their own pockets. The children are well behaved, eager to learn, the teachers are dedicated. The cost per pupil here is far less than in the public schools, yet on the average the children are two grades ahead. *That is because teachers and parents are free to choose how the children shall be taught. Private money has replaced the tax money and so control has been taken away from the bureaucrats and put back where it belongs* (Ibid, italics added).

The revision of social history required for this political project is not limited to the creation of the 'origins story' of the red one-room schoolhouse in Vermont or the recentering of volunteerism as the source of energy of public education.

The social and political upheaval of 1960s is also rewritten to fill the needs of Friedman's 'parent-run school' script: "In the 60s, Harlem was devastated by riots. It was a hot bed of trouble. Many teenagers dropped out of school" (Ibid). Fortunately, groups of concerned parents decided to do something about it. They used private funds to take over empty stores, setting up "what became known as store-front schools" (Ibid). Friedman focuses on "one of the first and most successful... Harlem Prep," as it was "designed to cater to students for whom conventional education had failed" (Ibid). His interpretation of the reasons for the success of this particular experiment gave him

another opportunity to attack teacher professionalism:

Many of the teachers didn't have the right pieces of paper to qualify for employment in public schools. That didn't stop them from doing a good job here. A lot of the students had been misfits and dropouts. Here they found the sort of teaching they wanted (Ibid).

Friedman rewrote the history of these educational experiments in inner city schools to direct responsibility for their failure to the 'bureaucrats,' the educational professionals who became thoroughly demonized throughout this episode.

But after some years, the school ran short of cash. The Board of Education offered Ed Carpenter, the head of the school and one of its founders, tax money, provided he would conform to their regulations. After a long battle to preserve independence, he finally gave in. The school was taken over by bureaucrats (Ibid).

This is precisely the 'danger of bureaucrats,' as representatives and agents of a public whose existence he denies throughout the entirety of the ten-part series. For Friedman, "the strangling of successful experiments by bureaucrats" is, unfortunately, not unusual (Ibid). He also cites the vaunted educational experiment at Alum Rock, San Jose, California, in the early 1970s. The Alum Rock demonstration was a first attempt to install vouchers within a public school system, with the "intent of a voucher system... to allow parent choice rather than bureaucratic decisions to determine the allocation of educational resources" (Levinson, 1).

The neoliberal analysis of this experiment and its failure hew tightly to the lines drawn in Friedman's account. They argue that in actual operation, the Alum Rock School District was changed into a decentralized, open enrollment system, in which the "supply of educational options was overly determined by the educational bureaucracy," and that the "decentralization necessary for the operation of a voucher system was not

congruent with the centralizing constraints [education code, fiscal liability, and teacher contracts] of the school district's operation” (Levinson, 35-36). Again, Friedman casts the parents as proactive and thoughtful agents consigned to contend with irrational bureaucratic resistance. “Giving parents greater choice had a dramatic effect on educational quality,” while the “bureaucrat objects to giving the customer, in this case the parent, anything to say about the kind of schooling his child gets. Instead, the bureaucrats should decide” (Ep. 6). This conflict constructed between an all-powerful educational bureaucracy and parents who reiterate their perceived positions as powerless pawns is reinforced through an extensive interview of one parent, Maurice Walton:

As the present system stands, I think virtually parents have got no freedom of choice whatsoever. They are told what is good for them by the teachers and are told that the teachers are doing a great job (Ibid).

One headmaster, Mr. Gee, challenged the capacities of parents as educators, arguing that:

I am not sure that parents know what is best educationally for their children. They know what is best for them to eat, they know the best environment they can provide at home, but we've been trained to ascertain the problems of children, to detect their weaknesses, and put light in things that need putting light, and we want to do this freely, with the cooperation of parents, and not under any undue strains.

However, this perspective is quickly and effectively dismissed by the refocused camera attention to parent Walton, who characterizes the entire relationship as nothing so much as a battle:

I can understand the teacher saying yes, it is a gun at my head, but they have got the same gun at the parents' head at the moment. The parent goes up to the teacher and says, well I am not satisfied with what you are doing, and the teacher can say, well tough, you can't take him away, you can't remove him, you can't do what you like so go away and stop bothering me. That can be the attitude of some teachers today - it often is. But now that the positions are being reversed and the roles are changed, I can only say tough on the teachers - let them pull their socks up and give us a better

deal and let us participate more (Ibid).

The first two rhetorical strategies that emerge in this instantiation of neoliberal publicization are inextricably bound together: the privileging of particular ‘conservative-populist’ historical narratives and the identification of populist parent victim-heroes suffering at the hands of bureaucratic and inept teacher villains provide both structure and agency for the neoliberal narrative.

The third critical element in the framing of the ‘problem’ of public education, after situating it in a historical narrative and identifying heroes and villains, is the emptying out of this public space, with the call to ‘marketize’ education, to remove education from the shared public space shared by citizens *qua* citizens. Opening education to the ‘energy’ of the ‘free market’ would provide incentives for students to complete their education and for parents to seek the ‘best product.’

Friedman uses higher education, especially private colleges, as the model relationship of instructional production and consumption. Because in America, “there is one part of education where the market has had extensive scope, that is, higher education,” he transitions in the third part of tightly structured narrative to compare private and public universities (Ibid). Refocusing the camera to a serene college campus, he goes on to describe and explain the scene as follows:

These students attend Dartmouth College, a private school founded in 1769. The college is supported entirely by private donations, income from endowment, and student fees. It has a high reputation and a fine record. Ninety-five percent of the students who enroll here complete their undergraduate course and get a degree (Ibid).

He extols the virtues associated with fee payment, that is, that payment of the consumer for a product encourages the students’ sense of ‘stake’ in their own education, and the

sense they are receiving, as any good consumer would expect to, value for their investment.

The students here pay high fees, fees which cover most of the cost of the schooling which they get. Most of them get the money from their parents, but some are on scholarships provided either by Dartmouth or by outside sources. Still others take out loans to pay the costs of schooling, loans which they will have to pay back years later. Still others work either during the school year or during the summer to pay the costs. Many students work in the college's own hotel. This girl is helping to pay her own way which is pretty good evidence that she is serious about getting an education (Ibid).

Both students and parents are recast primarily as consumers. "Parents of perspective students come here [Dartmouth] on shopping expeditions to check out the product before they buy," and together, parents and students contribute to the development of a "private market in education" (Ibid).

The college is selling schooling. The students are buying schooling. And as in most such markets, both sides have a strong incentive to serve one another. For the college, it has a strong incentive to provide the kind of schooling that its students want. If it doesn't, they can simply pick up and go elsewhere. For the students, they want to get their money's worth. They are customers, and like every customer everywhere, they want to get full value for the money they are paying. And so much of the success here comes from the fact that students understand precisely the cost involved and they are determined to get their money's worth (Ibid).

This commodification goes beyond the provision of instruction, extending to the physical setting of the educational institutions themselves. While many of the buildings and facilities at Dartmouth have been donated by private individuals and foundations (exemplifying the reliability of private volunteerism), Dartmouth has also "combined the selling of monuments with the provision of education and the one activity reinforces the other. *This may not be the usual idea of an economic market, but it is nonetheless a marketplace where buyers can choose and sellers must compete for customers*" (Ibid,

italics added). This reformulation of schools as another market where learning is commodified, reduced to a scarce good available only to the resourceful consumer, is important. The relationship between capitalism and democracy was already well-established and reproduced in American education. However, this new formulation completely replaces the purpose of public education, ostensibly at least partially that of strengthening democracy, with the cold, hard purpose of reproducing and strengthening capitalism.

Within this framework, the criteria by which schools and public education should be evaluated shifts from social to economic purposes, from political and social equality to alignment with ‘free market’ principles. According to Friedman, the state-funded state colleges and universities operate within a distorted market. The quality of education does not meet ‘market standards’ because “fees are generally very low, paying for only a small part of the cost of schooling,” and schools like this (UCLA) “attract a great many others. Students who come because fees are low, residential housing is good, food is good, and above all there are lots of their peers, it’s a pleasant interlude for them,” and “for those students who are here as a pleasant interlude, going to class is a price they pay to be here, not the product they are buying” (Ibid). This was a ‘clear misuse’ of taxpayer money: the justification for using tax money to support such institutions was supposed to be so that “every youngster, regardless of the income or wealth of his parents, can go to college” (Ibid). Most students are from middle and upper-income families, Friedman points out, yet everybody pays taxes to help support these institutions (Ibid).

This analysis makes possible slippage into the ‘conservative-populist compassionate’ rhetoric, condemning elite manipulation and expropriation of public

funds for elite purposes, at the expense of lower income families:

That is a disgraceful situation. It is hardly what public education was all about. These students are being subsidized by people who will never go to college. That means that on the average people who will end up with higher income are being subsidized by people who will end up with lower income.

The ultimate proof of the travesty as far as the neoliberals are concerned, and the critical disparity between public and private universities and colleges, lies in the difference in completion rate, as “only about half of those who enroll in UCLA complete the undergraduate course...compare that with the 95% at Dartmouth who finish the work for their degrees” (Ibid). This is not only a “waste of student time” but also, most importantly, a terrible “waste of taxpayers’ money” (Ibid). When he asks his television audience what ‘we’ should do about this disgraceful situation, he suggests that everyone who has the capacity and the desire to have a higher education should be able to do so, provided they are willing to undertake the obligation to pay the cost of their schooling either currently or in later years out of the higher income that their education will make possible (Ibid). Friedman clearly understands that the source of most of the money funding public university education, the way in which taxpayers most directly impact public education, has been federally guaranteed student loans.

We now have a governmental program of loans which is supposedly directed to this objective but it’s a loan program in name only. The interest rate charged is well below the market rate. Many of these loans are never paid back. We must have a system under which those who are not able or do not go to college are not forced to pay for those who do (Ibid).

But it is not simply a misleading construction of the college loan system that enables Friedman to further the neoliberal ‘branding’ of ‘the market’ as the source of *fairness* and *freedom*, as the distance from ‘pure’ market mechanisms in this system also marks its

distance from both fairness and freedom. He uses a very particular understanding of how the ‘the market’ shaped private higher education to serve as a model or ideal for reforming, or rather, deforming, public education to address this ‘crisis’:

As we have seen how the market works in education. When people pay for what they get, they value what they get. The market works in higher education. It can also work at the level of primary and secondary education. Until we change the way we run our public schools, far too many children will end up without being able to read, write, or do arithmetic. That is not what any of us wants (Ibid).

It is the centralized bureaucracy (read ‘Keynesian state’) that destroys the education system, the public aspect of the system, because it “lacks a vital ingredient,” that “degree of personal concern for each individual child that we have as parents,” thereby pitting parents against teachers as professional educators as ‘bureaucrats’ (Ibid). Denigrating the public space of ‘bureaucratized’ public space and glorifying the private, intimate space and relations of the family creates an illusory linkage between privatization (or marketizing) and the intimacy of familial relations. The dangers of bureaucratic centralization stem from the ways in which it “produces deadening uniformity, [and] destroys the experimentation that is the fundamental source of progress” (Ibid). This ability to negate or reverse the power or strength of the self-conception of teachers (those who act *in loco parentis*, as parents in the absence of biological parents, and who take pride in connecting with and attending to the individual needs of children) is another critical practice of the neoliberal rhetorical approach. The corollary to the practice of demonizing or vilifying teachers is the practice of heroifying another social group - parents.

What we need to do is to enable parents, by vouchers or other means, to have more say about the school which their child goes to, a public school

or a private school, whichever meets the need of the child best. That will inevitably give them also more say about what their children are taught, and how they are taught. Market competition is the surest way to improve the quality and promote innovation in education as in every other field (Ibid).

The source of salvation, Friedman claims, is the parents ‘freed’ by the market.

Situating ‘What’s Wrong With Our Schools’ in *Free to Choose* Series

While one central premise of this dissertation is that education is one of the most important sources of neoliberal hegemony, the segment ‘What’s Wrong With Our Schools?’ is but one part of a television docu-series. The patterns evidenced in this segment become more evident as one draws back to view it in the context of the whole. The ideological framework of the entire *Free to Choose* series is masked, in a sense, by Friedman’s practices of disingenuous simplicity. He adopts a conversational, non-academic tone, and situates himself in various ‘real world’ settings that are seemingly devoid of artifice, a strategy best described as *populist anti-intellectualization*. The *decontextualization* of economic theories or ideas from social or political history, as another, and connected, strategy or practice that contributes to the logic of neoliberalism, is also furthered by the Friedman’s seemingly asynchronistic choice of various international locations, such as Singapore, India and Bangladesh to illustrate his neoliberal narrative. This locating strategy that privileges particular sites which showcase positive effects of market capitalism contributes to the ‘universalizing’ tendency of his neoliberal position.

Friedman, like Galbraith, begins his series with a historical narrative of origins, but the neoliberal historical practice is simplistic, univocal and teleological. Standing on a grassy field looking out to the island of Manhattan, he locates it as the site of the

dynamic origins of American capitalism:

Once all of this was a swamp, covered with forest. The Canarce Indians who lived here traded the 22 square miles of soggy Manhattan Island to the Dutch for \$24.00 worth of cloth and trinkets. The newcomers founded a city, New Amsterdam at the edge of an empty continent. In the years that followed, it proved a magnet for millions of people from across the Atlantic; people who were driven by fear and poverty; who were attracted by the promise of freedom and plenty. They fanned out over the continent and built a new nation with their sweat, their enterprise and their vision of a better future (Ep. 1).

Seeking to reinforce national idealizations and American identification and to erase indigenous people with a very particular narrative of the American past, Friedman taps into popular and self-congratulatory mythology of American exceptionalism:

For the first time in their lives, many were truly free to pursue their own objectives. That freedom released the human energies which created the United States. For the immigrants who were welcomed by this statue [Statue of Liberty], America was truly a land of opportunity (Ep. 1).

For Friedman and his neoliberal fellow discussants, this framing created an opportunity to recast this moment in American history, the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, as the ‘mythical golden age’ of the ‘free market’ wherein:

...life was hard, but opportunity was real. There were few government programs to turn to and nobody expected them. But also, there were few rules and regulations. There were no licenses, no permits, no red tape to restrict them. They found in fact, a free market, and most of them thrived on it (Ibid).

Here, mythologization and nationalistic ego-gratification are mutually imbricated, because the ‘loss’ required for the logic of the narrative, the national crisis of hope and promise figured in the ‘problem of education,’ require an original moment of national greatness and wholeness.

Friedman also uses personalization and ‘small stories,’ much like the *See It Now*

series created by Edward Murrow and Fred Friendly in the 1950s, to establish facile but effective connections with the audience and to engage in a process of ‘reversing the meaning’ of key terms of social analysis (Ruben). Happily pontificating on the virtues of the ‘freedom’ from regulation on a NY sweatshop floor that ‘allows’ recent immigrants to find work in the garment district, he connects the backstories of the distinctly disgruntled looking women by whom he is surrounded to that of his mother:

Similarly, the people who are here now, they are like my mother. Most of the immigrants from the distant countries - they came here because they liked it here better and had more opportunities. A place like this gives them a chance to get started. They are not going to stay here very long or forever. On the contrary, they and their children will make a better life for themselves as they take advantage of the opportunities that a free market provides to them (Ep. 4).

In Friedman’s explication, exploitation of workers on the shop floor becomes a naturalized and necessary stage of every individual immigrant’s experience: “Their life may seem pretty tough compared to our own, but it is only because our parents or grandparents went through that stage for us that we have been able to start at a higher point” (Ibid). This insertion of his physical presence and the appropriation of the experiences of others to serve his ‘larger’ ideological purposes is one rhetorical practice employed very effectively by Friedman throughout this series (Blad). Ultimately, the post-New Deal American government and its “dangerous tendency to inhibit freedom” is the source of danger for these immigrants, who “owe much to the climate of freedom we inherited from the founders of our country, the climate that gave full scope to the poor from other lands who came here and were able to make better lives for themselves and their children” (Ep. 4).

But in the past 50 years, we’ve been squandering that inheritance by

allowing government to control more and more of our lives, instead of relying on ourselves. We need to rediscover the old truths that the immigrants knew in their bones; what economic freedom is and the role it plays in preserving personal freedom (Ibid).

Leaving the relationship between ‘economic freedom’ and ‘personal freedom’ undeveloped, Friedman then proceeds to ‘visit’ India, the U.S. and Britain to examine the question of equality, asserting (again, without any evidentiary basis) that American society has traditionally only recognized ‘equality before God’ and ‘equality of opportunity.’ Both of these, in contradistinction to the ‘new’ conception of ‘equality of outcomes’ promoted by the ‘misguided few,’ are “consistent with the goal of personal freedom” (Ep. 1). Friedman expands further on this narrowed concept of equality and its connection to market relations in Episode Five (reversal of meaning), appealing simultaneously to imperialist, racist, and sexist predilections of his audience (nationalist ego-stoking) in a remarkably candid and equally remarkably banal analysis of equality (de-intellectualizing). Denying the possibility of fairness (“life is unfair”), he posits that:

There is nothing fair about one man being born of a wealthy parent and one of an indigenous parent (sic). There is nothing fair about Mohammed Ali having been born with a skill that enables him to make millions of dollars one night. There is nothing fair about Marleena Detrich having great legs that we all want to watch. There is nothing fair about any of that (Ibid).

Equality is quickly reduced to an absolutist notion of total identity in Friedman’s analysis (reversal of meaning), as he laments a fictional social drive towards an equality that would eliminate all critical differences between individuals:

What kind of a world would it be if everybody was an absolute identical duplicate of anybody else. You might as well destroy the whole world and just keep one specimen left for a museum (Ibid).

While Friedman acknowledges that social inequality between individuals does exist, that

“it seems unfair that Muhammed Ali should be a great fighter and should be able to earn millions,” he suggests that it would be:

more unfair to the people who like to watch him if you said that in the pursuit of some abstract idea of equality we’re not going to let Muhammed Ali get more for one nights fight than the lowest man on the totem pole can get for a days unskilled work on the docks (Ibid).

He decries the putative push for ‘equality of outcomes,’ i.e. the ideal that “everyone should be equal in income and level of living in what he has” (Ep. 5). Moving facilely from the metaphor of stages to that of a race, he describes this understanding of equality as “the idea that the economic race should be so arranged that everybody ends at the finish line at the same time rather than that everyone starts at the beginning line at the same time” (Ibid). This is dangerous because it “raises a very serious problem for freedom” (Ibid). This conception of equality is “clearly in conflict with it [freedom], since it requires the freedom of some be restricted in order to provide greater benefits to others” (Ibid). Reducing the relationship between the two social and political ends to a zero-sum game, he suggests that “the society that puts equality before freedom will end up with neither” (Ibid). Following this reasoning, the ‘inheritance’ of talent is no different ethically than ‘inheritance’ of property: it “is no different from an ethical point of view from the inheritance of other forms of property, of bonds, of stocks, of houses, or of factories” (Ep. 5). The crux of the problem lies in the *resentment* of one type of inheritance and not of the other.

Speaking from ‘the strip,’ Friedman makes an argument that in some senses, America is best understood as Las Vegas writ large, in that while *freedom* (here meaning unfettered participation as actors in a ‘free *market*’) may seem to lead to unfair outcomes,

these outcomes are, in the final analysis, determined in part by chance, and hence, “just part of life” (Ep. 5). Gambling, taking risks that lead to uncertain outcomes, is a necessary and important part of ‘freedom’:

Every day, all of us are making decisions that involve gambles. Sometimes, they are big gambles, as when we decide what occupation to pursue or whom to marry. More often, they are small gambles as when we decide whether to cross the street against the traffic. But each time, the question is who shall make the decision - we or somebody else. We can make the decision only if we bear the consequences. That is the economic system that has transformed our society in the past century and more. That is what gave the Henry Fords, the Thomas Alva Edisons, the Christian Barnards, the incentives to produce the miracles that have benefited us all. It's what gave other people the incentive to provide them with the finance for their ventures. Of course, there were lots of losers along the way. We don't remember their names, but remember, they went in with their eyes open; they knew what they were doing; and win or lose, we society benefited from their willingness to take a chance (Ibid).

This practice of ideologizing and linking the concepts of *fairness* and *freedom*, reiterated throughout most Americans' lives in the 'hidden curriculum' and mass media, to a glorified conception of *market* that elicits positive and affirmative emotions with a clear and simple 'branding' process, strengthened Friedman's development of the 'anti-public public' (Blad).

Friedman celebrates, even fetishizes, economic freedom (the 'free market') as the primary source of personal freedom, and source of success for the 'small man.' He argues, as the man pictured behind him engages in difficult manual labor, that “When people are free, they are able to use their own resources most effectively and you will have a great deal of productivity, a great deal of opportunity” (Ep. 5). Without any reference to any social, economic or historical evidence that would support his claim, he goes on to assert that, “The major beneficiaries are always the small man... it is the

society which gives the small man the opportunity to go his way which is going to benefit him the most” (Ep. 5). Conflating pursuit of economic gain with the dominant American moral code, he elevates Adam Smith’s ideas to the level of irrefutable doctrine: “In the words of Adam Smith, [the ‘free market’ is characterized by] the uniform, constant, and uninterrupted effort of every man to better his condition, to improve his own lot and to make a better world for his children and his children’s children” (Ibid).

Dialogue: Structure and Content in *Free to Choose*

A central element of the popularizing impact of Friedman’s program, part of the way it achieved the discursive and symbolic power facilitating indefinite circulation through constant rebroadcast on a *Free to Choose* television station (FreetoChooseTV), recreation and reiteration as popular podcasts, Youtube videos, and heavily financed and trafficked websites, was the particular way in which he chose to structure the discussions in the second half of each episode. A wide range of political scientists, economists, and corporate leaders were invited to the University of Chicago to first view the half hour mini-documentaries together as a large group and then engage in discussion about the segment on which they had been invited to comment. While the listings below do not fully capture the complexity and depth of perspective invited into this conversation (much of the richness of this tapestry lies behind the weave, in the complexity of personal biographies and the ways in which the personal histories of many of these characters were surprisingly interwoven), they do help to explain the intensity of the discussions – these were people who have clearly invested their lives’ work in very different visions of the good.

Those who predictably supported his positions included Jagdish Bhagwati (neoliberal economist), William H. Brady (founder and president of W.H. Brady Co.), Clarence Brown (conservative politician), Barber Conable (politician, President of the World Bank), John Coons (law professor, school choice activist), Robert Crandall (Brookings Institution economist), Otmar Emminger (President of Deutsche Bundesbank), Bob Galvin (CEO of Motorola, Inc.), Helen Hughes (economist, World Bank), William McChesney Martin (former Chairman of the Federal Reserve), Russell W. Peterson (chemist, politician), Thomas Shannon (Executive Director of the NSBA, neoliberal economist), Thomas Sowell (conservative economist, author, columnist), Beryl Wayne Sprinkel (neoliberal economist, Friedman's student Executive Vice President of Harris Bank), Peter Temin (economist), and Walter E. Williams (neoliberal economist, political commentator).

However, Friedman also chose to include powerful voices of potential opposition. These included Gregory Anrig (Commissioner of Massachusetts Department of Education), Joan Claybrook (Administrator of the NHTSA), Richard Deason (IBEW union leader), James R. Dumpson (social worker, academic), Ernest Green (U.S. Assistant Secretary of Labor), Michael Harrington (Democratic Socialist Committee, historian), Nicholas von Hoffman (journalist), Peter Jay (Keynesian economist, journalist, diplomat), Robert Lampman (Keynesian economist), Richard Landau (medical professor), Robert Lekachman (Keynesian economist, socialist), Helen Bohen O'Bannon (economist, Secretary of PA Public Welfare), Kathleen O'Reilly (CFA consumer advocate), Frances Fox Piven (political scientist, labor historian), Albert Shanker (President of UFT and AFT teachers' unions), and Lynn R. Williams

(International Secretary of United Steelworkers).

This deliberate creation of debate structured by evident differences in perspective was clearly a risky endeavor, a gamble, which seems to have paid large dividends over the course of the past thirty years. This format did invite television audiences, and continues to engage multiple kinds of audiences, because Friedman was making his views and neoliberal argumentation open to public critique by his academic peers, creating a vulnerability within which his ideas became potentially susceptible to destabilization. This is a critical element of powerful contributions to the public sphere, that they show a willingness to hold the central assumptions and evidence supporting their arguments up to public scrutiny.

However, this was carefully and deceptively controlled risk, managed by silencing discussion through deflection, intentional disregard, alienation and incorporation. In the first segment of the series, “The Power of the Market,” the way in which Friedman dealt with Michael Harrington’s predictable resistance to Friedman’s line of argumentation (as author of *The Other America: Poverty in the United States*, Harrington helped lay the foundation for President Lyndon B. Johnson’s ‘War on Poverty’) provides a clear example of ‘silencing through deflection.’ Harrington challenged Friedman’s characterization of the ‘free market’ in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in the preceding documentary video:

...if you go back to that golden age, you find that the government constantly intervened in a rather characteristic way, it used troops against strikers. American labor history has been the most violent, bloody class struggle anywhere in the world, and the government, up until 1932, the law, the courts, the society, always sided with business, always sided against working people. Therefore, I would argue that both economically and in terms of repressing the attempts of people to assert their freedom,

our government prior to the rise of the welfare state in this country was more or less owned by business (Ep. 1).

Friedman, in a characteristically condescending manner, was able to reframe Harrington's response on his own terms, erasing class analysis and thereby eliminating *social* mediation between individuals and the (generally oppressive in that it limited 'freedom') government of the nation-state:

Michael Harrington is seeing the hole in the barn door and he's not looking at the barn door itself. The plain fact is during the whole of that period, while government did intervene from time to time, and mostly to do harm, I agree with him that government intervention was, in the main, not a good thing; tariffs, for example. On the other hand, throughout that whole period government spending, Federal Government spending, central government spending, never was more than 3 percent of the national income. It was trivial.... we need a government that sets a framework and rules within which *individuals*, pursuing their own objectives, can work together and cooperate together not only in economic areas (Ep. 2, italics added).

Friedman refused to respond to the issue of class conflict, and the role of the corporate-friendly government in suppressing social unrest, and instead, recast the central relationship as that between 'the individual' and 'the government.

While discussants who, based on their scholarship and past political activism should have been able to effectively challenge neoliberal arguments, were invited to participate, the purpose for their inclusion seems to have been less about expanding or broadening the discussion and more about silencing dissent through absorption and deflection. One silencing strategy that allowed dissent to be absorbed throughout the series was intentional disregard of serious challenges, especially with regard to definitional issues. In the fifth episode, "Created Equal," Francis Fox Piven challenged Friedman's conflation of 'freedom' with 'economic license':

Mr. Friedman... confuses us by using the term “freedom.” I think what Mr. Friedman means by the term “freedom” is economic license. And economic license - the economic license of those who control property and those who control capital, has in fact been a threat not only to equality, but a threat to the freedom of peoples all over the world, and not only in Europe and in the United States, but in Africa, in Asia, and in Latin America (Ep. 5).

While Piven was articulating a legitimate point of dissent, there was no coherent or engaged response on the issue of terms or at the level of historical analysis, as the moderator redirected the discussion to avoid the question, and Friedman later reversed himself to argue that a true ‘free market’ system had never existed. Instead, Friedman reiterated truisms and vague generalizations about the ‘free market’ or ‘free enterprise’ system that were expressed in the footage in the first half of the episode.

The silencing of dissent within the discussion segments of the series was not limited to ‘language control’ but also connected back to other rhetorical strategies, including the privileging of historical narratives favorable to the neoliberal political formation. Later in the same segment, Piven again tries to bring conversation around to a critical analysis of methods of discourse shaping the discussion, arguing that Friedman relies on unjustifiable argumentation methods to support his characterization of the ‘free enterprise system’:

It’s a distortion of the evidence to rest the argument for the free enterprise system by selectively using the example of England when you want to, the United States when you want to. The test of your argument about the free enterprise system and its capacity to produce both freedom and greater equality to relieve poverty, the test of that argument has to be made everywhere that the free enterprise system has been extended, has penetrated. The test of your argument is not only in what happens in England and the ostensible decline or not the decline of the English economy or what happened in the United States. The test of that argument has to look at what the free enterprise system has meant for the majority of people who do not live in England and who do not live in the United

States, who do not live in the mother countries, but rather live in that part of the world where most people live and when - where most people have had their lives disrupted. Peasants have lost their land, traumatic destruction occurs (Ep. 5).

Again, her arguments were met with a silence made possible by the moderator's avoidance, or intentional disregard, of the challenge or dissent. Silencing, through the refusal to engage with challengers on key issues, was practices used to great rhetorical effect by neoliberal discussants throughout the series.

When Bob Galvin, CEO of Motorola, opined that "maybe the industrialists have a clearer view of history and its prospects," Galvin used the prerogative of his subject position to interpret the recent events in American history in a language both familiar and favorable to an already powerful group without engaging in any historical analysis:

The most precious *asset* we possess is freedom. The easiest way to lose one's freedom is to go into receivership; and I mean economic receivership. Because *a receiver is a dictator*. And to the degree that we employ the costs and the burdens of government that lead us in the direction of further debt, ultimate receivership, and then the political consequence of the imposition of the political dictator over the economic and the job and the living rights of the individual, maybe the industrialists can see farther down the pike as to the consequence of all this (Ibid, italics added).

Michael Harrington challenged Galvin's assertion of privilege and situated working people rather than industrialists or corporate CEOs as a source of "positive increments to our freedom" (Ibid). He went further to undermine the legitimacy of the 'industrialists' as the privileged subject position, calling their vision myopic:

...related to industrialists, I think that one of the startling things about American history is that when Franklin Roosevelt was saving the system from itself, the main beneficiaries were screaming bloody murder at him for being a traitor to his class, when he was in fact the salvation of that class. And I think if you, therefore, if you look at our history, I do think you find a tremendous myopia on the part of industrialists, and you find

that the positive increments to our freedom, interestingly enough, have not come from the college graduates, but often from people with... not from the best people, it's come from working people. It's come from poor people, it's come from blacks and Hispanics and the like" (Ep. 1).

Yet this challenge, too, goes unanswered, so that the patterns of interaction that emerge from this discussion reflect dismissal and avoidance of the questions that critics raised about key principles and the selectivity of historical narratives. In the "Created Equal" episode, when Piven again challenged Friedman, this time on his historical mythologization of the 'free enterprise' system:

Mr. Friedman...when you say that it is wrong for government to intervene in the free enterprise system to do something about inequality, you evoke a model of a free enterprise system which does not exist and has never existed to a significant extent in history or anywhere in the world. That so-called free enterprise system has always used government. The entrepreneurs of that free enterprise system have always used government and the question that you raise is whether other people can use government to achieve their ends....The free enterprise system as it has spread around the world, as it has spread to Asia and Africa and Latin America has spread through the force of arms among other things and those arms were wielded by government. That was government intervention under the name of the free enterprise system, but a government intervention which destroyed the freedoms of many people not least of which are the people of Chile (Ep. 5).

Friedman, who (along with the 'Chicago Boys' - neoliberal economists trained at the University of Chicago) was, even at that time, intimately involved in the brutal social repression committed to secure elite economic benefit in Chile, tried to protect himself from this critique by denying any necessary connection between neoliberal economic reform and the political repression of Pinochet. Furthermore, he then moves to distance his overall argument from any kind of historical analysis by asserting that the 'free market' system has never existed in a pure form, and that any contradictions have arisen from the distance of said system from the 'pure form,' a discursive strategy that he

continues to use in the discussion sections throughout the series.

While there was important diversity of perspective represented in the room, including racial and gender diversity, this diversity was actually an important means of squelching dissent, through ‘proxy.’ One of the key principles of neoliberalism outlined in the documentary that preceded the discussion, that ‘equality of outcomes’ is a threat to ‘freedom,’ was openly challenged first by Frances Fox Piven, a white female political science professor, when she pointed out that, “...all over the world people are beginning to stir and are striving for a measure of equality for a measure of justice, [and] I think he [Friedman] demeans and trivializes those struggles when he tells us all that we can't all have Marlene Dietrich's legs” (Ep. 5). Thomas Sowell, who was so important in the creation of the ‘anti-public public’ in published journals (see Ch. 2) first dismissed Piven’s argument by implicitly undermining the subject position from which she spoke:

I would disagree *violently* with the notion that the people are stirring. A very small handful of *intellectuals* have generated an enormous amount of noise... most of the polls that I've seen of *blacks put them...very well to the right of most intellectuals* on most of these social issues. It is not the people who are stirring, it is a handful of intellectuals (Ibid, italics added).

From his particular subject position as a black conservative intellectual male, Sowell reiterated and reinforced Friedman’s argument, denying any place for social equality as a public issue and further severing what neoliberals call ‘equality of outcome’ from the types of equality (‘equality of opportunity’ and ‘equality under God’) that could be legitimately be discussed in the discussion forum. When Piven later challenged Friedman and Sowell’s duplicitous negative formulation with some heat, apparent in her tone and body language in the video, her argument was met with an intensified and even discursively violent dismissal on the same grounds:

PIVEN: The argument of, about equality of results was an argument that was linked to equality of opportunity. People recognized that unless there was a degree of equality in - a degree - enough food, enough security, access to education. Unless these things were available to all children, then equality of opportunity was merely a mockery. That's why equality of results became an issue and it became an issue for black people in the United States and they expressed their concern whatever the opinion polls.

SOWELL: You expressed it, dammit, look.

PIVEN: They expressed ____

SOWELL: No, they did not. They did not.

(Applause)

SOWELL: Dammit.

PIVEN: They expressed their will by their extraordinary participation in a protest movement that began in the late 1950s and didn't end until the 1960s.

.....

SOWELL: ...Black people have never supported, for example, affirmative action, quotas, anything of that sort. Wherever polls have been taken of black opinion on such matters as should people be paid equally or should there be this or that. Black people have never taken a position that you described. So it is not a question of what black people choose to do. It's *what you choose to put in the mouths of black people and it's what you choose to project*. It is not what any black people have ever said anywhere that you could put your finger on (Ibid, italics added).

The topic was quickly changed by Friedman, as he tacitly used the violence of Sowell's language, the way in which Sowell was awarded by the audience with applause for his personal attack on Piven and Sowell's dismissal of Piven's argument (*what you choose to put in the mouths of black people and it's what you choose to project*) to his advantage without addressing the violation of democratic norms that had silenced dissent.

Dialogue: Making Sense of "What's Wrong With Our Schools"

In this second half of the "What's Wrong With Our Schools" segment in the *Free to Choose* series, the procedures and parameters established in the overall series with respect to discussion of Friedman's 'documentary' films hardened into a structure that was the least open and the most violent. First, the cast of characters, or participants, may

on the surface seem to have included a broad range of voices on the issues facing education in the United States. But in fact, all but one of the participants is implicated in the formation of the neoliberal coalition. Robert McKenzie, the moderator, was a neoliberal professor of sociology and economics; Milton Friedman had dedicated his life dedicated to the neoliberal project; Albert Shanker, President, American Federation of Teachers, was the main source of neoliberal strength within teacher unions (first with New York City teachers and later throughout the country) and represented the most important ‘capture’ for the neoliberal movement; Professor John Coons, Initiative for Family Choice in Education, California, was a neoliberal advocate for vouchers and ‘school choice’; Thomas A. Shannon, Executive Director, National School Boards Association, who, while he did not fully support the notion of vouchers, accepted the legitimacy of much of the rest of neoliberal argumentation; and Gregory Anrig, Commissioner of Dept. of Education in Commonwealth of Massachusetts, who was really the only voice of substantive resistance to the neoliberal project.

It is clear from the outset of the discussion that the moderator, Robert McKenzie, was willing to brook no challenge to his ‘leadership’ of the discussion. When Shanker, even in a limited way, attempted to make a comment about Friedman’s “pet ideas,” McKenzie silenced Shanker, framing the discussion with the quotation from the film, “Market competition is the surest way to improve the quality and promote innovation in education,” and directed John Coons to respond first, followed by Friedman. Coons provides the predictable reinforcement of the argument being made in the ‘docu-film’:

Well, of course, there’s enormous evidence that that is exactly right and we see it in the case in California that I observe every day of low income children whose families are making great sacrifices to go to schools that

operate at a third of the cost of public education and are turning out kids who are performing and are learning and achieving at very high levels (Ep. 6).

Coons also uses this moment to raise the issue of ‘free competition,’ which Shanker, for all of his neoliberal proclivities, does challenge, on the premise that, “you cannot have free competition where one group of schools must accept every single student who comes along, no matter what his physical or emotional handicaps or other problems” (Ibid).

When he is interrupted by several discussants speaking at once, Shanker goes on to remind the participants that “public schools have to take the handicapped, must provide bilingual education, must engage in bussing or other programs in terms of integration, must do all of these things” (Ibid). Shannon, the president of the National School Board, connects the issue of competition back to the federalization of education: “I think in the real world there is no competition between private schools and public schools because private schools, especially parochial schools, do not have to comply with Federal and State mandates and constitutional limitations and things of that sort” (Ibid).

But it is when the core understanding of education employed by neoliberals like Friedman is challenged that the discussion opens to a moment of possibility. While Dr. Anrig applauds the section of the film that speaks to greater parental involvement in education, he is very clear that he sees Friedman’s film as misconstruing the role of public education in a democracy:

I think the role of public education in a democracy is not akin to that of the marketplace. The purpose for the common school is not the same as the purpose for the marketplace. We are trying in our public schools to create a democracy, to create an educated electorate. If you're going to do that, you have to have the common school (Ibid).

McKenzie quickly redirects the discussion away from that analysis, however, to ask

Anrig about the extent to which he accepted Friedman's "pretty drastic" analysis of the present condition of the public education system. Anrig took the opportunity to outline the central problem with Friedman's film, the fact that it relies on Friedman's establishment of "three straw men": the first is that there is a "profession of education out there which has run amuck;" second, "you [Friedman] long, as I would, for the good old days of the one-room school in Vermont," a school that "served a small proportion of the youngsters for a short period of time....those days will never come back;" and third, "you use as an example of American education, a troubled high school in an urban center, which is not typical of where the American student goes to school, [and]...is not typical of the City of Boston" (Ibid). Critically, he points out to Friedman, and indirectly to the other discussants and the audience, that at "that particular school, at the time that you [Friedman] took filming there, or your production crew did, was in the middle of a desegregation process that was not anywhere remarked about in the film" (Ibid).

This must have been provocative, dangerous critique, because McKenzie quickly moved into a modality that he had not previous deployed in the series, that of interlocutor, one who worked to delegitimize the critique that had just been articulated:

The one unsurprising thing about these comments is that all of the opposition to allowing the market work comes from people who have a very strong vested interest in the present public school system (Ibid).

Then he goes one sad step further, 'outing' himself as interested, vested, party to the conversation. "*I am not proposing, we are not proposing,*" he asserts, "to destroy the public school system," thereby undermining his effectiveness as neutral moderator. He goes on to expound at length:

We are only asking that the public school system should be free to

compete, should be open to competition, if it is really as good as you people make it out to be, it has nothing to worry about... the more decentralized the control, in my opinion, the more satisfactory is the schooling. The real problem is concentrated in those areas where decentralization is broken down, where you have moved to much greater centralization, much greater control, and the main trouble areas are in the large cities. That's why *we picked* that school to show. In response to the question of the excellence of the schooling that's coming, I think there is *nobody who can question* the declining SAT scores, the declining scores on exams, the declining performance in the schools, the fact that there is widespread dissatisfaction, that *many schools, not all schools, some schools, in urban areas are more accurately described as centers to keep people off the street than as educational institutions*" (Ibid).

In this moment, McKenzie provides a great deal of clarity about the purpose of the segment "What's Wrong With Our Schools" within the *Free to Choose* series as a whole, and indeed, the purpose of a focus on education within a larger neoliberal agenda. The ideological framework of neoliberalism requires 'absolute' marketization and privatization: sectors left remaining in the 'public sphere' or for public, non-marketized purposes, are incomprehensible. The most important assumption, though, in this ideology, is that of a 'disaster in education,' one born not of the effects of social inequality and racial hierarchy but over-centralization and lack of market competition.

After this awkward revelation of McKenzie's biases, the group moves into an equally challenging area of discussion. Shanker tries to redirect the group back to analysis of 'free market' assumptions, especially with respect to the ways in which reliance on 'free market' mechanisms would unfairly disadvantage the poor.

When you have a free market, there are dangers that go along with that market. Now, we know that there are people in our society who buy consumer's reports, and there are people who do a great deal of research before they buy something, and there are other people who are taken in by the Crest commercials and instant appeal to give them some sort of a gimmick with a thing. And I think that the evidence is pretty clear that if you take middle class and wealthier families they are gonna do a good

deal of research. They may very well be able to invest some additional money of their own to take some inconvenience. And if you have an open system of this sort it may very well be that the poorest parents are gonna have to take what is most convenient for them. What is going to fit in with their own work schedules, what is not going to require additional sums of money. And there is no doubt in my mind that you set up a system of free choice of this sort, you're going to end up with the poor in one set of schools of their own on the basis of a good deal of gimmicks that will be offered to them (Ibid).

The partial rupture created by McKenzie's self-positioning, and widened by his use of "us versus you" language is momentarily closed by their 'discovery' of the common ground of elite white male status. Coons begins the process, unintentionally, by attempting to challenge Shanker's argument. The dialogue is understood most clearly if seen in its entirety:

COONS: *They can't learn, right? They're...*

FRIEDMAN: Excuse me, Mr. Shanker. I want to ask you one question: How do you explain the fact that there is no area of the free market, no area of the private market, in which the *poor people who live in the ghettos* of our major cities are as disadvantaged as they are with respect to the kind of schooling they can get. I want you to name me any aspect in the kind of supermarkets they can go to. *They're* not as disadvantaged even in the kind of housing they can occupy as they are in respect of the kind of schooling *their* children can go to. How does ___

SHANKER: What's your evidence for that? I don't think you have any evidence for that.

COONS: But, *they're* trying to get out.

FRIEDMAN: *They're* trying desperately to get out. *Families with very low incomes* are trying to get into the parochial schools that you're talking about.

SHANKER: Exactly. And *they're* trying to get out of the slums, and *they're* trying to get into different neighborhoods...

FRIEDMAN: *They are* trying to, sure.

SHANKER: *they're* trying to do all sorts of things.

FRIEDMAN: *They're* doing better on that. *They're* doing better on that. (Several talking at once) (Ibid).

Once the embarrassing commonality, their shared class, gender and racial subject-positions, was reinforced for all participants, the tone of the discussion changed

dramatically. Shanker, returning to his concern with respect to the exclusivity of the parochial schools to whom Friedman advocates giving voucher money, asks Friedman why parochial schools' enrollment is relatively low if they take everyone who applies. This provides Friedman with the perfect opportunity to expand on the argument presented in the 'docu-film,' arguing that "it's very hard to sell something when other people are giving it away - anybody who wants to send his child to a nonpublic school has to pay twice for it, once in the form of taxes and once in the form of tuition" (Ibid). Under the kind of voucher scheme that Coons and Friedman supported, that difficulty would be eliminated: "You would now have a situation in which the low-income people would have the kind of bargaining power, the kind of possibility of choice, that those of us who are in the upper-income groups have had all along" (Ibid). McKenzie here, preempting critical discussion, says, "Jack Coons, I want you to come in now because I know you're in principle advocating the voucher system. Could you give us the case as you see it?" (Ibid). Coons describes what was being attempted in California at the time, focusing largely on the question of information that Shanker raised earlier, responding that:

Anybody needs information in a market. And they need information from independent sources, not from the schools themselves, and that's the way the initiative is designed, to come from independent sources. Now, we believe that ordinary people can make the best judgments for their children about where they should go, if they're given good *professional* advice (Ibid).

It is this nod to the notion of professionalism that must have prompted his next thought, concerning the ways in which the voucher system would actually be 'helping teachers':

And it also helps teachers because they can, for the first time, be professionals. They can act like real professionals, because they don't have a captive audience. They don't dominate their client, they respect their client, and they deal with them on the basis of a contract. What could be

better for teachers than for the first time to become people who are dealing in a democratic and respectful way with clientele instead of with captives (Ibid).

There was a not a whisper of a response to this characterization of teachers from anyone in the room. Here, educational professionalism is reduced to the fulfillment of a contract, respectful engagement in client relations, as compared to teachers' current bullying, controlling, abusive behavior.

The public institutions within which these teachers work, public schools, are held responsible for the social alienation of young people. Shannon begins to point to the potential dangers of a voucher system, including the creation of 'havens for white flight,' leading to a "duel school system in the sense that you have one school system operating under one set of rules, the other school system, public school system, operating under carefully articulated educational policy in any given state" (Ibid). Shanker, in response, again raised the question of inequity in enrollment policies. His question concerned the openness of voucher schools with respect to the "tough children, the five percent that absorb 95% of the energy and resources of a school?" (Ibid). Shanker predicted that,

What's gonna happen is that the parents of all the other children are gonna move right out and go to another school, because ultimately you're going to have to deal with hardcore problems, whether it's in a private school or whether it's in a public school (Ibid).

McKenzie, exercising his power to discipline and silence, cut Shanker off and called on Coons, who commented sardonically, "In other words, that kid isn't tough in the school that he's in because he's stuck there, he's just a rotten, tough kid" (Ibid). The exchange below is important because it laid the groundwork for the revelation of a critical but hidden fundamental premise of the neoliberal understanding of public education:

SHANKER: He may be a kid with a lot of problems, not rotten, a kid with a lot of problems.

COONS: And it will never ...you can't imagine a situation where if he were given choice, and allowed to go to a school that he liked, and to which he would connect emotionally that he would no longer be a troublemaker, but that he would like to stay in a place where he has chosen and would therefore do what is necessary to stay there and to learn.

SHANKER: You know, I don't think you've been near schools or classrooms for a heck of a long time.

COONS: Thanks a lot.

(Laughter and applause)

(Ibid).

Friedman stepped in as self-appointed moderator, and asserted that, "The plain fact is that children are not born troublemakers. They do not emerge from the womb... some of them do, of course, but most of them do not" (Ibid). Then, he goes on to make the most remarkable assertion of the evening, that "Most of the cases of the tough kids in the schools you're talking about are tough kids because they're in lousy schools. Because the schools do not evoke their interest. Because the school does not...[Several voices at once]" (Ibid). While Shanker asserted that Friedman was "dead wrong," it was Anrig who addressed the crux of the issue:

With all respect, Professor, the problems that you see in the urban schools of this country are not problems of the schools, they are problems of poverty. And they are problems of what do you do when for demographic and sociological and economic reasons, in a country like ours, you begin to concentrate those people who are poor in the inner and older parts of the cities of our country. That's when the problem comes, and it's not just a problem with schools. It's a problem of housing, of jobs, of medical care, of social services, and the same problems crop up, and to say that the answer to that is take one part of that element and say, just set up a competitive marketplace, is not dealing with the problem. The problem is the problem of poverty (Ibid).

After a digression of almost fifteen minutes, Friedman had an opportunity to respond to Anrig, and did so in the following way:

....do not underestimate the role which bad schooling, provided by our present governmental mechanism has played in creating poverty. It's been a major source, particularly among black and white teenagers coming up in the slums, it's been a major source of their difficulties of getting out of the trap of poverty. So it's not a one-way relation between poverty and the schools, the schools themselves bear a great deal of responsibility (Ibid).

While he acknowledged that schools bore some indirect responsibility, Shanker resisted Friedman's analysis to the extent that he argued:

....we don't put enough resources in for children who need special and additional help because they are not getting it in their homes or they're not getting the same sort of support in home and community as middle class kids do, and then we wait until the child is 16 or 17 and drops out, and then we provide a youth employment program for them where we spend between five and ten thousand dollars to try to undo what could have been undone in the first, second and third grade if we had a decent investment in the public schools (Ibid).

Put on the defensive, Friedman resorts to sarcasm, saying, "I have never yet known anybody who was trying to defend a government program who didn't say all its evils came from the fact that it wasn't big enough" (Ibid).

Conclusion

Neoliberal themes, valorizing market imperatives and demonizing social provision, began to dominate alternative frames of media coverage of political debates by the early 1980s (Guardino). Neoliberal publicists, led by Milton Friedman, were able to effectively deploy conservative-populist rhetoric within the field of *publicly owned media* to hollow out this public space, to effectively obscure corporate and upper-income prerogatives by deploying a key set of rhetorical strategies to more effectively depict neoliberal policy moves as commonsensical projects that advanced ordinary people's material interests and cultural values.

In the wake of a crisis of legitimacy of the governing coalition and ideologies of the New Deal and Great Society, neoliberalism began permeate American popular culture, attaining power to shape political debate and cultural contestation as a form of “common sense,” whose power was affirmed not only by its explicit, triumphant articulation, but also by its status as a foundation upon which – and against which – a broad range of political, commercial and cultural forms of address were and are constructed (Gramsci). This “common sense,” through the difficult ideological and political work of neoliberals, replaced social equality with economic growth as the ethos and blueprint for national endeavor, “representing and narrating the politics and practices of capital accumulation as if they were the politics and practices of social justice” (Ruben).

This chapter has explored the publicization of the neoliberal ‘*anti-public public*’ and suggests that the stories told and rhetorical strategies deployed within this ‘*anti-public public*’ have fundamentally altered the terms of the American debate about education, citizenship and governance in the United States. While some scholars still seem to be expecting emancipatory potential to emerge from ‘public sphere’ analysis of counter-publics, this particular story of the neoliberal ‘anti-public public’ (which can be considered to have an anti-establishment impetus as its origin, and may lay a claim to being a counter-public) may be leading us in a different direction, further along the path about which Habermas despaired. This path, one on which the official bourgeois public sphere provides the institutional vehicle for a major historical transformation in the nature of political domination, marks the “shift from a repressive mode of domination to a hegemonic one, from rule based primarily on acquiescence to superior force to rule based primarily on consent supplemented with some measure of repression” (Eley, qtd. in

Fraser, 62). Despite the hard cultural and political work within subaltern countercultures and counter-publics in the 1960s and 1970s, it can be argued that since the 1960s and 70s, American governance has moved from “rule based primarily on consent supplemented with some measure of repression” to “rule based on repression with some measure of manufactured consent,” through the hard cultural work of American neoliberals (Herman and Chomsky).

Chapter Four: From ‘Anti-Public Public’ to New Educational State

Redistributing Power and Privatizing Public Space

The technologies developed in the creation of, and the logic articulated by, the neoliberal ‘anti-public public’ have fundamentally altered the terms of the American debate about education, citizenship and governance in the United States, and are largely responsible for the passage of the landmark *No Child Left Behind* legislation. This legislation has restructured the landscape of public education in the United States, and has reconfigured American federalism in the process.

The Reagan administration’s clear adoption of neoliberal education problem analysis in the 1983 *Nation at Risk* report marks the initial stages of a public policy transformation in education. This possibility was opened up by the work of the neoliberal anti-public ‘counter-public’ that originated in the 1970s, and this transformation was not complete until the passage of *No Child Left Behind*, with this legislation signaling the failure of liberal critics and tragic success of Clinton neoliberal collaborators.

In the early 1980s, the Reagan administration, advised by Friedman and others involved in developing the ‘anti-public public’ on educational issues, began making sweeping attacks on the conduct and achievements of public schools, crystallized in the infamous *A Nation At Risk* report.¹³ Earlier scholarship on the genesis of *No Child Left Behind* legislation has emphasized the top-down role of the federal government in the

¹³ "A Nation at Risk," initiated under Secretary of Education Terrell Bell, has been heavily critiqued elsewhere for making claims regarding the "failures" of education without supporting such claims with actual evidence or indicating where such evidence could be found (Berliner and Biddle). The National Commission on Excellence in Education, led by uber-conservative ideologue Assistant, Secretary of Education Chester Finn, compared Japanese system favorably to that of the US, especially in terms of having a coherent curriculum, high standards, good discipline, parental support, professional teaching force and well-run schools (1983).

conservative educational movement of the 1980s and 1990s, and has underplayed the role of corporate power in this movement. These historians and scholars have argued that a new era was born with the attacks issued by President Reagan's National Committee on Excellence in Education, headed by Terrence Bell. In this narrative, additional hostile claims against public schools, teachers and their unions were issued by Reagan and Bush officials, then embraced in documents issued by conservative industrialists and corporate leaders. And finally, the negative claims were legitimated through endless repetition and elaboration by the conservative media, so that conservative leaders of the education community were empowered to "state these lies as facts" (Berliner and Biddle, xi).

While there is strong evidence of organized malevolence on the part of the Reagan administration, of "government officials and allies ignoring, suppressing, and distorting evidence," the dynamics of the production and distribution of their educational policy approaches may be more complicated, and it is the contention of this chapter that these dynamics reflect the development of a profound and institutionalized ideological consensus, rooted in elite desires to preserve existing social and political inequalities and articulated in a set of ideas best described as 'neoliberal' (xii).¹⁴ New configurations of knowledge production and distribution were initiated in an emergent neoliberal 'anti-public public' around the issues of public education, creating new alliances and power 'nodes,' concentrations of decision-making capacity in small groups of corporate and political elites who sought to redefine relationships between education and labor. The

¹⁴ While it seems clear that "many of the myths were told by powerful people who -despite their protestations - were pursuing a political agenda designed to weaken the nation's schools, redistribute support for those schools so that privileged students are favored over needy students, or even abolish these schools altogether," and that they willing and able to "suppress evidence, scapegoat educators, and sow endless confusion," I am interested here more in the structuring process by which this occurred (Berliner and Biddle, x).

formation of these ‘nodes’ not only brought these elites together across traditional state-federal government divides, helping to restructure the American nation-state in ways that ultimately allowed for increasing federal and state intrusion into local educational matters of standard-setting, testing, accountability, and teacher quality. More importantly, these nodes of discursive production also brought socio-political elites together across traditional political party lines to redefine the nature and purposes of public education for the working classes.

It is this new ‘educational state,’ crystallized in the 2002 *No Child Left Behind* legislation, that makes the state and federal educational response to the devastation of Hurricane Katrina [discussed in Chapter 2] ‘natural’ and seemingly inevitable. The early twenty-first century American domestic neoliberal regime emerged from the confluence of neoliberal intellectual and corporate elite agenda-setting at the national level in thickened nodes of political networks, reinforced and intensified by feedback from neoliberal policymakers at the state and local levels, all primarily centered on the issue of public education.

The Commodified Penal Educational State: Building the School-to-Prison Pipeline

The political and social turmoil of the 1960s and 1970s, coupled with the slow growth, inflation, and high unemployment of the 1970s and early 1980s, created intense dissatisfaction amongst traditional political elites, both liberal and conservative. Racial inequality had been the "pivot around which a vast reworking of the governance of public schools took place" in the middle of the twentieth century (Simon, 207). While desegregation was defeated by white backlash and judicial retreat, in succeeding decades, the penalization of schools as public institutions was accelerated by fresh historical

memories of youthful violence in 1960s and again in 1980s; the association of youth culture with drugs and drug trafficking; and a growing conservative movement against public schools (those with unions and elected school board supervision) which found it extremely useful to frame the public schools as being rife with crime (208). Beginning with Reagan's War on Drugs, racially imagined crime became the central problem to be confronted and documented by a reinforcing spiral of political will and the production of new knowledge about school crime.

Corporate executives, southern governors, a range of conservative intellectuals, and disaffected liberals all identified the American public education system as the central source of their discontent, and the source of institutional failure which gave rise to the youth crime epidemic. This development set the stage for a coalition around the ideas of domestic neoliberalism, with a shared political agenda developed into a new ideological type from diverse ideological strains. These actors brought formidable resources together, deploying financial, institutional, and social capital to center education as the basis of this new domestic political agenda, resources which would give life and voice to the emergent ideology of neoliberalism.

The neoliberal coalition that developed a new national framework for debate around education in the 1980s involved conservative and liberal intellectuals, southern 'education' governors, and corporate leaders. Conservative intellectuals, including Chester Finn, Diane Ravitch, William Bennett, and Joseph Adelson, were motivated to ensure that education was strengthened to promote 'human capital development' for economic growth; to foster a culture of 'excellence in education' and respect for traditional modes of teaching and learning; to promote 'lay control' of education; and to

weaken teacher unions and the educational ‘establishment’. Liberal intellectuals, including John Goodlad, Ernest Boyer, Mortimer Adler, and David Cohen were focused on reducing the ‘achievement gap’; ensuring that disadvantaged students had the opportunities and resources to achieve at high levels; and eliminating the ‘culture of low expectations.’ While conservative intellectuals worked through and with the Educational Excellence Network, Hudson Institute, American Enterprise Institute, and the Fordham Foundation, traditional liberal intellectuals working within the neoliberal framework affiliated themselves with organizations such as the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, the Council of Chief State School Officers’ Resource Equity Center, and the California Achievement Council (Rhodes).

Neoliberal intellectuals, working through such organizations and think tanks, profoundly influenced corporate leadership and southern governors. Corporate leaders, including men like David Kearns and Owen “Brad” Butler, were motivated to promote ‘human capital development’ to increase corporate profit; to focus economic growth strategies away from government regulation of corporations or management of the economy; and to redirect blame for economic weakness and instability to labor. These corporate leaders used the existing organizational forms of the Business Roundtable, National Alliance of Corporate, Committee for Economic Development, and the Conference Board to pursue the development of the neoliberal educational agenda. And the ‘Education Governors,’ including Bill Clinton, Lamar Alexander, Richard Riley, and William Winter, were also focused on ensuring ‘human capital development’ to promote state (and later, national) economic growth; avoid the difficult racial politics of equity and integration in education; and attract middle-class (white) voters to their states. These

men organized themselves into the National Governors' Association, Education Commission of the States, and the Democratic Leadership Council (Rhodes).

'Failure' at State Level Leads to 'Standards-Based' Education

Those advocating an 'excellence-centered' neoliberal agenda on educational policy were forced to contend with the diversity of state contexts, each of which provided a different set of challenges. While virtually all states were active in some way in restructuring their educational systems in the early to mid-1980s, the intensity of state involvement in the 'excellence' movement varied substantially across states. The new educational innovations did not diffuse evenly across states; rather, a "mosaic" pattern, in which some states adopted far more elements of the reform agenda than others, was evident (McGuinn, Ch. 4). By the end of the 1980s, the emergent neoliberal alliance of intellectuals, corporate leaders and governors were calling for a stronger federal role in the process of restructuring public education. These elite agents raised new issues, generated by affiliated think tanks, including national standards, national tests, and accountability for performance, pushing a reluctant President Bush to make more ambitious efforts to reform education, and laying the groundwork for the educational legislation of Bill Clinton's New Democrats (McGuinn, Ch. 5).

Through their agenda-setting and lobbying, corporate leaders helped provoke a hesitant Bush I administration into adopting a much more ambitious agenda in education. The continued involvement of corporate leaders in educational issues was propelled by the desire to maximize profits through reductions in labor costs, and the perception that decentralized efforts at the state level had not yielded the desired effects in terms of creating a workforce that would meet the production needs of corporations. Informed by

the work of the neoliberal think tanks and connected publications, the corporate elite argued that educational improvements were not emerging rapidly enough, and that neotraditionalist changes they had worked for had spread haphazardly, if at all, across the states (McGuinn, Ch. 4). In approaching the federal government, big business indicated that they were willing to abandon the conservative orthodoxy of ‘small government’ to achieve their broader goal of ‘strengthening human capital development.’

Conservative, moderate and even liberal intellectuals’ contributions to the Bush administration’s agenda mirrored that of corporate leaders, pressing it, through their work in think tanks and foundations, to adopt a more vigorous policy agenda in light of the limits of state- and locally-led reform strategies. These intellectuals generally argued for more ambitious policies on the grounds that decentralized strategies had failed to respond adequately to the “educational crisis” (Smith). Governors, long active in efforts to reform the schools at the state level, provided much of the energy behind education summits and conferences, and helped build support for national standards and tests (Rhodes). These forces helped drive the formulation of the Bush administration’s education initiative, *America 2000*. But it was actually during Bill Clinton’s presidency that the neoliberal political formation took new shape, as it came to inform presidential leadership strategies over the next two decades. This political formation was profoundly influenced by the emergence of New Democrats, who argued that the party should solicit middle-class whites’ support by ending welfare ‘as we know it,’ getting tough on crime, and supporting markets and free trade (Baer, Ch. 6-7).

Under pressure from the Clinton administration, three major initiatives – *Improving America’s Schools Act* of 1994, *Safe Schools Act* of 1994, and *Goals 2000*,– were passed,

transforming the nature of federal involvement in American education and setting the stage for full federal intervention with *No Child Left Behind* in 2002 (Manna).

The groundwork for this legislation was laid in 1990 by President Clinton at the National Governors Association Conference, held to develop the National Education Agenda. Two of the items on this agenda speak most clearly to this shared vision:

5. Every adult American will be literate and will possess the *knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy* and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.
6. Every school in America will be free of drugs and violence and will offer a *disciplined* environment conducive to learning (Simon, 214 – italics added).

Agenda item five provides linkages between neoliberal language on worker knowledge and skills, global competitiveness and the ‘invisible hand’ of the ‘free market’ to national citizenship that inform not only two Clinton initiatives, *Goals 2000* and *Improving America’s Schools Act* (IASA), but more importantly, federal Department of Education language all the way through President Obama’s contemporary *Race to the Top* initiative.

Agenda item six for the National Governors Association sets up a complex equation between three elements: drugs, violence, and lack of discipline, and becomes highly productive in shaping a ‘field of knowledge’ about school crime. This was the only agenda item that incorporated the largely poor and minority school population in neighborhoods where armed violence was a real risk, and the language surrounding that incorporation indicates that elite policy-maker discussion about racial justice had all but disappeared. By linking drugs to violence, this language widened the range of social problems to a broader array of schools, linking both to a ‘lack of discipline’ among students. This equation made crime control a vehicle for improving the educational

function of schools because "schools dominated by a culture friendly to drugs and marked by violence were presumed to be a causal explanation of declining educational achievement of American students" (215).

The federal government has only relatively recently, through more complete articulation of the neoliberal education agenda, come to play a critical role in making national crime a problem for schools, and crime prevention a national agenda for school reform, using incentives and sanctions to spread it across state and local systems. By the early 1990s under the Clinton administration, a "broad consensus that school violence was a primary problem for American education and that this problem could only be addressed by more security and technology" was locked into place (Simon, 215). The *Safe Schools Act* of 1994 marked the creation of a national model of crime governance for schools, parallel to the *Safe Streets Act* of 1968 in that both were declaring public spaces 'safe' by legislation, the rhetorical effect of which was to define both as dangerous (Ibid). Using the same model of funding that it would embed in Clinton's IASA, Congress appropriated significant funds, conditioning eligibility for funding on state and local school district adoption of "techniques of knowledge and power calculated to focus more governance attention and resources on crime in schools, while assuring a more rapid and punitive response to it" (216).

Policy analysts associated with the Consortium for Policy Research in Education, who had been among the first to raise scholarly attention to problems with state implementation of 'reform' efforts under the banner of the 'excellence in education' movement, led the critique of these reform efforts while failing to address the context of increasing criminalization of schools. They argued that state and local 'excellence'

reforms had failed in large part because they lacked ‘coherence.’ Moreover, they advocated the reform of state-level education policymaking, with centralized reform aligning all of the components of the educational system to common educational goals and standards (CPRE). Chester Finn, working with the Hoover Institution and the Hudson Institute, was developing similar policy prescriptions around the same time, also based on the argument that the ‘excellence movement’ had failed to deliver on its promises (Finn, 17-18). He argued that federal *standards* and *goals* needed to be established, so that states would have direction and incentive to develop “quality tests gauging progress toward the goals and establishing strong mechanisms to hold individuals and institutions accountable for their performance” (Ibid). These groups produced policy recommendations based on shared assumptions, i.e. that American public schools exist to create a docile, compliant, and hierarchically organized work force and that the needs of American corporate capitalism can most effectively be met by an educational system modeled on factory production, with standardized inputs, measurements and outcomes.

The Pew Forum on K-12 Education Reform played a critical role in elaborating and disseminating neoliberal education policy ideas by bringing together key intellectuals and political players, including Smith and O’Day, Finn, Albert Shanker of the AFT, Michael Cohen of the National Governors’ Association, Hugh Price of the National Urban League, and David Hornbeck of the Council of Chief State School Officers (Rhodes, 350-352). Richard Riley, the Secretary of Education under Clinton, worked closely with Michael Cohen and others from this forum to lay the groundwork for the Department of Education’s *Goals 2000* program, which was “facilitative in that it provided grants to

states to promote standards-based reforms,” and “directive insofar as it set the agenda by providing grants only for standards-based reform and by anticipating significant federal oversight of state adoption and implementation of these reforms” (354). The design of *Goals 2000* was meant to complement *Improving America’s Schools Act* (IASA), the Clinton administration’s ESEA reauthorization plan, to pressure states to adopt standards-based reforms. States using voluntary *Goals 2000* funds to develop standards and assessments (virtually all by 1996) would have to use those standards and assessments as the foundation of their standards and accountability regimes under ESEA (Ibid).

Corporate leaders again played a significant role in developing the Clinton educational agenda and driving forward the Clinton strategy. They had continued to express frustration with the pace and distribution of education reform during the later part of Bush I’s term, with part of this frustration stemming from the disappointing early showing of their own education reform projects in the states. Corporate leaders, especially the National Alliance of Business, the Business Roundtable, the National Association of Manufacturers, and the Chamber of Commerce, became strong supporters of the Clinton education agenda, even if they were not important visible authors of it (Rhodes, 732). The corporate elite played three important roles in support of Clinton’s education strategy; “they served as cheerleaders for the legislation in Congress, generated stiff criticism of controversial ‘opportunity to learn’ standards which ultimately threatened the bills’ chances of survival, and defended the bill against vociferous attacks from the political right” (733).

The process by which the Clinton legislation was passed revealed the fragility of the still emergent neoliberal consensus on education. The Congressional debates over the

Bush I and Clinton education agendas illuminated the coalescence of a temporary, fragile and limited coalition of diverse groups around a seemingly hybridized education reform agenda. Some factions within the Democratic and liberal camps embraced the standards-based reform agenda and expanding federal involvement as a *means* for improving all schools and aiding the disadvantaged. At the same time, some groups within the moderate Republican coalition, particularly corporate leaders and some members of Congress, came to accept a much more ambitious federal role in the educational agenda, *as long as* this role also served to ‘strengthen human capital’ and ‘promote economic development’ (Rhodes; Manna; Smith).

However, controversy over federal involvement also caused fractures within the neoliberal coalition, revealing its fragility and ultimately eviscerating *Goals 2000* and IASA. Both Bush I and Clinton had to negotiate inter- and intra-partisan disputes over the appropriate role of the federal government in restructuring education policy, and Bush’s major legislative program was defeated when these negotiations failed. But factionalism within each party also provided opportunities for cross-partisan coalitions capable of providing early needed votes for education policy restructuring under Clinton, whose background as one of the original ‘Education Governors’ and as the head of the neoliberal New Democrats helped him maximize those opportunities. Many of the conservative educational intellectuals had envisioned a more limited role for the federal government in education policy, however, and they ultimately moved away from the ‘reform’ coalition. Governors, who also favored a more limited role for the federal government, had been much more active in formulating the agenda during the Bush I administration than during the Clinton administration. They played a much more limited

role during the development of *Goals 2000* and the IASA, perhaps because three of the four original leading ‘education governors’ (Clinton, Alexander and Riley) had already entered federal politics by late 1980s. More importantly, the governors newly elected in the ‘Republican Revolution’ of 1994 were very resistant to sharing power over education policy with the federal government (Rhodes).

Ironically, Clinton’s initiatives were signed into law in 1994, on the eve of this ‘Republican Revolution,’ and the ascendance of conservative Republicans radically undermined Clinton’s educational initiatives. Outnumbered by Republicans largely hostile to his agenda, Clinton was unable to pursue his new educational strategy. As a result, the extent to which *Goals 2000* and IASA were adopted and implemented in the various states and localities was irregular at best. And it was this very unevenness and haphazardness of ‘reforms’ at the state and local levels that would anger the coalition of neoliberal educational policy advocates, particularly corporate elite and upwardly mobile civil rights leaders. Consequently, more aggressive agendas for federal intervention in education would gain legitimacy among this coalition of corporate elites, civil rights leaders, and factions within both the Democratic and Republican parties (McGuinn, Ch. 9). With the election of George W. Bush in 2000, the stage would be set for the passage of the most ambitious incursion of the federal government into education - *No Child Left Behind*.

The election of George W. Bush, a staunch proponent of ‘accountability’ and self-proclaimed ‘author’ of the ‘Texas Miracle’, was the final piece in the puzzle, as his dependency on Friedman acolytes, Donald Rumsfeld and Vice President Dick Cheney, was perceived as the source of his ‘presidential leadership.’ After the divisive and

contested election and in the wake of the attacks of September 11, 2001, the neoliberal group of political actors who had coalesced around education policy marginalized other interests in order to preserve a political compromise centered on ‘standards-based reform’ (McGuinn, Ch. 9). On one hand, New Democrats and disillusioned liberal Democrats marginalized and silenced traditional liberals and their teacher union supporters, who objected to standards-based reforms or emphasized increased spending as the key to true education reform. On the other, President Bush and his allies circumscribed the influence of traditional conservatives who championed decentralizing reforms such as block granting and vouchers as educational panaceas. Both worked to limit the influence of governors, who objected to what they perceived as “unfunded mandates” and incursions on areas of traditional state authority (Manna, Ch. 6).

Building on themes and governing assumptions contained in the *Improving America’s Schools Act* of 1994, the *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2002 represented a revolution in federal education policy, as it sought to transform the ESEA, the largest federal K-12 education program, from a compensatory education program that targeted resources to disadvantaged students into a powerful mechanism for ‘raising educational standards for all students’ *and* for ‘holding schools accountable’ for results. In undertaking this mission, the Act imposed highly prescriptive new mandates on the states. In exchange for access to ESEA funds, states were to test every student in grades 3-8 each year; establish a plan for bringing all students to ‘academic proficiency’ by 2014; ensure that each group of students within each school made ‘adequately yearly progress’ toward proficiency every year; implement an escalating series of consequences for schools in which groups of students did not make adequate yearly progress; undertake

wide-reaching reforms to ensure that all students were taught by ‘highly qualified’ teachers; and participate biannually in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NCLB).

"Schools have long been considered the most important gateway to citizenship in the modern state" (Simon, 2009). The passage of this legislation, alongside the *Safe Schools Act* of 1994, established a structure of knowledge production, distribution and compliance based on fear in American public schools which should be cause for great concern. Taken together, these policies frame public education with themes of 'accountability,' 'zero tolerance' and 'norm shaping.'

President Bush, in a speech in 2001 to showcase the *No Child Left Behind* proposal, relied on two dominant metaphors, a ‘scandal of illiteracy’ and a ‘plague of school violence.’ Each of the four elements or 'commitments' as he outlined them - testing, local responsibility, assistance and additional funding for failing schools, followed by 'ultimate consequences' for those that do not improve - is shaded or framed by a metaphor of crime. ‘Testing’ involves a normalizing judgment, expert surveillance and the looming possibility of punishment, with the emphasis not on a circuit of knowledge and power that runs through testing from diagnosis to treatment but instead a penal circuit of judgment followed after a fair interval by 'consequences' (Simon, 229). Both ‘local responsibility’ and ‘federal assistance’ are elements of the model of crime policy crafted in Nixon’s *Safe Streets Act* (1968). And the language of 'ultimate consequences' not only suggests punishment but also reinforces the sense of a "merging of school and penal system [that] has resulted in speeding the collapse of the progressive project of education and tilting the administration of schools towards a highly authoritarian and mechanistic

model" (209).

No Child Left Behind led to a dramatic expansion of the federal government's role in education and the incursion of the federal government into core educational issues of standards, assessment, accountability, and teacher quality. That this outcome seems to be an ironic result of the interplay between neoliberal ambitions and states' own diffuse and 'ineffective' efforts to reform their education systems is less significant than the particular political formation that emerged out of this historical process. A diverse coalition of elites, capitalizing on a context of social crisis and economic uncertainty, drew upon and developed their organizational resources to establish an agenda for redefining the purposes of public education in the late 1970s and early 1980s. While this agenda was redefined in the process of movement from state level to national level policy-making focus, from 'excellence' to 'standards and accountability,' key elements remained constant. The deployment of these discursive or rhetorical elements within the articulation of a neoliberal anti-public 'public' successfully reconstituted and reshaped an American public terrain by changing the rules of engagement so much that the social space has been increasingly effectively evacuated.

Obama as 'Kinder, Gentler' Neoliberal

While much of the political discussion circulating in 2013 around the question of whether or not Obama can properly be understood as a neoliberal reeks of vitriol and a sense of betrayal by traditional liberals and progressives, it is an interesting and productive question precisely because it is not easily answered. But if the reproductive work of hegemony is done within formal and informal educational institutions, then the nature of the nation-state and its leadership can be traced through changes and continuity

in educational policy. This dissertation has shown, thus far, that an important neoliberal political formation emerged and gained contested hegemonic status in the intersections of state and federal education policy-making in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century. The most important legislative outcome of this process was *No Child Left Behind*.

The litmus test for the Obama administration in domestic policy lay in the relationship his administration established with that core legislation. The relationship was marked by continuity rather than change: despite changes in motivational strategies adopted with respect to the states, properly described as an elaboration of competitive federalism and most recently, devolved competitive federalism, the federal government under Obama solidified the transformation of ESEA. ESEA, under Obama, was completely transformed from a compensatory education program that targeted resources to disadvantaged students into a powerful neoliberal mechanism for ‘raising educational standards for all students’ *and* for ‘holding schools accountable’ for results, i.e. creating and reproducing a hierarchically organized, docile and compliant workforce and privatizing/marketizing the social spaces occupied by public educational institutions.

This deployment of competitive federalism, ironically, intensified the negative impact of NCLB on communities of color and disadvantaged students. Even prior to advent of the Obama administration, the negative impact of NCLB on American Indian, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian students had been well-documented (McCarty). In addressing the contradictions between stated intentions and clear, duplicating outcomes of neoliberal education policy, investigators began to examine the ways in which the "patterning of racial advantage and inequity is structured in domination and its

continuation represents a form of tacit intentionality on the part of white power-holders and policy makers" (Gillborn, 485). Amongst a group of critical scholars, voices were beginning to argue that neoliberal "education policy is actively involved in the defense, legitimation and extension of white supremacy.... assumptions which feed, and are strengthened by, this regime, are not overtly discriminatory but their effects are empirically verifiable and materially real in every meaningful sense" (499). Essentially, they were arguing, the racist outcomes of neoliberal educational policy may not be coldly calculated but they are far from accidental.

However, it was not only the innovative ways in which competitive federalism was deployed but also the administration's explicit renewal and development of 'public-private partnerships' that created new possibilities for hollowing out and privatizing the public space of all levels of public schools. Katharyn Mitchell's preliminary work points to an important and (as of yet) undeveloped area of research, looking at the impact of new forms of venture philanthropy in education, "focusing in particular on the ways in which it manifests new geographies and temporalities of neoliberalism" (Mitchell). This manifestation of a newly modulated neoliberalism under Obama reflects his administration's response to the forms of resistance experienced by earlier administrations with a stronger "push towards micro-managed markets and public-private partnerships within which philanthropic foundations are major actors" (Ibid). Philanthropic 'dollars in education' have encouraged the emergence of numerous geographically specific market hybrids, which have won much broader consent for neoliberal/corporate educational reform from many parents, school boards, and the general public than did "uniform, top-down, or coercive approaches" of previous

administrations (Mitchell).¹⁵

Moment of Opportunity: Lost

At the moment of Barack Obama's election in 2008, there seemed to be an opening, a possibility for a shift in the ideological approach if not the structure of the new education state (Peck). Although Obama did not organize his campaign around any substantive response to the central education questions facing the country, there was great hope amongst progressives and traditional liberals that the neoliberal approach to education would be challenged and even reversed (Dingerson et al, xii).

The first opportunity for clarification came with his nomination of a new Secretary of Education. There was some conjecture that Obama might select Linda Darling-Hammond, a progressive who, at that point, had been at the forefront of critique of NCLB and its effects. The power center of the Democratic Party was still largely controlled by Clinton New Democrats, however, who helped to shape the hegemonic neoliberal narrative on education (Bracey; FAIR). Opposition to a shift away from the hegemonic neoliberal approach to education came from self-anointed [neoliberal] 'reformers,' including Michael Bloomberg, Joel Klein, Paul Vallas, Michelle Rhee, Arne Duncan, and Al Sharpton, featured widely in the corporate mass media, so that discussion around the possibility itself was silenced. Linda Darling-Hammond was virtually invisible, and the implications of her possible selection as head of the federal Department of Education unexplored, in large part due to 'silencing' and 'marginalization' tactics used by the mainstream corporate media (Bracey; FAIR).

¹⁵ While this new geography has yet to be mapped, this dissertation will contribute one small piece of the puzzle in its examination of the Hawai'i case.

Obama's choice of Arne Duncan as Secretary of Education, over progressive educator Linda Darling-Hammond, made it clear that Obama had aligned himself with the 'third way' or New Democrats in his party who had consolidated such power with Clinton on the issue of education at the end of the twentieth century. As Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Chicago Public Schools with no background in teaching or educational administration, Duncan had championed *Renaissance 2010*, a plan developed in collaboration with the Commercial Club of Chicago (CCC), a group of leaders from corporate, financial, philanthropic, and civic sectors, and launched by Chicago Mayor Richard Daley in 2004 to shut down 'underperforming' city schools and open new, autonomous schools (as possible charters) by 2010. During Duncan's tenure as CEO of Chicago Public Schools, more than fifty traditional schools were shut down because they failed to meet academic standards, and Chicago experienced an increase in both *public* and *private* charter schools as well as militarized public schools (Gwynne & de la Torre, 2009; Au, 2009). The closing or 'turning around' of schools also resulted in experienced teachers losing their jobs and being replaced at the new schools by younger, less experienced, and lower paid teachers (Carr and Porfilio). *Renaissance 2010* destabilized working-class and low-income communities in Chicago, contributing to an experienced crisis of displacement as children transferred to other schools, often much further from their homes and across neighborhoods marked by violence and crime.

This context of felt community crisis led to social instability in urban Chicago and correlated to an increase in youth violence (Brenner and Theodore). Critics charge that the explosion of charter schools in Chicago spurred urban gentrification, as middle class families displaced thousands of residents, including many in public housing, when these

families were lured to the city with offers of privatized choice through a lottery-based charter system (Lipman). During Duncan's tenure as Chicago Public Schools' CEO, low-income communities also had to contend with an increase of military charter schools, specifically the five military academies that made the JROTC program in Chicago the largest in the country (four of which are in Black communities), with cadet programs in predominantly Black and Latina/o middle schools (Brown et al, 2009). Duncan publicly lauded these military schools for their *discipline* and *leadership*, as they train and socialize children as young as fifteen years old for possible careers in the military. Such militarization of schools is consistent with neoliberal and conservative policies that both impoverish poor African American children and target them for military participation through 'economic conscription and coercion' (Tareen; Berlowitz).

Disaster Capitalism and the Educational State

The recent economic crisis, widely known as the "Great Recession," was used effectively by the Obama White House to dramatically accelerate a neoliberal agenda for education, going far beyond George W. Bush's *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) policy. With the intensification of this policy implementation process through 'softer,' seemingly 'kinder' and less overtly coercive strategies, the imbrication of the federal state in the personal, private, everyday lives of American citizens became much more immediate and complicated.

The appointment of Arne Duncan marked a shift in federal policy to the Chicago model of school reform: "top-down, standardized tests to hold teachers and students accountable, weakening teacher input, privatizing schools as charters or handing school governance over to business groups" (Carr and Porfilio, 13). This agenda was and

continues to be supported by a nearly unified front of the powerful—the corporate and finance sector, political party operatives at all levels, and many non-profit ‘philanthrocapitalist’ organizations. While the origination of the neoliberal education policy consensus lay in alliances, institutionalized and legitimated by the academic and mass media work of neoliberal and conservative think tanks, across Democratic and Republican party lines that reached down to the states through business councils and activist ‘reform’ governors seeking to attract monies to their states, the ‘kinder, gentler’ approaches used by the new educational state under the Obama administration defused criticism of NCLB and contributed to the acceleration of the intensification of the reproduction of the neoliberal hegemony.

Early signs of the Obama administration’s approach towards public education, reflecting neoliberal propensities, were visible in public statements. The “Nation at Risk” report discussed in an earlier chapter, which was produced in 1983 by think tanks working in collaboration with Milton Friedman and his neoliberal colleagues and issued by the Reagan administration, was motivated by an articulated fear that a poorly educated workforce would make the U.S. economy less competitive. This fear-based reasoning, centering on global economic competitiveness, echoed loudly in Obama’s first major speech on education at Hispanic Chamber of Commerce on March 9, 2009:

“In 8th grade math, we’ve fallen to 9th place,” he remarked. “Singapore’s middle-schoolers outperform ours three to one... It’s time to prepare every child, everywhere in America, to out-compete any worker, anywhere in the world” (“Remarks of the President”).

Similarly, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan was quite open about his favorable views of ‘shock doctrine’ approach taken by the Bush administration to the social crisis in New

Orleans after Hurricane Katrina. In an interview on ABC News on January 29, 2010, Duncan said,

I've spent a lot of time in New Orleans and this is a tough thing to say but I'm going to be really honest. The best thing that happened to the education system in New Orleans was Hurricane Katrina. That education system was a disaster. And it took Hurricane Katrina to wake up the community to say that we have to do better. And the progress that it made in four years since the hurricane, is unbelievable ("Washington Watch with Roland Martin").

After Hurricane Katrina, all New Orleans schools were closed and the teachers fired, and fifty-seven percent of New Orleans schools were reopened as non-union charter schools (Dingerson, 17-34). This sense of crisis was rediscovered with the onslaught of the economic downturn in 2009, facilitating further dramatic changes to national education policy. In San Francisco in May 2009, Arne Duncan said that California is facing a "moment of opportunity and a moment of crisis...Despite how tough things are financially, it's often at times of crisis we get the reforms we need" (Mehta). States were plunged into such deep budget deficits in this economic crisis that they became extremely vulnerable to Obama/Duncan's 'call to prostitution,' rapidly revamping their education policies in hopes of attracting tiny portions of federal stimulus money from *Race to the Top* grants.¹⁶

On February 19, 2009, President Barack Obama signed into law the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act*, which, among other things, set aside roughly \$4.35

¹⁶ In *The Cradle Will Rock* (1999), director Tim Robbins, through multiple lines in the production, asserts that "we are all prostitutes, in one way or another." The poignancy of the film derives from the extent to which, due to social and economic circumstances beyond their control, ordinarily good and decent people genuinely have no choice but to engage in practices that lead to their own debasement and defilement, for the sake of survival. It is this debasement or corruption which has such a corrosive effect in a democracy, as the entire political order, at least in theory, is built upon some assumptions of individual autonomy, some measure of formal political equality and psychological coherence which ironically seems to require certain levels of social cohesion and stability.

billion for states to improve their education systems. Following his neoliberal predecessors, Obama allocated funding via the *Race to the Top* grant competition to entice states into adopting tighter neoliberal policies. There were two central actions states needed to take to be eligible: massively expand charter schools and create data systems that would allow teachers to be evaluated based on their students' test scores. During both *Race to the Top* competition rounds, state applications "receive[d] points based on the extent to which their laws do not prohibit or effectively inhibit increase of the number of high-performing charter schools" ("Scoring Rubric"). Applications were judged based on what percentage of a state's schools could be charters: forty points were available for "ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charters and other innovative schools" ("Executive Summary"). *Race to the Top* guidelines suggested that "reviewers should give States high points if they have no caps or caps of 10 percent or more; medium points if they have caps of 5 to 10 percent; and low points if they have caps of less than 5 percent" ("Guidance and Frequently Asked Questions"). Ultimately, forty-one states and the District of Columbia submitted applications, with only eleven states and the District of Columbia receiving funds. All the states that received federal funds had heeded the administration's warnings, and eliminated or raised their restrictions on charter schools. Given that nearly all of the states that applied relaxed restrictions on charter schools, the *Race to the Top* competitive grant structure provided the most far-reaching federal policy enacted on behalf of charter schools, fulfilling one of the primary goals of the neoliberal education movement.

Another key area of 'reform,' as laid out by the requirements of the *Race to the Top* grant competition, was teacher evaluation, the requirements for which should have

led to a number of conflicts between unions and government officials, primarily because the grant application required that evaluations be based, in large part, on student scores on high stakes standardized tests. The *Race to the Top* grant criteria were carefully calibrated to incentivize state commitments to neoliberal reform in this area of teacher evaluation. To be eligible for a grant, states were required to link student test scores to individual teachers and principals for the purposes of evaluation. In the selection process for *Race to the Top* applicants, fifty-eight points were awarded for “improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance,” while only ten points were allotted for “making education funding a priority” (“Executive Summary”). Points were also earned for getting teachers and other unions to sign memoranda of understanding (MOU) agreeing to the state ‘reform’ plans (“Guidance and Frequently Asked Questions”).

District of Columbia Public Schools Chancellor Michelle Rhee’s imposition of IMPACT in the fall of 2009-- an evaluation system best known for its prioritization of ‘Value-Added’ assessments, representing forty percent of a teacher’s evaluation - without union negotiations, directed public attention to the implications of such grant requirements. Under the IMPACT model, fully endorsed by Arne Duncan and other neoliberal education ‘reformers,’ student scores on standardized assessments, as well as observations conducted by ‘master educators, and teachers’ commitment to professional development, contributed to teachers’ final scores. ‘Highly effective’ teachers became eligible for bonuses, while ‘ineffective’ teachers faced dismissal. Critics of the program, particularly local teachers’ unions, charged that it punished those teachers working with the most challenging students, but many states, working with national union leadership -- motivated by President Obama’s *Race to the Top* program -- studied and tried to emulate

IMPACT while overhauling their own teacher evaluation systems for the purposes of applying for grant money.

Educational “Blueprint” For Disaster Capitalism

Intensification and extension of the reach of the neoliberal educational state was made possible, in part, by ‘rebranding’ *No Child Left Behind* (Russom). On March 15, 2010, the Obama administration released “A Blueprint for Reform: The Reauthorization of the ESEA” (*ESEA Reauthorization*). The ‘Blueprint’ leaves all the basic pillars of Bush’s NCLB legislation untouched. The administration claimed that the ‘Blueprint’ changes the focus “from punishing failure to rewarding success,” and schools that are improving will be granted more freedom from federal intervention (Ibid). But the plan called for increased intervention for “low-performing schools,” and set up “school turnaround grants,” which states could only receive if they choose one of four models for their most troubled schools: “transformation (replacing the principal, extending the school day, and implementing new governance and ‘flexibility’); turnaround (replacing the principal and rehiring no more than 50 percent of the school staff); restart (closing the school and reopening it under the management of a charter operator); or closure” (Ibid). Like NCLB, the ‘Blueprint’ also sets unattainable goals for school improvement, requiring all students to be on track to be “career and college ready” by 2020 (Neill).

National Teacher Union Leaders as Collaborators

The power and the danger of a Democratic administration favoring neoliberal federal educational policy lies in the traditional relationship between the Democratic Party and labor unions. Many national teacher union leaders who derided NCLB during the Bush era supported the *Race to the Top* (RTTT) agenda, even as Obama signaled the

lengths to which he was willing to go to implement this agenda. Speaking before an audience of business executives at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce on March 1, 2010, the president supported a Rhode Island school board's decision to fire all seventy-four teachers and nineteen other school employees at Central Falls High School, at a high school in the poorest community in Rhode Island, Central Falls, that has been chronically underfunded (Chidester, 1). "If a school continues to fail year after year after year and doesn't show sign of improvements then there has got to be a sense of accountability," he asserted (Greenhouse and Dillon, 1).

Even when the public attack on teachers legitimized by this neoliberal policy approach to education resulted in clearly tragic outcomes, local union leadership that dared to challenge such policies was dismissed and marginalized. Despite preliminary resistance from local teachers' unions, notably the United Teachers of Los Angeles (UTLA), the *Los Angeles Times*, aided by researchers from neoliberal think tanks, published 'value-added' scores derived from seven years of data looking at 6,000 elementary school teachers in the Los Angeles Unified School District on August 14, 2010. The following month, Rigoberto Ruelas, who had taught fifth grade for 14 years in Los Angeles, committed suicide, with his family citing the publication of his 'average' and 'less effective' ratings for raising students' standardized test scores as the central reason for his decision to take his life. UTLA leadership urged the newspaper to remove the database from their website, to no avail. They received no support from national union leadership. The Obama administration still advocated publication of the 'value-added measurements' (VAM), positing that "the analysis brings a measure of objectivity to teacher evaluations, which now rest almost exclusively on subjective factors, such as

pre-announced administrator observations” (Lopez).

National leaders of the AFT and NEA have accepted many of the assumptions of the neoliberal attack. While the two teacher organizations both originated in the mid to late nineteenth century under somewhat similar circumstances, the NEA’s history has generally been that of a more conservative, ‘professional’ organization up until the 1960s, while the AFT, with its ties to the American Federation of Labor, was the more militant, radical organization. In 1966, with its merger with the American Teachers Association, the historically Black teachers’ organization and a new willingness to embrace its role as a ‘true’ labor union, the leadership of NEA shifted direction. The AFT, led primarily by Al Shanker, developed a different position on the issue of race, in large part due to Shanker’s role in the Ocean Hill- Brownsville UTF strikes in 1968, in which the African-American school board fired eighteen white (Jewish) teachers without cause in order to replace them with African-American teachers. Shanker bitterly but ultimately successfully fought the action of the school board, generating considerable enmity from the African-American community (Kahlenberg). Under Shanker’s leadership, the AFT became increasingly conservative and willing to make concessions to neoliberal political interests.

Commenting on Obama’s first education speech which stressed ‘performance pay’ and charter schools, current AFT President Randi Weingarten asserted that, “We finally have an education president...We really embrace the fact that he’s talked about both *shared responsibility* and making sure there is a *voice for teachers*, something that was totally lacking in the last eight years” (Quaid, italics added). In these word choices lie some suggestion of the motivational tactics and subtle coercion strategies that would

begin to characterize the Obama administration's approach to working with teachers. The language appropriated and used by national union leadership acknowledges a sense of responsibility for the ills said to be plaguing the schools, so the union leadership was, in effect, taking at least partial responsibility for social ills far beyond their control. In response to the same speech, NEA President Dennis Van Roekel said, "President Obama always says he will do it *with educators, not to them*. That is a wonderful feeling, for the president of the United States to acknowledge and respect the professional knowledge and skills that those educators bring to every job in the school" (Ibid, italics added). Here too, the language chosen by union leadership is powerfully expressive of a move towards internalizing 'discipline and punishment' for teachers: whatever needed to be done in the name of neoliberal reform will be done *together* by teachers and political leaders to themselves. The Obama administration was moving close to achievement of its goal of reducing the political costs of external coercion by motivating teachers and their unions to 'discipline and punish' themselves.

The leadership of both national unions initially clearly voiced their support of the *Race to the Top* competition. According to Weingarten, "The Department of Education worked hard to strike the *right balance* between what it takes to get system-wide improvement for schools and kids, and how to measure that improvement" (Education Gadfly). The language of reasonableness, fairness and 'striking a balance' conveyed willingness to compromise and dialogue, providing an important set of concessions on the ways in which the terms of debate on education were framed. Similarly, Van Roekel said that, "While NEA disagrees with some of the details surrounding the RTTT initiative, this is an *unprecedented opportunity* to make a lasting impact on student

achievement, the teaching profession, and public education” (Van Roekel, italics added).

The national union leadership consensus started to fracture slightly with the release of the “A Blueprint for Reform: The Reauthorization of the ESEA” (*ESEA Reauthorization*). The NEA, which had largely refrained from criticizing Obama, did issue a critical statement after the release of the “Blueprint”:

We were expecting to see a much broader effort to truly transform public education for kids. Instead, the accountability system... still relies on standardized tests to identify winners and losers. We were expecting more funding stability to enable states to meet higher expectations. Instead, the “blueprint” requires states to compete for critical resources, setting up another winners-and-losers scenario. We were expecting school turnaround efforts to be research-based and fully collaborative. Instead, we see too much top-down scapegoating of teachers and not enough collaboration.

Nevertheless, the NEA did not put forward a clear strategy on how to shift education policy. For the AFT, Weingarten issued a strategy piece entitled, “A New Path Forward” (AFT). Although this piece claimed to challenge teacher scapegoating, Weingarten’s first two recommendations in the document, that a new, more fair, and “expedient” process of teacher evaluation (for dealing with ineffective teachers) be developed and that a new fair and faster system of due process for teachers accused of misconduct also be developed, are based on the logic that individual classroom teachers are the central obstacle to high quality education.

Tragedy of the Privatized Public

Private foundations with increasingly large sums of money at their disposal, such as the Annenberg Foundation, the Ely and Edith Broad Foundation, the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the Gates Foundation, the Heritage Foundation, and the John M. Olin Foundation, are providing charter schools with

financial support, while some of these same players, along with others, are also heavily invested in the development of high stakes standardized testing and development of teacher evaluations using ‘value-added measures’ (i.e. student test scores). The key role played by these venture philanthropists, or “philanthro-capitalists,” illuminates the startling extent to which policy of public education has been privatized via nominal philanthropy (Ravitch, 199). These foundations have funded individual charter schools and non-profit organizations dedicated to the nationwide expansion of charter schools, standardized testing and ‘value-added’ teacher evaluation. While such organizations are involved in massive educational ‘reforms’ that hollow out public institutions for the purposes of private or institutional profit, they have not been, and cannot legally be, held accountable by voters.

Such foundations have entered into the previously developed and already dense nodes of neoliberal governance under the rubric of ‘public-private partnerships,’ which have been actively cultivated by the Obama administration. Building what Secretary Duncan euphemistically calls “communities of collaboration on behalf of America’s most vulnerable children,” such relationships are not only encouraged but supported through the use of federal monies. For example, the recent Annual Private School Leadership Conference, hosted and paid for by U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Innovation and Improvement’s Office of Non-Public Education (ONPE), provided Duncan with an important opportunity to praise public-private school partnerships. In his speech, he noted that independent private schools across America are partnering with public schools and other community organizations to “address the academic and social needs of some of our nation’s most vulnerable children” (ONPE). Two of the examples to which he

devoted considerable attention were activities of Hawai‘i Association of Independent Schools (HAIS), which offers coaching, mentoring, and consulting services to public charter schools, and the Private Schools with Public Purpose consortium led by a Hawai‘i contingent, which “encourages America’s independent and parochial schools to coordinate and leverage their resources, expertise, and experience with those of the public schools to benefit public school students and teachers” (ONPE).

Locally Situated Networks - Place-Based Neoliberalism

In Hawai‘i, the dense and largely invisible interrelationships between private philanthropic foundations, Department of Education officials, legislators, union leadership, ‘non-profit’ educational companies, and ‘astro-turf’ teacher and parent organizations require further exploration. Hawai‘i is an important case not only because it brings the relationship between neoliberalism and neocolonialism full circle. The State of Hawai‘i was also one of the few to be awarded an early first round *Race to the Top* grant, and it has assumed a national leadership role in the development of the ‘public-private partnerships’ discussed briefly above. The first institutional instantiation of neoliberal ‘public-private partnerships’ under *No Child Left Behind* was developed under the title of the Hawai‘i P-20 Educational Partnership. In 2003, the University of Hawai‘i, the Hawai‘i State Department of Education, and the Good Beginnings Alliance (now known as ‘Be My Voice! Hawai‘i ’) began with a three million dollar grant from W. K. Kellogg Foundation, and has functioned as a critical institutional site for more than ten years in neoliberal educational reform.

In its current form, the Hawai‘i P-20 Council is a group of thirty-three leaders from education, business, labor, government and community. Four state legislators, Roy

Takumi, Isaac Choy, Jill Tokuda and Brian Taniguchi, had been heavily involved or largely responsible for the bulk of the ‘educational reform’ legislation, such as Act 51 and subsequent supporting legislation, including laws to greatly expand charter schools, lengthen the school day without additional teacher pay, and make it easier for non-educators to teach and administer public schools, which have passed through the legislature for the past twelve years. The Department of Education and Board of Education, working together in unprecedentedly tight alignment under the leadership of former First Hawaiian Bank president Don Horner, are represented by the state superintendent, Kathryn Matayoshi and Cheryl Lupenui, Student Achievement Committee Chair, Hawai‘i State Board of Education, respectively. The University of Hawai‘i system is represented by John Morton, Vice President for Community Colleges; Eric Martinson, Chair, University of Hawai‘i Board of Regents; M.R.C. Greenwood, President of the University of Hawai‘i System; Linda Johnsrud, Vice President for Academic Planning and Policy of the University of Hawai‘i System; and Donald Young, Dean of the University of Hawai‘i at Manoa College of Education.

The ‘interests’ of UH faculty, public sector workers, and public school teachers, are represented by Randy Perreira of Hawai‘i Government Employees Association, JN Musto, Executive Director of University of Hawai‘i Professional Assembly, and Al Nagasako, Executive Director of the Hawai‘i State Teachers Association, respectively. While Perreira and Justo have reputations as ‘fighting’ union leaders, Nagasako has been engaged in neoliberal educational reform from his days as Kapolei High School principal. Moreover, the corporate interests on the council are formidable, including Gary Kai, Executive Director of the Hawai‘i Business Roundtable, Jim Tollefson, the president of

the Chamber of Commerce of Hawai‘i , and John White, Executive Director of the Pacific Resource Partnership. Their conservative tendencies are reinforced and buttressed by representatives of the U.S. military, Col. Ellen Moore, Chief, U.S. Pacific Command Programs Management Division, and the State of Hawai‘i , including Tammi Oyadomari-Chun, policy analyst with the Governor’s Office and former director of the Hawai‘i P-20 Council; Dwight Takamine, director of the Department of Industrial Relations; and Lynn Hammonds, director of the Hawai‘i Teacher Standards Board.

Private schools and the foundations that support them and the further privatization of public education in Hawai‘i have a strangely strong presence on the Hawai‘i P-20 Council, which is meant to shape public policy direction on public education in Hawai‘i . The most important private school, Kamehameha Schools, which is also funded by the one of the most wealthy and powerful charitable trusts in the United States, Bishop Estate, has two representatives: Rod Chamberlain, Vice President for Campus Strategies, and Chris Pating, Vice President of Strategic Planning and Implementation. The president of Chaminade University, Brother Bernie Ploeger, is also included, as is Michael Rockers, the superintendent of Hawai‘i Catholic School. However, the linchpin of this group is Robert Witt, Executive Director of the Hawai‘i Association of Independent Schools, strategically positioning the group to further capitalize on the ‘disaster’ of public education in the particular interests of more than one hundred private schools in Hawai‘i. The philanthropic foundations that support both the creative and exciting educational programs at these private schools for Hawai‘i ’s elite and the neoliberal dismantling of the strengths of public education in Hawai‘i are represented by two critical players: Chris Van Bergeijk, Vice President and Chief Operating Officer of

the Hawai‘i Community Foundation, which channels and directs most non-profit funding in the state; and Mitch D'Olier, President and CEO of Harold K.L. Castle Foundation, which is the most heavily educationally invested private foundation in the state.

The relative strength and power of these non-profit private philanthropic organizations in Hawai‘i is rooted in the historical context of cultural imperialism and illegal occupation (Kame'elehiwa; Osorio; Goodyear-Ka'opua; Kaomea). The deep and dramatic divide between public and private education in Hawai‘i originated in the relations of production shaped by sugar and pineapple plantations from the late nineteenth century. American sugar planters, most of whom were the sons of American Protestant missionaries who had come to Hawai‘i to proselytize, benefitted both from the Mahele and from a later 1872 non-judicial foreclosure law and had acquired vast swathes of the most productive land by the late nineteenth century (Kame'elehiwa; Perkins). Importing laborers largely from China, Japan, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines, these white plantation owners used race-based wage rates, language and cultural barriers, and differential access to perquisites within the plantation system to divide the plantation workers and successfully control them as sources of cheap labor power (Glenn). Although Kamehameha II had established the first public schools in Hawai‘i as part of his constitutional nation-state building, the American missionaries established the first private school in Hawai‘i (Punahou) so that their children would not have to go to school with Hawaiian children (Hughes). The illegal overthrow of the Hawaiian kingdom by American forces in 1893 and subsequent American occupation of Hawai‘i under pretext of annexation had important implications for public education (Sai; Perkins). Under American occupation, public schools became a more explicit site of assimilation and

cultural imperialism, especially as the children of plantation workers came of school age and were required to attend public school. Hawai‘i became ‘Americanized’ as a territory, in the first half of the twentieth century, in part through the work of progressive American educators who helped to create two-tiered public school system (English Standard and Common Schools). The Common Schools were institutionalized for plantation workers and English Standard Schools were developed for white “middle level plantation management and technicians, physicians, teachers, social workers, shop keepers, skilled craftsmen, and members of the American military” (Hughes, 67). For most of the twentieth century, public schools in Hawai‘i served the children of workers and lower middle class, while the social and political elite sent their children into a substantial and well-funded private school system.

The philanthropic foundations most active in neoliberal education reform in Hawai‘i, including Bishop Estate, Harold Y.L. Castle Foundation, and the various foundations coordinated by the Hawai‘i Community Foundation, are precisely those founded by ‘sugar money,’ the governing boards of which are dominated by descendants of American missionary and plantation families who graduated from elite Hawai‘i private schools. The Hawai‘i Community Foundation, which coordinates the funding activities of most of the smaller philanthropic foundations in Hawai‘i, exhibits funding proclivities and patterns similar to those of the other dominant foundations. To more firmly establish their role as a player in the neoliberal educational reform game, they also are solidifying and deepening investments into Hawai‘i’s private schools, to serve as exemplars, through the heavily funded Schools of the Future initiative: “a handful of schools in Hawai‘i are emerging as role models of what learning should be like for both

teachers and students in the 21st century...they all share... the desire to create an environment where learning together is the norm” (HCF). This initiative has provided funding for private schools teachers’ “professional development, for educators to devote time to planning for school change, for technology infrastructure upgrades in the classroom, and more” (Ibid). It involves a five year, five million dollar “investment in education transformation,” funded by the Hawai‘i Community Foundation, managed by the Hawai‘i Association of Independent Schools, and as intended, “recognized by local and national education and funder groups as an example of effective collaboration” (Ibid).

Much of the energy of ‘public-private partnerships’ on the continental United States is dedicated to the expansion of charter schools and independent schools as a means of addressing the perceived negative impact of public education on children and their parents through the creation of ‘educational choice.’ This is also true to some extent in Hawai‘i, but it is most notable in the relationship between Kamehameha Schools, supported by Bishop Estate, and charter schools designed for Native Hawaiian students. In 2003, Kamehameha Schools' Ho'olako Like program began this process by awarding nearly \$665,000 to eight start-up charter schools in Hawai'i, serving nearly 680 students, most of who are of Hawaiian ancestry, and provided these school with multiple kinds of “opportunities to collaborate with KS to obtain financial, technical and resource support,” so that these schools received a minimum of \$1 for every \$4 of per pupil allocation received from the State of Hawai'i (Paulsen). Kamehameha Schools (KS) has also provided “curriculum and professional development activities, baseline accountability and program evaluation development, or other collaborations that facilitate effective

education reform” (Paulsen).

This continued expansion of charter schools for Native Hawaiian students has dovetailed with the transformation of the Kamehameha Schools’ vision to provide educational opportunities to a much broader base of the Hawaiian community, following the ‘Broken Trust’ scandal in the late 1990s (King). Native Hawaiian charter schools have also received millions of dollars from the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, which, as an agency of the State of Hawai‘i, disburses funds collected on ‘ceded’ lands and redistributes those funds to members of the Native Hawaiian community. Since 2008, OHA has financially supported four thousand students at seventeen Hawaiian-focused public charter schools with enrollments that are ninety-one percent Hawaiian. Schools are located on the islands of Kaua‘i, O‘ahu, Moloka‘i and Hawai‘i Island (“Native Hawaiian Charter Schools”; OHA reports 2008-2012). While these schools provide critical institutional sites for reclaiming and reconstituting Hawaiian governance, the basis for the financial support provided both by Bishop Estate and OHA, is still framed by neoliberal logic: there is recognition that “Nā Lei Na‘auao schools have high levels of school engagement and positive achievements due to culturally grounded, strength-based approaches, which are sensitive to student and family needs,” but the ‘bottom line’ is that “research confirms that Hawaiians in charter schools perform better on standardized reading and math tests and are significantly less chronically absent than Hawaiians in standard public schools” (“Native Hawaiian Charter Schools”).

There is strong evidence of important decolonization work being done in the Native Hawaiian charter school movement, as it rebuilds cultural identity and reaffirms the social and political sources of political sovereignty of the Hawaiian people

(Goodyear-Ka'opua). The culturally grounded place-based approach to learning facilitates the foundational development of social and cultural connections. These connections provide a basis for alternative understandings of legitimate and useful knowledge, and the possibility of learning to value authentic and emancipatory education. However, that work exists in tension with the constraints of NCLB and the kinds of knowledge privileged in a neoliberal political formation.

While there are about twenty other non-Native Hawaiian charter schools, in Hawai'i, none of them are particularly well funded or supported by philanthropic organizations in any kind of institutionalized way. Following the monies spent by the Castle Foundation and the Hawai'i Community Foundation, on the contrary, reveals a very different logic. In Hawai'i, the vast preponderance of the philanthropic monies are dedicated to "Public Education Redesign and Enhancement," i.e. replacing Hawai'i's teaching and administrative leadership. Framing the 'problem' with language that seems to focus on social equality issues, the leaders of these private organizations position themselves as players in the neoliberal game to create 'equal educational opportunities':

...in Hawai'i, as in the rest of the nation, public schools do not serve all students equally. Children in wealthy neighborhoods attend schools with more resources and higher-performing peers than children in less wealthy neighborhoods. Children of different ethnic backgrounds fare differently, with widely varying achievement scores and graduation rates. This means that students' opportunities vary greatly depending on their race and socioeconomic status. In a nation founded on the principle that all are created equal, we need a *system of public education that raises all students to the same high standards*, not a system that deepens existing inequalities (Castle Foundation, italics added).

The means or methods identified by these foundations to "achieving equality and closing the 'achievement gap' between students of different backgrounds" is to create a political

and educational system that supports all students' achievement through “policy reforms, transformational leadership, fiscal transparency, high expectations, and data-driven planning, curriculum, and instruction” (CF). Castle Foundation, in particular, identifies its particular niche in helping to eliminate the achievement and preparation gaps as that of “building school and community leadership” through their investments in public education. This financial interest in this area of ‘public education reform’ has intensified dramatically over the past three years, reflected in the growth from the \$366,750.00 spent in 2010 to the \$1,082,340.50 spent in 2012, a period which has been marked by great economic uncertainty, increased income disparities in Hawai‘i, and a dramatic rise in homelessness and joblessness.

The seemingly innocuous objective of “building school and community leadership” actually means that Castle Foundation, just in 2012, awarded \$10,000.00 to Grantmakers for Education (private consulting firm) for an unsolicited grant to collect, catalog and report on grants made to date for Race to the Top initiatives; \$750,000.00 to The New Teacher Center (mainland consulting company) for building the foundation for a Hawai‘i New Teacher Induction Network (teacher mentoring); \$77,000.00 to Hawai‘i Association of Independent Schools (HAIS – network of private schools) for planning and design of the HAIS Institute for 21st Century Teaching & Learning and for support for charter school leaders to attend the High Tech High Graduate School of Education Leadership Certificate Program; \$75,000.00 to the Hawai‘i Community Foundation (HCF) for partial support to build the Hawai‘i Department of Education's capacity for strategic and effective communications regarding Race to the Top reforms; \$25,000.00 to the State of Hawai‘i Department of Education (HIDOE) to “support rulemaking

assistance for the creation of an alternative certification program for principals”; \$30,000.00 awarded to the Hawai‘i State Teachers Association (HSTA) for Multimedia Teacher Growth Portfolios (for teacher evaluation); \$55,000 awarded to the State of Hawai‘i Department of Education's Kailua-Kalaheo Complex Area for integrated complex area-wide training in instructional leadership that results in major improvements in student achievement (student scores on high stakes standardized tests); \$150,000.00 awarded to the University of Hawai‘i Foundation for implementation of the Hawai‘i P-3 Demonstration Project model in Windward Oahu to achieve literacy by grade three (Hawai‘i P-20 initiative); and \$750,000.00 awarded to Teach for America Hawai‘i to “recruit outstanding teachers to close the achievement gap in Hawai‘i’s public schools” (“Harold K.L. Castle Foundation”). All of these funds are dedicated to fulfilling *Race to the Top* neoliberal educational objectives. Yet even among these, there is a clear focus, from a critical perspective, on initiatives designed to lower labor costs by de-professionalizing both classroom educators and educational administrators and to weaken the public schools further. Private and privatized schools, which have already been deeply institutionalized and are supported politically by the social and economic elite in Hawai‘i, will become the only viable option for those parents seeking a meaningful education for their children.

This type of support for neoliberal reform efforts, focused on ‘educational leadership’ in schools, cannot simply be attributed to the nature of the *Race to the Top* grant requirements, but rather, does reflect a longer-term strategy specific to the neoliberal elite in Hawai‘i. In 2004, when the Hawai‘i State Legislature passed Act 51 to “support the reinvention of public education statewide,” the Hawai‘i DOE Superintendent, the

Hawaiian Educational Council and the Harold K.L. Castle Foundation collaborated to create the Hawai‘i Change Leaders Project (HCLP). This project, funded largely by the Castle Foundation, drew inspiration from and partnered with the Change Leadership Group at the Harvard Graduate School of Education (CLG), which received support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to “pioneer new approaches to developing educators’ skills as change leaders” (CLG). Due to the “policy opportunities afforded by Act 51, and the momentum and enthusiasm created by the DOE and HEC,” the Harold K.L. Castle Foundation funded a six year program under HCLP at 120 schools focusing on “core competencies of *change leadership*” and “changes in local policy and management practice to support *change leadership*” (CF, italics added).

The Hawai‘i Change Leadership Group then morphed into Academy 21, a non-profit consulting company working on the premise that “Schools, Colleges of Education and [Public] Accountability Systems are Obsolete” (“Academy 21 Overview”). The key focus areas in 2009 were the development of evaluations of existing teachers and administrators *and* the provision of alternative routes for teacher and administrator certification. This non-profit organization merged with current HIDOE Principal Leadership Academy (PLA) in 2009, presumably maintaining a common purpose. The PLA has become the professional development arm for the Hawai‘i Change Leadership Project to “help school leaders transform their competencies, cultures and conditions” (Castle Foundation). Effectiveness, according to the neoliberal logic, requires numerical measurement, and the Castle Foundation has also invested in exploration and adaption of the Vanderbilt Assessment of Leadership in Education (VAL-ED), assessment which “utilizes a multi-rater, evidence-based approach to measure the effectiveness of school

leadership behaviors known to influence teacher performance and student learning” (Ibid). The VAL-ED ostensibly measures core components, “characteristics of schools that support the learning of students and enhance the ability of teachers to teach,” and key processes, or the means by which “leaders create those core components” (Ibid). This attentiveness, on the part of private philanthropies, to the need for neoliberal “change leadership” in educational reform at the state, district and school level, bespeaks an urge to “reform from above” (Ibid). In all of the private philanthropic literature, there is a shared expressed belief that social inequality can be ameliorated with heightened attention to public schools, the putative institutional source of inequality, with student scores on high stakes standardized tests providing clear measurement of the “efficacy of change leadership” (Ibid). The onus is on the teachers and administrators, who are identified as the human agents who are seen as reproducing and reinforcing those social inequalities through rigid and outmoded approaches to teaching and school leadership, to effect the change that will allow for social equality to occur (Ibid).

Parental activism in education reform, while often portrayed as an exemplary manifestation of participatory democracy and grassroots action in response to entrenched corporate and bureaucratic interests, has in the neoliberal era actually been carefully cultivated and channeled through strategic networks of philanthropic funding and knowledge. Private philanthropic organizations in Hawai‘i have actively cultivated ‘astro-turf’ parental activism, masking private financial sponsorship of a strong ‘cheerleaders for educational reform’ message to give the appearance of it coming from disinterested, grassroots participants. Although it is difficult to get a clear sense of the ways in which philanthropic neoliberal reformers are connected and impact the larger

political process, because neither their funding sources nor their activities are publicly detailed, it is clear that there are dense and important interconnections that shape the political process in Hawai‘i.

These nodes of interconnection are also often geographically specific, concentrating political action on a specific complex or district. Castle Foundation, for example, whose executive director Mitchell D’Olier also serves as the President of Kaneohe Ranch, is heavily invested in ‘restructuring’ the Castle complex of schools. With the assistance of the leadership of the Learning Coalition (the most important education non-profit, which will be discussed more fully below), the Castle Foundation has created and funded the Castle Complex Community Council (C4), an astro-turf parent-community organization that has helped intensify the school restructuring process on the Windward side of Oahu, which describes itself as “one of the first to respond to the challenges of change by implementing transformation-effective methods in public education” (Picolish). The C4 organization describes the work of its members, who include “parents, students, community, teachers, non-teaching staff and administrators spanning the preschool to college/career continuum” as “changing the paradigm to provide regular opportunities for dialogue and decision making between all schools and major role groups that partner with a Complex Area Superintendent (CAS) to educate our children” (Ibid).

The C4 acts together to:

- help the CAS and Complex focus on the right work
- lead by motivating others to follow; recommends responsibly vetted and thoughtfully made decisions; and works with School Community Councils (SCCs), parent leaders, students and community partners
- assure access and a voice for everyone invested in and impacted by our schools
- promote positive education news and public understanding of issues

- operate transparently and shares accountability for results
- develop leaders and promotes partnerships between schools and the community
- monitor initiatives that shape the Complex
- serve as an Academic Review Team to monitor Complex progress (Ibid).

That which is left unstated is the larger purpose of this organization.

Funded by venture philanthropists, these participants act in complicity or without full understanding to deconstruct the public school system, one complex at a time, by design of the originators. This design and vision is shared across the networks of neoliberal educational reformers. Organizations like C4 might describe themselves as “weaving diverse perspectives into a holistic understanding of issues and acting as “critical friends” and voices to the CAS...[with] members’ differences enriching the dialogue... and [t]heir shared commitment to children, schools and community binding them with common purpose,” but the fundamental purpose is to make the schools subservient to the business community and allow leaders of the business community and social and economic elite to come into schools throughout the complex, to “develop leaders and promote ‘partnerships’ between schools and the community, monitor initiatives that shape the Complex, and serve as an Academic Review Team to monitor Complex progress” (Ibid). Most recently, the C4 structure was used to force the principal of the complex high school, Castle High School, to quit, and all of its teachers, to toe the educational reform line. The teachers were threatened with dismissal and required reapplication for their positions, while a new principal whose leadership style and vision aligns with that of the C4, was finally hired. The school complex is no longer even semi-autonomous, existing to provide public education for the children in that complex, but rather is completely subsumed within the particular mission of the corporate elite of that

area.

The Learning Coalition operates on both a regionally specific and broader statewide level. As a statewide organization, it provides the invisible support, the backbone of HE'E, or "Hu'i for Excellence in Education," an organization that depicts itself as "statewide coalition of diverse stakeholders committed to working collaboratively to identify opportunities to improve public education in Hawai'i" and "seeks to be the focal point for community and parent engagement while serving as a public resource for educational policy" (HE'E). The origin story of HE'E, as shared publicly, is fascinating, because the founders, Bill Reeves and Debbie Berger, locate the history of their organization in civil disobedience: the founders claim that HE'E was "formed in May 2010 by parents and community members who stood up and said 'no' to school furloughs and 'yes' to re-establishing education as a public priority" (HE'E). However, the founders of HE'E have an interesting background in the politics of public education in Hawai'i. While they publicly date their involvement to the parent resistance against Furlough Fridays of spring 2010, specifically organizing 'Hawai'i Education Matters,' their larger philanthropic organization has been involved with neoliberal educational reform since 2007 with the foundation of The Learning Coalition.

The work of the people involved in venture philanthropy is never far removed from the larger context of the neoliberal movement. Debbie Berger, the director of The Learning Coalition, spent much of her youth in Japan and worked for JP Morgan in New York, Tokyo and London running interest rate derivatives trading books in a broad variety of markets. She then moved to the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development where she ran the Client Risk Management Group advising "developing

Eastern European countries on how to best manage their financial risks as they *moved toward a free market system*” (INPEACE, italics added). William H. Reeves, Berger’s husband, is a director and co-founder of BlueCrest Capital Management based in London, which “manages investments for a predominantly institutional investor base across fifteen diverse funds” (Baker). Until April 2000, when he left J.P. Morgan to establish BlueCrest, Mr. Reeves was a Managing Director of the London office and head of macro strategy and trading within the proprietary trading group. The company he runs is predatory and thrives on economic uncertainty: “A multi-strategy fund that makes money betting mostly on currency and interest-rate movements, BlueCrest Capital International has thrived on market turmoil” (Baker).

When Reeves and Berger returned to Hawai‘i and co-founded The Learning Coalition in 2007, the stated goal of which is to “assist Hawai‘i’s public schools by building and strengthening a grassroots movement around their transformation into world class institutions of 21st century learning,” they began in 2008 with an initial grant to Teach for America for \$25,000. By 2009, they were offering ‘technical support’ to the neoliberal education reformers within the DOE under the Lingle administration, primarily Kathryn Matayoshi and Ronn Nozoe, identifying and paying a neoliberal educational reform specialist \$39,000 to help write the DOE RTTT grant application, as well as dedicating \$100,000 (already in 2009) for the 21st Century Schools Project (“Investment”). In 2010, Bill Reeves dedicated more than \$400,000 to the campaign nominally run by the ‘Hawai‘i Children First’ organization to remove the Hawai‘i Board of Education from democratic control by supporting a governor-appointed Board of Education (Toguchi). This effort was intimately connected to the effort to

deprofessionalize teaching and undermine the teachers' union, in that Randy Baldemor, the president of Hawai'i's Children First, who solicited these funds from Reeves, was and is married to Jill Baldemor, the executive director of Teach For America in Hawai'i, who also received hundreds of thousands of dollars to bring in untrained young people to fill teaching positions in Hawai'i from The Learning Coalition, which is run by Reeves' wife, Debbie Berger. In 2010, the two neoliberal 'power couples' also became involved in the Castle complex of public schools in a serious way: between 2010 and 2012, The Learning Coalition 'invested' over \$120,000.00 in initiatives supporting the Castle Complex Community Council (C4), Teach for America doubled their corps member numbers in Hawai'i, primarily on the Windward and Leeward coasts, and Randy Baldemor was appointed to various positions within the Abercrombie administration, most recently as Deputy Director of Business Transformation. The 'seed money' provided by The Learning Corporation for Hawai'i's Children First and Teach for America cannot be considered 'disinterested' or 'altruistic' gifts: TLC, like all of the other major philanthropic foundations in Hawai'i, uses these funds to finance projects that they perceive to be 'levers' of significant social change that will work in the interest of neoliberal stakeholders. For the stakeholders in these Hawai'i foundations, the privatization of schools through demolition of the teachers' union, creation of charter schools and voucher systems, possible when the Board of Education is firmly in the hands of the neoliberal elite, is much more exciting when it is connected to land.

This funding provided by The Learning Coalition to the Hawai'i Institute for Public Affairs (HIPA) to privatize land use has been substantial. In 2009, TLC gave HIPA \$100,000.00, in 2010 the amount increased to \$273,700.00, and in 2013, TLC gave

HIPA an additional \$75,000.00 (The Learning Coalition). The stated purpose of this funding was to enable HIPA to “examine solutions and establish a stakeholder group to guide the project, which resulted in proposed legislation (HB1385) to reform land use and facilities for public schools” (TLC). In a presentation to interested parties in January 2012, the public policy advocates at HIPA discussed first “How to Leverage Public Lands,” by utilizing vacant or underutilized lands, allowing for the joint use of parcels, long-term leases, land swaps, and use of public school lands for “commercial, residential, public or other purposes that are compatible with school and community activities” (“21st Century Schools”).

The strategic approach to legal and policy reform advocated by the group involves multiple steps, beginning with the creation of public school land trust, the formation of new commission (with a real estate background) to engage public-private partnerships on school lands, the transfer of school lands into the trust, so that revenues that are generated go into the land trust, with the proceeds used to build 21st century schools. This strategic approach utilizes real estate and development professionals, and those who are overseeing the process would be empowered to use a multiplicity of long-term financing mechanisms, including all available public and private revenue and debt financing tools, the monetization of annual CIP and other revenue for issuance of large scale municipal bonds, leveraging vacant and underutilized lands, providing developers with incentives to build, maintain, and manage facilities over extended period of time, and creating joint development agreements to share the costs of school and community facilities, tax credits and business incentives. The partners invited to work on this radical reconfiguration of public land use included the HIDOE, the Council for Educational Facility Planners, the

Urban Land Institute, the Chamber of Commerce of Hawai‘i, HSTA, Good Beginnings Alliance, and Concordia LLC.

Concordia LLC, located in New Orleans, LA, and financially supported with separate funding by The Learning Coalition, is critical in this strategy formulation. Following Hurricane Katrina they “were tasked, by the Greater New Orleans Foundation, with assembling and facilitating an interdisciplinary team of local and national urban planners, architects, and community organizers to deliver what came to be known as the Unified New Orleans Plan (UNOP)” (“Philosophy: Concordia”). This company acted as one of the leading entrepreneurs in what Naomi Klein described as ‘disaster capitalism,’ developing ten district plans and one citywide redevelopment plan in less than five months, and has been heavily involved in the appropriation of public lands for private purposes and gentrification of urban areas throughout New Orleans. Their work with the Recovery School District after Hurricane Katrina to develop a city wide School Facilities Master Plan ironically received a national “Game Changer” award from Metropolis Magazine, because it so radically altered the political vocabulary of the possible in public-private partnerships in land use (Ibid).

The controversy over this 21st Century Schools legislation was muted by the furor over the related and equally egregious ‘public-private partnership’ approved under the Public Land Development Corporation (PLDC) legislation of 2012. The public uproar over the PLDC in the 2013 session led to its repeal, but also diverted public attention from the same strategies being used to privatize the public domain with the 21st Century Schools legislation.

The venture philanthropy apparent in Hawai‘i is modeled on venture capital and

the investments in the technology boom of the 1990s. Its leaders, those who have moved easily from the corporate to the non-profit sector, not only push privatization and deregulation, the most significant policy dictates of neoliberalism, but also insinuate neoliberal language and rationales further into the policy discussion about public education, making the use of business terms to describe educational reforms and policies (choice, competition, efficiency, accountability, monopoly, turnaround and failure) increasingly central. These venture philanthropists in Hawai‘i treat ‘giving’ to public education as a “social investment” that, like venture capital, must begin with a business plan, involve quantitative measurement of efficacy, be replicable so that it can be “brought into scale,” and ideally “leverage” public spending in ways compatible with the strategic donor. Grants are referred to as “investments,” donors are “investors,” impact is renamed “social return,” evaluation becomes “performance measurement,” grant-reviewing turns into “due diligence,” grant list is renamed an “investment portfolio,” charter networks are referred to as “franchises” – but most important is way in which public and civic purposes of public education are rearticulated by venture philanthropists in distinctly private ways. The public and civic roles of public education are completely overtaken by economistic neoliberal perspective that views public schooling principally as a matter of producing workers and consumers for the economy and for global economic competition. These organizations coordinate the privatization of schooling and housing and gentrify coveted sections of key urban and rural areas. They aggressively seek to reimagine teacher education through online and onsite initiatives and educational leadership on the model of the MBA. The seed money that underfunded schools desperately seek allows venture philanthropists to “leverage” influence over educational

policy and planning, curriculum and instructional practices, and influence the very idea of what it means to be an educated person (Saltman). However, the networks and nodes of intense neoliberal interaction and policy visioning and enactment that are described above can also said to be characteristic of a contemporary form of neoliberal governmentality, in which “the philanthropic “gift” both obligates its recipients to participate in the ideological projects of the givers and obscures the incursion of market principles into education behind a veneer of progressive activism” (Mitchell; Saltman).

Conclusion

These private philanthropic foundations in Hawai‘i are entering into and contributing to the complexity of already existing nodes in a statewide network of neoliberal reform, which is taking forms both approximating and very distinct from those in other locations in the country. It was not only the innovative ways in which competitive federalism was deployed under President Obama, but also his administration’s explicit renewal and development of ‘public-private partnerships’ that created new possibilities for hollowing out and privatizing the public space of all levels of public schools. Katharyn Mitchell’s preliminary work points to an important and (as of yet) undeveloped area of research, looking at the geographically specific impact of new forms of venture philanthropy in education, “focusing in particular on the ways in which it manifests new geographies and temporalities of neoliberalism” (Mitchell). This manifestation of a newly modulated neoliberalism under Obama reflects his administration’s response to the forms of resistance experienced by earlier administrations with a stronger “push towards micro-managed markets and public-private partnerships within which philanthropic foundations are major actors” (Ibid).

Philanthropic investment in corporate reform of public education has encouraged the emergence of geographically specific hybrids, like that which has emerged in Hawai‘i in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Building on existing historically specific social hierarchies, allegiances and alliances, local social and political elites have appropriated and recirculated the dominant hegemonic neoliberal discourse on public education reform and used to widen and tighten their grasp of material resources and ‘play in the game.’ In the process, they have changed public language and ‘common sense’ about the nature and sources of the problems in public education in ways that won much broader consent for neoliberal/corporate educational reform from many parents, school boards, and the general public than did “uniform, top-down, or coercive approaches” of previous administrations (Mitchell).¹⁷

Chapter Five: The Teachers' Counter-public

A BAT teacher speaks out...

July 10th, 2013

At the core of the BAT movement is a group of graceful, caring, elegant teachers who
have simply had enough.

At the core of the BAT movement is love... on fire.

I AM NOT MY TEST SCORE!

Amanda Shaw

This overall project explores the ways in which neoliberal reconstitution of the global political order has contributed to the remaking of the American nation-state through the restructuring, privatization and marketization of the public education system in the United States. This chapter will examine the ways in which this process of neoliberal reconfiguration of political power is also contributing to the gradual and partial politicization of American public school teachers. I have argued in previous chapters that American conservative and disaffected traditional liberal intellectuals in the last half of the twentieth century and early twenty-first century were successful in creating a powerful neoliberal 'anti-public public' centered around the creation of a new 'neoliberal' subject. The concatenation of conservative and disaffected traditional liberal intellectual writing over time led to American neoliberal public policy on education that is hollowing out and privatizing the conception of citizenship embedded in public education, much as it is hollowing out and privatizing the actual physical spaces of public schools. These processes are mutually interdependent. Moreover, the process of hollowing out and privatizing has been delivered through the creation of political fear, a fear of the educational crisis manufactured by these 'intellectuals' and intimidation of teachers and their unions through demonization and vilification. Over the past fifteen

years, and more particularly within the past five, American public school teachers and their allies have developed an emergent ‘counter-public,’ using newly available communication technology and innovative ‘textual’ forms, and evidencing an increasingly profound critique not only of NCLB but also of the historical formation of neoliberalism.

Publics and Counter-Publics

Recent work on publics contributes additional theoretical complexity by describing three kinds of publics: a social totality, a concrete audience assembled in common visibility and in common action, and reading and listening audience centered on texts (Warner, 65-66). The first type refers an abstraction of a collective that must be imagined into existence, the second is characterized by physicality, visibility and witnessing and the third type of public arises from texts and their circulation (Warner). These publics are text-based, either oral or written, and “exist by virtue of being addressed” (67). While it is perhaps in their interrelatedness and connectedness that we can most clearly understand the dynamics of these ‘publics,’ the relationships between these levels is fluid and complex (Ferguson, 196-197). This examination of the emergence of a teacher counter-public explores the relationships between the third and second types, and the implications of the fluidity of this movement for political action.

Neoliberalism, Education and the Popular Imagination in the Early Twenty-First Century

At the first level, conservative intellectuals in the 1970s did speak into existence, or imagine into collectivity, a ‘true American nation’ based on the principles of ‘fiscal responsibility, limited government, and free markets’ (Lepore). The third level of analysis, the primary focus of Chapter 3, examined the social space these conservative

intellectuals “created by reflexive circulation of discourse,” as the “concatenation of [their] texts over time” went beyond the scale of conversation or discussion to “encompass a multi-generic life world organized not just by relational axis of utterance and response but by potentially infinite axes of citation and characterization” (Warner, 90-91). The breadth and depth of this ‘multi-generic life world’ are evidenced not only in the seemingly endless recirculation of intellectual and popular culture production around the ideas expressed in the ‘Free to Choose’ series, including work by neoliberal think tanks that is meant for popular consumption, online videos and podcasts, but also, more dangerously, an attack on teachers through movie production.

The neoliberal ‘anti-public public’ of Milton Friedman produced a narrative of danger and crisis, inducing fear of the implications of their manufactured educational crisis and creating public scapegoats through the demonization and vilification of public school teachers and their unions (Berliner and Biddle; Bracey). I am especially concerned here with the creation of a public identity of the ‘Bad Teacher,’ an identity that “serves as an unconscious filter through which Americans receive the policy options presented in public discourse about...reform” (Hancock, 115). Hancock notes, with respect to the 1996 welfare ‘reform’ movement, how “policy options were discussed, selected, and implemented with no effective contributions from those affected most” (Ibid). In the case of teachers as in the case of AFCD recipients, the constructed ‘public’ identity serves to delegitimize their claims and lived experiences. This investigation into the emergent teacher ‘counter-public’ suggests that while teachers have agency, the ability to act themselves in the public sphere and articulate a vibrant ‘counter-public,’ this

agency has also been severely circumscribed by the construction of the larger, hegemonic 'public' they also inhabit.

This 'public' identity is vividly captured in the recent film, *Bad Teacher*. In a review written for the *American Spectator*, Sean Higgins gleefully proclaims that where the "thoughtful, sober-minded commentary" of *Waiting for Superman* may have failed to adequately expose "bad teachers protected by unions," "savage mockery might succeed" (Higgins, 1). One of summer 2011's biggest box-office hits, it is accurately described by Higgins as "black comedy" that is the "most scabrous portrayal of public education ever put to celluloid" (Ibid). Cameron Diaz stars as Elisabeth Halsey, a highly sexualized public middle school teacher who seems to despise and detest students. Her incorrigible behavior includes utter failure to make any effort to teach, teaching in an alcoholic haze on a regular basis, soliciting bribes in exchange for good grades, embezzling money from school fundraisers and deflating students' dreams. Her motivation for teaching consists of "[s]horter hours, summers off, no accountability ..." (Ibid). The promise of financial compensation based on test scores motivates her first to use physical abuse against her students, and then to develop an elaborate scam to cheat the test. Higgins has reason to gloat, not simply because the movie did well financially and was seen by hundreds of thousands of Americans, but also because it does indeed seem that "the public is ready to accept such a portrayal" (Ibid). CBS recently struck a deal not only for a television series entitled *Bad Teacher*, in which Ari Graynor stars in the lead role of Meredith Davis, an "unapologetic, inappropriate, horrible teacher and former trophy wife who is in search for a love life and someone to support her after she was left without money in her last marriage," but also for a sequel to the original movie with Cameron Diaz ("Bad

Teacher”). This situation has grim implications for American public policy on education.

But perhaps we should pause to reconsider the implications of Higgins’ gloating. While a traditional feminist analysis of the transformation of the central images of the ‘anti-public public’ into a hegemonic and deeply gendered ‘public’ capable of reshaping the American nation-state will also be fruitful and productive, there is a sense of perverse, transgressive pleasure in Higgins’ tone that could provide a different kind of insight. Žižek has expressed an interest in communities’ cultural practices that give rise to what he calls *jouissance*, an always sexualized, always transgressive enjoyment (Žižek, 71). He argues that subjects’ experiences of the events and practices wherein their political culture organizes its specific relations to *jouissance* are as close as they will get to knowing the deeper Truth intimated for them by their regime’s master signifiers – ‘nation,’ ‘God,’ ‘our way of life,’ etc. (Žižek; Sharpe). In a liberal democracy, the citizen-subject is always enjoined to abide by ‘fair rules’ of engagement, and is simultaneously constantly attempting to transgress these prohibitions. Democratic norm violation with its attendant *jouissance*, and systemization of the perversion of democratic attention, are both evident in Higgins’ review (Hancock).¹⁸ And it is the powerful pleasure available through such norm violation that any teacher resistance will have to counter.

Teachers’ Counter-public

Over the past fifteen years, and more particularly within the past five, an emergent ‘counter-public’ has been developed by American public school teachers, using newly available communication technology as well as different kinds of ‘texts,’ and developing

¹⁸ My research into the neoliberal language around education, teachers and unions suggests that these problems were present in the 1970s conservative anti-public counter-public and have still been inadequately understood, theorized, or confronted.

an increasingly profound critique not only of NCLB but also of the historical formation of neoliberalism. Recent scholarship problematizes definitions of the ‘counter’ in counter-publics, but a minimalist definition could consist of the following:

“A counter-public, against the background of the public sphere, enables a horizon of opinion and exchange; its exchanges remain distinct from authority and can have a critical relation to power” (Asen, 425).

Asen also locates the emancipatory potential of counter-publics in the “participants’ recognition of exclusion from wider public spheres” and “articulation through alternative discourse practices and norms” (427).

While there is great deal of legitimate scholarly concern about the mobilization of identity categories in the conceptualization of social movements or counter-publics, it is precisely a set of shared accomplished social identities *as* teachers, across traditional race, class and gender identity demarcations, that defines the emergence of this ‘counter-public.’¹⁹ But this shared identity is not simply accomplished through professional labor or imposed from without: it is also through participation in communicative action that teachers’ identities are formed and transformed:

[T]his subordinate status does not simply reflect identities formed elsewhere; participation in such a public is one of the ways by which its members’ identities are formed and transformed (Warner, 56-57).

American public school teachers and their unions have, in part as a result of neoliberal attacks, received more historical attention and additional scholarly analysis in recent years. And such analysis can provide richness and depth to our understanding of the

¹⁹ Robert Asen, citing Iris Young, points out that “identity-based conceptions founder against the dilemmas of difference. She maintains that these conceptions of group difference invoke an essentialism that coagulates fluid social relations by constructing rigid inside-outside distinctions among groups. Such conceptions imply that all members of a group have the same interests and agree on strategies to promote their interests. Further, Young asserts that identity-based conceptions of group difference deny differentiation within and across groups. She explains that ‘everyone relates to a plurality of social groups; every social group has other social groups cutting across it’” (Young 1997, p. 388, cited in Asen, 425).

current ways in which teachers are struggling to redefine not only their *identities* as teachers in an increasingly hostile environment, but also the *purposes* of public education, through the creation of an increasingly coherent ‘counter-public.’²⁰

Teachers *as* teachers occupy a complex social position. To resist the current demonization and vilification of teachers, they are increasingly acting on a felt need to create and support various connected sites of resistant identity, to nurture alternatives to the marketized/ commodified subject of globalized capitalism, and to do the hard work of sustaining some critical and political agency in their work, i.e. to develop understandings of teachers as critically reflective practitioners. But this struggle over agency has not been constrained to the classroom or even the school.²¹ Teachers have been connecting with ‘sites of resistance’ and continue to develop counter-publics that aim to find “ways of democratizing the state and civil society” (Whitty, 135). The most important institutional sites for this resistance outside of public schools, prior to the last five years, have included undergraduate teacher education programs, postgraduate teacher programs, university research, and unions (Giroux 1987).

Teacher Unions and Professionalization

Teacher unions remain the most visible institutional site of resistance within which

²⁰ There are a multiplicity of ways to think about teachers’ shared identities in connection with political agency: critical workers in forging national identity (Gellner); ‘organic intellectuals’ who will educate a revolutionary vanguard (Gramsci); ‘social reproduction’ workers of bourgeois capitalists in that they nurture the skills and attitudes most necessary to ensure capitalist domination (Bourdieu; Bowles and Gintis); or as ‘street-level’ bureaucrats distinguished by direct interaction with citizens, wide discretion over dispensation of benefits or allocation of public sanctions, and relative autonomy from organizational authority (Toloudis). Toloudis raises interesting questions about the social positionality of public school teachers, as both resource-mobilizing regime challengers and the subjects of elite actors’ mobilization (6). Embedded in the state apparatus, they have a certain proximity to coercive power of the state apparatus, making them especially vulnerable to repression from above.

²¹ See Riedner and Mahoney (2008) as a great example of research on new efforts to connect pedagogy to anti-neoliberal social movements. They argue that in order for such ‘liberatory pedagogy’ to contribute to fundamental social transformation, it is necessary to build links to social movements.

teachers have been struggling for a more socially just system of education, but the emerging teacher ‘counter-public’ is exceeding the parameters of this site.²² Giroux argues, in the late 1990s, that undergraduate programs, post-graduate programs, and university research are also critical sites of resistance, but these sites have largely been successfully coopted in the move to ‘professionalize’ teaching over the past ten years, using the threat of program de-accreditation, primarily through NCATE. Within new regimes for teacher preparation, there is no room for teachers to develop political skills or even sensibilities that will enable them act effectively in arenas where policy is determined, to wrest back and then maintain some greater degree of autonomy in their curriculum work. Development of the capacities to recognize the ways in which curriculum *control* operates, the critical skills to *uncover* hegemonic constructions of teaching as an apolitical activity, and the will to work *collectively*, through union and professional associations, play little part in teacher preparation programs that have themselves increasingly come under close scrutiny by neoliberal education policy think tanks like NCTQ (Reid, 252). University research is still one area of potential resistance, but as universities are increasingly subjected to the same privatizing and corporatizing pressures of neoliberal public policy, they are moving further away from being potential ‘sites of revolutionary learning’ which offer the “means to resuscitate social relations, opposition, defiance, struggle and hope whenever they have been crushed, distorted or stifled by order, which is always the order of the state” (Touraine, 55).²³ Yet, to the extent that the scholars within education programs are overtly concerned with social

²³ A particularly ludicrous example of the pressures those within teacher education programs face is the growing movement to hold those instructors ‘accountable’ for the test scores of the public school students that their graduates teach (c.f. Zeichner).

justice and giving voice to ‘subjugated knowledges,’ demonstrating a strong commitment to reflexive engagement with the reality of public schools, they can still be important allies.

The history of the national teacher unions, primarily the NEA and AFT, point to some of their limitations (Murphy; Urban 1982; Urban 2000; McDonnell). Teachers in the United States have generally been able to freely associate, and by mid 19th century, teachers’ associations had begun forming in towns and cities across country. Many of them had collectively political identities, as they lobbied their administrations for higher salaries and better working conditions. Unlike France and other European countries, in the United States, the evolution of teachers’ political associations, up to and including their efforts to unionize, had relatively little to do with their history as state ‘subjects.’ Only after the so-called ‘professional’ efficiency experts took control of school administration did teachers’ political presence come into question (Toloudis). American historians generally concur that by the turn of the century, public schools had largely abandoned the locally controlled ward system in favor of a centralized and scientifically rationalized system based heavily on corporate models of social efficiency (Tyack). With this new bureaucratic structure came a fundamental retooling of the teaching profession and notions of professionalism, as unionized teachers, administrators, and teacher educators warily navigated the terms of an ever-changing relationship. The processes of the centralization and standardization developed by the administrative elites triggered teacher resistance and ‘unionization through professionalization,’ as they required the mobilization of teachers to ‘do the work’ of political elites. These processes had profound effects on teachers’ identities, as they simultaneously changed the material

circumstances and responsibilities for teachers' labor.²⁴

Teacher unions have, since their inception, borne within themselves the seeds of contradiction, as unionization is usually a form of organization reserved for 'blue-collar workers' rather than professionals. However, ironically, teachers fought for unionization within the context of claiming professional identity (Warren). "Both what it meant to be a professional and how teachers attempted to achieve such a demarcation were inextricably linked to an idiosyncratic time and space," so that while teachers of the Progressive era defined their professional stature against the backdrop of immigration, claiming an expertise that correlated to nativity and whiteness, teachers of the Depression era shaped their professional persona within the context of economic catastrophe (D'Amico, 8). Asserting professional identity, these overlapping and reinforcing histories of teachers suggest, was a fluid process of definition, with a central challenge lying within historical constructs of 'professionalism' itself, traditionally correlated to a white, middle class manhood (Hoffman; Sattler; Biklen; Blount; Urban). Rather than challenging or redefining the meanings of professionalism, teachers appealed, *through* their unions, to traditional constructions as a way to bolster their authority and stature in and out of the schools (D'Amico, 10-18). Teachers, though, were not alone as they crafted these identities. Instead, their professional personas were both created and contested alongside their administrators and teacher educators. Historically, teachers employed the language of 'professionalism' to sustain calls for higher pay and increased

²⁴ Toloudis argues further that of the important catalysts of change in education, including the development of increasingly radical labor movements and the dramatic expansion of the white collar work force, the most important by the turn of twentieth century was an increase in nation-state capacity and assets. This is a central concern for my research, as I explore the relationships between neoliberal nation-state 'creative destruction' and the possibilities that it creates for teacher organization and resistance.

autonomy. In contrast, administrators and teacher ‘educator/trainers’ often used the language of ‘professionalism’ to highlight teachers’ perceived deficiencies, bolstering their own calls for increased regulation or formulaic curricula (D’Amico).

The divide between teachers and administrators in the late 19th and 20th century education contexts was highly gendered. Not only did men become managers and women become workers, but the administration also became a male-dominant space where male educators’ true masculinity would not be called into question (Blount). Through the development of school leadership, male administrators legitimized their work, in large degree, by separating it – in terms of rank, prestige and physical locale – from the growing ranks of female teachers. Many of the tensions that have come to shape teachers’ work-lives and the various ways their union have crafted their professional identity stem from the feminization of the teaching profession (Sugg; Biklen).²⁵ While women have dominated the teaching profession since the formation of the common school in the mid-nineteenth century, throughout much of the twentieth century, teacher unions have been disproportionately populated and led by men.²⁶ As such, teachers’ professional persona, throughout the twentieth and into the twenty-first century, has ironically been, with few exceptions, articulated by a male leadership.²⁷

²⁵ Heidi Pitzer’s piece, “No Child Left Behind or Every Teacher under Surveillance?: Revealing Patriarchal Ideologies of Surveillance and Control,” is very useful in this regard.

²⁶ The literature surrounding the history of women workers is especially instructive, even as teachers have not historically understood themselves in these terms. (Benson; Cameron; Clement; Kessler-Harris, Milkman; Peiss; Rosenzweig; and Strom).

²⁷ Douglas (2008) argues that the efficacy of women’s activism is sponsored by emotional literacy which shapes individual identities prior to or as part of the forming of a collective community, and that emotional literacy continues to sponsor their activist endeavors. While this kind of analysis runs the risk of essentialism, gender, race and class do fracture any common ‘identity’ that might be asserted in the process of political mobilization or counter-public articulation. Similarly, Greyser (2004) traces the gendered, sexualized metaphors of “touching” to show how sentimental rhetoric can be read both as emotionally oppressive and as a respectful process of coming to terms of mutual understanding. These flip sides of sentimentality together draw on notions of space to construct the modern liberal subject and a national body

Teacher unionists have long grappled with the tensions between claims to professional status and their drives to unionize (Walkowitz, 103-110). While it seems that unionized teachers found ways in the twentieth century to reconcile the conundrum, as their place in a union became a fundamental component in their vision of themselves as professionals, it is precisely this ‘contradiction’ that is being used as an axis of division by those attacking teacher unions. This is one central ‘identity conflict’ that is being challenged by members of the emergent teacher ‘counter-public’ as they speak to defend teachers. An overlapping and intertwined conflict that is used to divide teachers, of attributed gendered, race, and class identities, is also being challenged with the context of the emergent counter-public, as teachers speak for and with the young people in the communities they serve, against the devastating effects that “education deform” has on their students.²⁸

Emergence of Teacher Counter-public

Nancy Fraser argues that social space is constituted by overlapping counter-publics, “parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent

that styles itself as a "caring" entity. There is something important happening with the simultaneous sentimentalization and denigration of teaching that connects to gender and which requires further exploration.

²⁸ A critical challenge will involve developing localized understandings of the differences that have been used to divide to forge not only national alliances but also international relationships capable of struggling against transnational corporations and neoliberal governments, and develop campaigns to defend public education globally. Globalizing capitalism requires globalizing social movements. Blackwell (2000) argues that “crucial to the possibility of a transnational feminist project is the ability to recognize, respect and build solidarity between vastly different social terrains and structural confinements placed on women's lives while being attentive to power differentials that exist among women both on a local and global level.” She asks how questions of difference and diversity have been negotiated within the discursive and political practices of second wave women's movements in Mexico and the U.S., and how these negotiations around difference structure transnational organizing. Showing how race, sexuality and socio-economic class play a constitutive role in the formation of women's political subjectivities, she clarifies the way in which political interests are articulated and represented. While the emergent teacher counter-public exceeds union, race or feminist identity or social movement boundaries, this global perspective is critical to developing concrete and meaningful alliances, because neoliberalism is nothing if not a global historical formation. See especially the work described in Compton and Weiner’s *The Global Assault on Teaching, Teachers, and their Unions* (2008).

and circulate counter-discourses, which in turn permit them to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs” (113). Counter-publics are also ideological in that they "provide a sense of active belonging that masks or compensates for the real powerlessness of human agents in capitalist society" (Ibid). Counter-publics, like publics, are poetic world-making: counter-public discourse not only calls a counter-public into existence, but also works to “structure the character, language and vision of the world, then seeks to confirm existence of said public through further attempts to cite, circulate, and realize the world understanding it articulates" (114).

For a counter-public, the "cultural horizon against which it marks itself off is not just a general or wider public but a dominant one" and the "conflict extends not just to ideas or policy questions but to the speech genres and modes of address that constitute the public or to the hierarchy among media" (119). "Counter-publics are 'counter' to the extent that they try to supply different ways of imagining stranger sociability and its reflexivity; as publics, they remain oriented to stranger circulation in a way that is not just strategic but constitutive of membership and its affects" (122). Political satire, to the extent that it facilitates a social process of critique and deconstruction, is constitutive of counter-public political language (Day).

Using Social Media to Create Counter-Public Space

Teachers and their allies have availed themselves of critical rhetorical strategies to “build the feeling of community in opposition, using their work as focal points for political identification and as platforms for dialogue within the larger public sphere” (1). Taylor Mali was the first to inject political satire about attacks on educators into performance art, specifically slam poetry. In 2001, Mali used a grant from the New York

Foundation for the Arts to develop the one-man show "Teacher! Teacher!" about poetry and teaching. As a former teacher, he has performed, lectured and conducted workshops for teachers all over the world, and his 'New Teacher Project' has a goal of creating 1,000 new teachers through "poetry, persuasion, perseverance, or passion" (Moody). Mali's slam poem, "What Teachers Make," has become one of most circulated slam poetry videos on Youtube over the past five years. Sarcastically describing a vapid dinner discussion on the value of teaching, he 'recaptures' a moment for the audience(s):

"I mean, you're a teacher, Taylor," he says. "Be honest. What do you make?"
And I wish he hadn't done that (asked me to be honest) because, you see,
I have a policy about honesty and ass-kicking: if you ask for it,
I have to let you have it.
You want to know what I make?
I make kids work harder than they ever thought they could.
I can make a C+ feel like a Congressional medal of honor and an A- feel like a slap in the
face.
How dare you waste my time with anything less than your very best? (Mali).

The *Daily Show*'s Jon Stewart ran a short series in spring 2011 about the attack on public school teachers. With episode 'bits' entitled "Message to Teachers," "Teachers Compared to Wall Street Employees," and "Teachers Edition Exposes Lavish Lifestyles," the writers and producers of the show challenged the hypocrisy of the public attack on teachers with dark humor and satire. By doing so, they exposed the reductionist and economistic logic of the neoliberal approach to education and the gross norm violations evidenced in symbolic and real attacks on teachers and their unions, and the absurdity of blaming them for the supposed failures of the public schools *and* the national economic crisis. As important as these counter-demonization practices were in challenging neoliberal reasoning, they did not work to activate the emergent counter-public because they originated from outside the community under attack, i.e. that of teachers.

Community Media

New forms of media have provided broader range and possibilities for the emergent teacher counter-public. Community media help produce temporary, fragile collective identities, through the construction of meaning, negotiation of proximities to power, enrichment of networks of social bonds, and the enhancement of individual capacities (Lithgow). Teachers, working independently and within union organizations, have been mobilizing this form of media to bring their perspective to different audiences in various communities around the country. They have used the medium to create mini-series and full series, on public radio and public television, interviewing teachers, their allies, and their community members to broaden the dialogue about public education. The most extensive is ‘Teachers Speak Out,’ a public television series created, produced and directed entirely by public school teachers for a California community. This series, like many of the teacher blogs and Facebook pages discussed below, is intense, critical, and filled with raw emotion. It tackles the most controversial issues public school teachers confront with a "regular flow of discourse in and out, punctuated by daily rhythms and oriented to that punctuality as to news" (Warner, 94). And as with the multiple local public radio series, it is reproduced for indefinite access through website posting, creating a new kind of circularity and something of an intermediate level of [counter]publicity or publicness, between the circulation of texts (third level) and physical witnessing (second level). Retracing the episodes which had screened in their visual immediacy from June 2009 to the present reveals another level of narrative: moving from “teachers of the Pajaro Valley Unified School District express[ing] their opinions about important issues facing students and teachers after extensive budget cuts”

(“Educational Priorities”) in June 2009 to the roundtable discussion on the national “Attacks on Public Workers” reveals an intensifying and polarized narrative about the connections between public education, citizenship, and nation-building (“Teachers Speak Out”). Moreover, it reveals an increasing willingness and felt need on the part of teachers and their allies to challenge the “representative thinking, or correspondence bias, that occurs when people react to stereotypes or the representative image of a person or issue, instead of the actual person or issue,” addressing in a public format the ways in which emotions can illegitimately regulate power relationships (Hancock, 5).

Danger of Hollywood: Teacher-Washing the Neoliberal Political Formation

Documentary cinema has also emerged as an important focus for research into popular culture, marginalized narratives, and democratic media, but has not yet been incorporated into the literature of counter-publics (Winton). This ‘scene’ would seem to be one of the least likely for an emergent teacher counter-public, as neoliberal think tanks and foundations have dominated this sphere, developing and recently releasing into mainstream cinema circulation three major documentaries, “Waiting for Superman,” “The Lottery,” and “Teached.” These documentaries have been influential in shaping ‘public discourse,’ as part of multiple neoliberal campaigns to hollow out and privatize public education. One central common theme of these documentaries is assignment of responsibility for the ‘crisis’ of education to public school teachers. The new documentary “American Teacher” (2011) is the first evidence of cultural production approximating a ‘counter’ circulation of ‘texts’ in this particular realm.²⁹

²⁹ To be fair, the almost underground ‘The Inconvenient Truth Behind Waiting for Superman’ is a great counter-public piece, focused primarily on New York. I would like to address this piece out if I flesh this chapter out further in the future.

Narrated by Matt Damon, directed by Academy Award winner Vanessa Roth and produced by Dave Eggers and Ninive Caligari, *American Teacher: A Documentary* “seeks to counteract popular misconceptions about the teaching profession by showing, in a style of close-up realism, what teachers actually do and what their lives are really like — and how continued neglect of the profession may be jeopardizing the nation's future” (UTF). It is designed around the ‘small stories’ of four teachers, as they struggle with the personally devastating everyday challenges of teaching in public schools: extremely long hours, ridiculously low pay, lack of prestige, stressful working conditions, and lack of support. The neoliberal documentaries cultivated the representation of teachers as complex human beings facing multiple yet ultimately surmountable challenges, providing a challenge to the ‘correspondence bias’ visible in other documentaries. The power of this narrative lies in its simplicity and the courage evidenced in the vignettes. These four teachers, whose narrative was supported by the testimony and explication of others in the profession and those who had left, allowed the filmmakers to come into the most personal domains of their lives, as the impact of their chosen line of work, including broken marriages, stress-related illness, lost homes, and lack of connection to their own families, became evident over the course of just a few short years, even as the film highlighted the personal capacities that made all of these individuals clearly effective teachers (“American Teacher”).

“American Teacher” was based on the book *“Teachers Have it Easy: The Big Sacrifices and Small Salaries of America’s Teachers.”* Its producers, part of a large and apparently fairly well-funded organization (“The Teacher Salary Project”), approximate ‘middle class radicals’ (c.f. Kann) less than elite traditional liberals, both in the way they

frame the stories they tell and in the recommendations they provide for action. While the individual stories of these four teachers are very powerful in that they challenge the demonization and vilification of teachers apparent in the corporate mass media, the analysis of such stories falls safely within the recognizable and fairly hegemonic neoliberal narrative about the role of education, and hence teaching, in American society. For the producers of this documentary, the ‘big picture’ is ultimately the issue of global economic competitiveness: the analysis drew a direct correlation between the decline in the international ranking of American student scores and the decline in the ways teachers are rewarded. According to the documentary, over the past thirty years the average salary for doctors in the United States has increased from \$82,630.00 to \$337,000.00, while the average teacher salary has only increased from \$34,688.00 to \$57,976.00. The producers actually validate the destructive neoliberal work of Michelle Rhee by including her accomplice in ‘educational reform,’ Jason Kamras, former Teach for America teacher and current ‘Chief of Human Capital’ of the District of Columbia, who describes their shared ‘reform’ mission in the following way:

The paradigm we are trying to shift to is one in which our response to the teaching profession goes from ‘Hey, thanks for doing it,’ to “Hey, you gotta be excellent to be doing this (Ibid).

Zeke Vanderhoek, founder and principal of the “The Equity Project” (TEP), a New York charter school that pays teachers \$125,000.00 a year, argues that the “issues in education today come down to a human capital problem,” that addressing failing schools and failing students requires “transforming the nature of teachers and nature of teaching,” suggesting that it is the ‘nature’ of teachers that requires ameliorative attention (“American Teacher”). Clearly reproducing the neoliberal reduction of human worth to an

economistic evaluation, Vanderhoek asserts that, “The point about money is that it does have a catalytic effect on a lot of things. If you increase teachers’ salaries, you change the perception of what it means to be a teacher” (Ibid). What the documentary fails to mention about TEP is that high teacher salaries were made possible through elimination of administration and support staff, teachers are asked to take on twice the responsibilities, and they could be fired at will, all of which only produced very disappointing outcomes in terms of student scores on standardized tests, the improvement of which was the main objective.

The narrative throughout *American Teacher*, articulated in part through interviews, maintains the neoliberal connection between pay, ‘accountability,’ and ‘excellence.’ The focus is consistent with the neoliberal narrative in that it is the individual teacher, as an economic being, that is addressed. The four teachers who share their stories begin their stories alone in their classrooms, and end their stories alone in classrooms, reinforcing the ideological position that their work and ability to be resilient in the face of formidable challenges is largely due to their individual resourcefulness and rational decision-making. Although there is attention to demoralization of teachers, the public policy discussion contained in the documentary only outlined the problem in very shallow and simplistic ways. The producers identified trends in remuneration and teaching conditions, but provided no explanation for this decline in teaching conditions other than the loss of a traditionally female workforce to more lucrative professions, creating the illusion that these widespread negative changes in public education have no other structural explanation. The conclusion of the comparative policy analysis section of the documentary examines the correlation between teacher conditions and student

achievement. As the filmmakers emphasize, the practices utilized by all of the countries who rank the highest in terms of student scores include selective recruitment into the profession, funded training, competitive compensation (almost three times American teacher compensation), professional working environment, cultural respect, and career orientation (Ibid). This graphic representation of national differences in teacher treatment challenged the ways in which a neoliberal system treats public school teachers, but did not challenge the premises and assumptions of neoliberal hegemony. One of the concluding interviews, conducted with Charlotte Danielson, educational consultant and author of the evaluation model that is [mis]used in Hawai'i, argued that, "Democracy depends on an educated citizenry, and today more than ever, we depend upon an educated workforce, and educated to levels that we have never seen before, even in the elite, so we have a compelling public interest to have better schools than what we've got now" (Ibid). Even Linda Darling-Hammond is pulled into the 'national competitiveness' narrative, as she argues at the very end that "if we want a nation that is going to be a learning nation, that is going to be able to succeed in the global knowledge-based economy that exists, we need a profession full of experts, dedicated, supported, experienced teachers who are going to raise up the youth of the nation" (Ibid).

The structure of release designed by the originators of *American Teacher*, which was essentially a series of hundreds of 'release screening parties' organized at the grassroots level for the past two years, spoke to explicit connections being made between cultural production and political intervention. The website created by the producers to accompany the documentary makes explicit action recommendations both for teachers and for sympathetic ordinary citizens. The first, "Help American people understand how

sophisticated teaching is,” is straightforward, and the second, “Protect education budgets,” is proposed without any critical analysis of how local, state, and federal education budgets are now being exhausted by the exigencies of standardized testing, testing that profits not education professionals but corporations and venture philanthropists. The third, “Pay for schooling and training of top teaching candidates,” reproduces and heightens a presumed competition amongst teaching candidates, as does the injunction to “Support nationally board-certified teachers,” rather than support all teachers in engaging in the professional development process that is required by application for national board certification. But it is toward the end of the list that the motivation fueling ‘The Teacher Salary Project’ becomes clear. Citizens are asked to “Rethink tenure,” with the elaboration provided making it clear that the intention is the elimination of tenure, and “Build a profession for teachers” with corresponding elaboration that not only suggests that teachers are not professional if they are not being evaluated, but also that any meaningful evaluation will necessarily include student test scores (TSP). Lodging themselves firmly within a ‘teacher-friendly’ dimension of the neoliberal spectrum, they ask citizens to suggest to policy makers that financial incentives be “awarded to states or districts that raise teacher salaries,” and that school districts “Take advantage of compensation reform experts” (Ibid). All of these public policy suggestions are intended to make the current approach of neoliberal educational reform more palatable to the most ‘desirable’ teachers, and also, and to create a constantly circulating pool of temporary teachers who may or may not survive the technocratic and flat evaluation process, but who could drive down labor costs in a largely for-profit ‘public’ education system.

Organic Intellectuals and the Teacher Counter-Public

There are, however, more promising and organic examples of emergent teacher counter-public documentary work currently in production. On May 4, 2013, teachers, parents, students, scholars, and administrators gathered at Barnard College, New York City, to “work toward the common goal of reclaiming the conversation on education” (*Reclaiming the Conversation*). The ‘conversations’ of the conference will be the basis of a new documentary, now in production, by one of the coordinators, a teacher educator at Long Island University, and documentarian, Yen Yen Woo. Within the constraints of a one-day conference, participants shared their personal experiences with ‘educational reform,’ imagined and discussed equitable and sustainable alternatives, began to build coalitions through small and wide conversations, and “support[ed] resistance to the standardization, privatization and corporate take-over of education” (Ibid).

The morning began with a panel discussion providing an overview of the analytical framework within which the organizers were operating and upon which they wanted to build. These panelists included such important figures in the resistance movement, or counter-public, as Susan Ohanian (Freelance writer / Fellow at the Education Policy Studies Laboratory at Arizona State University); Barbara Bowen (CUNY Grad School / President, CUNY/PSC); Carol Burris (Principal, South Side High School); Zakiyah Ansari (Parent activist, Alliance for Quality Education); and Barbara Madeloni (UMass-Amherst / Founder, Can't Be Neutral). These public school teachers, administrators and teacher educators, like the teachers in the *American Teacher* documentary, shared their stories, but they were stories not about victimization, feelings

of helplessness, humiliation, and demoralization, but about anger, courage, resistance and standing up for themselves in solidarity with other teachers.

The analytical framework, introduced in the conference invitation and reproduced through occasionally tense discussion and dialogue within the conference, was deliberately and provocatively critical of the entire neoliberal hegemonic narrative. Unlike *American Teacher*, which seemed to take the educational status quo as given and failed to question the transformed structure and purposes of public education in the United States since the passage of *No Child Left Behind*, the organizers and conference attendees allowed for no ambiguity about the nature of their critique and the directions towards which it was aimed.

If you want to move beyond the focus on test scores, performance outcomes, standardization, and data aggregation, if you are tired of seeing your students deprived of real educational opportunities, if you worry teaching is being reduced to test prep and educators are losing their autonomy and academic freedom, and if you believe all our children should have access to a curriculum and extra-curriculum that are far more engaging than stripped down cram courses or subsistence level job training, then this is the conference for you (RTC).

This direct and open appeal in the conference invitation to teachers was framed in an explicitly personal and critical fashion, in sharp contrast to the seemingly ‘objective’ and ‘neutral’ tone of *American Teacher*.

The conference organizers approached the ‘problem’ of the historicization of the neoliberal political-cultural formation in somewhat rhizomatic fashion. There was far less attention to causation, chronology and organization of this political formation, with the presenters in the first panel assuming a great deal of shared historical background although they were supposed to be laying the down the common framework for

understanding. The broad purpose of the conference was first to formulate the nature of the negative ways in which the new educational nation-state, with its more insidiously controlling strategies, has impacted American public education and then to identify possibilities and openings for resistance.

The morning panelists facilitated the articulation of a common ground, and examined the demoralizing impact of instructional, assessment and evaluation practices designed not by educators but by and for corporations. They testified to the changed context of education and impact of high-stakes testing on children, including dramatically increased stress levels, stultified ‘learning’ experiences and radically increased ‘failure’ rates. Panelists also discussed ways in which the deprofessionalization of teaching, preventing seasoned and effective teachers from engaging in what they know to be ‘best practices,’ undermines the basis of their authority and ability to be effective. They expressed their feelings about a depoliticized and de-intellectualized educational milieu, and, worse, the intimidation of teachers and administrators to the point that they feel powerless and helpless. The frustration expressed escalated to anger fueled a sense of abandonment by unions, whether the abandonment was characterized by appeasement, attempt to compromise with neoliberals, or complete complicity.³⁰

Attention to actions that have been taken in response to this situation were a focus of discussion for both panels, as deconstructive language that challenged neoliberal ‘common sense,’ creative and sustainable grassroots alliances, and acts of civil disobedience specific to this context were themes around which this counter-public talk swirled. In the panel presentations and in the small group discussions, both in the

³⁰ This conference was streamed live and videotaped for upload to the group’s website, and included micro-footage of small group breakout discussions.

morning and afternoon, iterated in multiple ways the need to find, use and circulate counter-public language that could and would challenge the hegemonic neoliberal narrative. Susan Ohanian, veteran resistance leader and author of SusanOhanian.org, winner of the 2003 NCTE George Orwell Award for Distinguished Contribution to Honesty and Clarity in Public Language, opened the session with critical analysis of the ways in which neoliberal double-speak has colonized the American educational life-world, and the results of her recent research into the money trail linking philanthro-capitalists' educational reform efforts and control of mass media outlets. Her body of work seemed to have provided the foundation, the shared language and 'common sense' of the conference panelists, as there was constant reference for the need to challenge the very terms and underlying assumptions of the hegemonic narrative throughout the entire day. One of the concrete action steps recommended at the end of the day was an 'unpacking' glossary which will use both dark humor or satire to deflate or challenge the terms and a more serious, intellectual, and academic deconstruction of the terms. Brian Jones, speaking in the afternoon, took a different approach to the theme of 'Reclaiming the Conversation' and argued that there are

schools that are unhappy places, schools, that for whatever reason, parents, students or teachers have a gripe, then we have to sit down and have a different conversation in a school like that, because the conversation cannot just be about defending the school as it is. It has to simultaneously be a struggle to improve the school and defend it. It has to be both (Ibid).

In making this argument about the need to address the legitimate concerns of frustrated stakeholders in public holders in a democratic fashion, he also enjoined the audience to reframe the understanding of audience to be 'the people' rather than the mass media. In reclaiming the conversation, not only is it "on us to reclaim it on the grassroots level," but

more importantly, “we cannot wait to reclaim it at the level of the New York Times, the mainstream media” because

[t]hey don’t know what’s happening, they’re not going to get what’s going on. They’re not going to report it the way we want them to, so you’re just going to hold to hold your breath to reclaim that conversation. It’s not gonna happen.... We have to try to reclaim this conversation at the grassroots level. We need to be perceived not only as the people who are trying to defend public education but also those who are trying to improve it (Ibid).

Strengthening alliances with parents and students, both through counter-publics imaginary world building and through direct social action, was also a central theme. Cereste Smith, parent and resistance leader, after sharing her story of politicization, argued that parents could and should support their child’s learning and teachers’ resistance to neoliberal educational structures and processes by demanding to opt out of the standardized tests. She offered the support of the organization that she and fellow parent-teachers created, the United Opt Out National movement, which has already done great work helping to provide students and their parents with information about engaging in civil disobedience by opting out, or refusing to take, the high stakes standardized tests. Nijhil Soyak, an eighteen year old panelist in the afternoon, also spoke to the need to connect with a growing student movement against high stakes standardized testing. He spoke passionately about the historical and emergent power of young people:

In all of human civilization, young people have been the ones who have been driving every movement, in some fashion. They have been the catalyst for getting adults to listen. Because right now, there is a perfect storm brewing. Young people from around the country are standing up and saying, “Enough is enough.” We’re not going to stand with the system any longer. We’re not going to let our teachers be boiled down to test scores. We’re not going to be forced to sit through hours and hours of testing and regurgitation which has no relevance to our lives.

Providing examples of these sites of resistance, connected through organizers and strategies informed by common purpose, Goyal inspired the adults in the audience to consider the possibilities of critical sites of mass protest and civil disobedience:

In Portland, Providence, Chicago, Newark, in so many different cities around the country, students are speaking out. Just last week, we had hundreds of Chicago high school students walking out of school against high stakes testing. In Providence, you had students forcing state legislators and many adults in the Providence community to take the same graduation test. And guess what? Sixty percent of adults failed that test.

While his analysis seemed simple and even a little naïve at times, he made points about which his audience needed to be reminded, especially the importance of laying the foundations for action in critical discussion. His student comrades in Washington, D.C., in preparation for the action to ‘Occupy Education,’ stepped back to consolidate their action in the basement of a church in Columbia Heights. This captured Goyal’s imagination, the vision of “all these young people in a dark and scary basement of a church in the middle of Washington, D.C., discussing revolution” (Ibid). For Goyal, the point was about sites of counter-publics, where the circulating counter-hegemonic analysis occurs in spaces that are immediate and personal, because “[r]evolutions begin in the basements of churches, they begin in the backs of bars, and schoolhouses and your neighborhoods. They don’t begin at the Department of Education or any other government organization.... They happen from the ground, from the bottom up” (Ibid).

Much of the work of the conference ebbed and flowed toward and away from the question of civil disobedience as a useful strategy, but also always connecting political action back to language and ‘telling stories.’ Kris McBride used the space of the conference to share the story of the teachers of Garfield High in Seattle who boycotted

the mandated high stakes test, MAP, and brought an end to mandatory high stakes testing in Seattle. She describes a process by which these teachers developed a counter-public sensibility simply through sharing stories with each about their classrooms, their own teaching practices, and the ways in which high stakes testing was impacting their students. Together, they developed and demonstrated the critical elements necessary to catalyze a movement: “they were courageous, they organized, they showed incredible solidarity and they grew solidarity nationally for their cause, and they were successful” (Madeloni, RTC). These Seattle teachers, building upon years of critical school-wide discussions about high stakes standardized testing, ultimately decided unanimously not to administer district-mandated standardized MAP tests in the spring of 2013, “calling them a waste of time and money” (“Victory for Seattle Teachers”). Their courageous stand, during which their jobs and livelihoods were threatened, even as they solidified support of students, parents, and administrators, led to a statewide victory, as the MAP tests were made optional in Seattle (Ibid). This courageous act, the collective movement connecting the language and texts of a counter-public to riskier, more exposed public action, “put boycotting on the map, [and] really changed the conversation about what we can do,” as Barbara Madeloni said when she introduced Kris McBride at the conference.

“We need to tell each other stories,” Barbara Madeloni suggested in the introduction of Kris McBride, “stories of courage, stories of how we organized - what we actually did, i.e. steps taken, stories of solidarity, and stories of success” (RTC).

Madeloni’s story itself, like the story of the teachers of Garfield High, had all of the elements necessary to lay foundation for a movement. As a teacher educator at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, she resisted the further corporatization of

education (specifically, over the issue of Pearson's involvement in state educational development) by connecting counter-public language to civil disobedience. Her blog, ChalkFace, became an important source of critique and coordination, the basis for solidarity for the UMass teacher educators and the sixty-seven student teachers at UMass Amherst School of Education who together chose to boycott the Teacher Performance Assessment field test via Pearson in April 2013. When she was informed that her contract was not renewed, students, faculty and community members quickly organized as *Can't Be Neutral* (cantbeneutral.org) and demanded her reinstatement. This organization used the attack on academic freedom as a "means to educate others about the dangers of corporate incursion into education" ("United Opt Out"). The students started a petition, wrote letters, and held a powerful teach-in on the UMass Amherst Campus. She was offered a settlement, ultimately, and their act of civil disobedience has also been successful in that its courage has inspired others, motivating, energizing and connecting multiple kinds of counter-publics.

In Madeloni's introduction of McBride, she began by saying that when she heard about the Garfield High teachers' press conference, she immediately sent them a bouquet of flowers, "because that's what you do when you fall in love. I fell in love with the teachers of Garfield High School" (203:55). And Madeloni, like the administrators and organizers of the BAT teacher group, does explicitly operate from a space of ethical care and political love. In her updated statement on the *Can't Be Neutral* website, she thanked those whose support had sustained her:

It has been an exciting, rewarding, loving, joyous, and exhausting year from the student resistance of the TPA, to the amazing organizing and solidarity within *Can't Be Neutral*, to the connections made with

education activists across the country. When I showed up at the chancellor's office for the grievance hearing I was met by members of Can't Be Neutral carrying signs and giving me flowers. It was really sweet to sit at the large wooden boardroom table across from the Dean, in the presence of the hearing officer, who was a vice-chancellor, and have my own bouquet in front of me ("Update from Barbara").

However, both the Seattle and Amherst cases involved not just love but also teacher unions. The teachers at Garfield High did not contact their union to seek permission or to even make them aware of their intentions before they had faculty unanimity, but they did appeal to the union for support even as they held their first press conference, so that the union was essentially shamed into following teacher action. Similarly, Madeloni's settlement offer was based in part on a grievance filed that alleged denial of academic freedom and breaches of the unit contract. This grievance filed by her union representative and the protections of due process offered to her as a unionized worker mitigated what could have been professional disaster.

Teachers' relationships with their unions, especially for those teachers who are critical of the neoliberal hegemony, are becoming increasingly intense. Brian Jones, teacher and activist, spoke on the afternoon panel of the conferences about teacher unionism and using the unions as weapons, that is, "using our unions to help fight these battles, which is easier said than done" (RTC). It may seem nonsensical or counter-intuitive to posit that might be difficult to mobilize union energy around these issues, but "When we turn to our unions, we find them ill-prepared to find these, or unwilling, or at the very worst, complicit in the attacks that are happening on public education" (Ibid). But he argued that teachers should redefine and reclaim unionism as part of the struggle.

One of the important lessons of the Seattle case is that there is a possibility of dragging our union leadership into supporting these struggles, as they

did so brilliantly in Seattle, AND as they did in Chicago. Even when it is not their idea, their initiative, and usually it is not and we should not expect it to be. That's really the pattern in labor history, it's when the workers lead and then the leaders follow, so as teachers we have to take that as our expectation (Ibid).

Such an approach lessens teacher stress, anxiety and feelings of anger about abandonment by their union: if teachers have low expectations of their unions (as it seems they should), then there is less disappointment.

For teachers, preparation to enter into or continue to work in the profession has to be based in part on awareness of the origins and sources of union power, as teachers are workers who will continue to require union solidarity and support. This awareness, Jones pointed out, does not happen magically. While “most teachers come into the classroom unprepared and not knowing that much about unions and how they work, and not knowing that much about organizing,” the teacher preparation programs provide space and opportunity to “initiate Unionism 101...because we really need teachers to come into the classroom understanding the history of unions, understanding how they work, and knowing a little bit about how to move and operate and shake things up in the union” (Ibid). Even when teachers are working, organizing and struggling without the support of unions, they need and follow to develop principles of solidarity, so that they are working in and building some kind of team, however small.

We cannot have individuals sticking their necks out. We have to develop collective action, and that's the way people will feel safer taking action (Ibid).

Teachers have to be creative, according to Jones, use official or unofficial bodies, and understand that success will not and should not be instantaneous or simple. He counseled conference participants to accustom themselves to the idea that “there is going

to be a tremendous unevenness in this struggle” (Ibid). Despite the Seattle boycott and the Chicago teachers’ strike, the grassroots teacher resistance leaders “do not yet have any imitators, despite the widespread feelings of anger amongst teachers, the demoralization, the outrage, we have not yet duplicated either of those struggles nationwide” (Ibid). For Jones and for most of the participants, there was some comfort in the notion that such unevenness “just shows us where we are – that we are in a process of building and rebuilding the kinds of organization that’s going to make that possible” (Ibid). But he spoke to other examples of teachers and schools that almost boycotted or engaged in less risky but still challenging counter-public expression, such as the ‘I Could Have Been Doing....’ elementary school mural, painted by children expressing what they would rather have been doing other than taking a high stakes standardized test. For Jones, these examples show that

there’s something going on that has not yet hit the radar, yet, but there’s a subterranean process going on, probably in thousands of schools around the country, where people are looking at each other and asking themselves, “Could we do the same thing?” But the fact that they haven’t yet, again, just shows us where we are (RTC).

The ‘continuum of action’ fleshed out by *Reclaiming the Conversation* conference participants parallels, in some ways, the interrelationships between different levels or types of counter-publics discussed above. However, whereas the creation of cultural, political and social work challenging hegemonic structures seems to be precisely the work of counter-publics, it is in the move towards more openly confrontational political action that the question of appropriate strategies becomes central.

You can hold a forum to educate parents and teachers, you can hold discussions, you can begin a process, but ultimately, yes, we all have to understand, we have to see this as a conflict that escalates (Ibid).

For Jones and most of the other conference participants, the objective is ultimately to confront and challenge oppressive structures and practices in a transformational way.

Social Media: Websites, Blogs and Facebook

The Internet has opened a new space which many public school teachers and their allies are using to some effect to organize a collectivity by discourse, a textual counter-public “capable of being addressed and capable of action” (Warner, 67). This text-based counter-public extends to strangers, combines personal and impersonal modes of address, works on a variable temporal rhythm of virtual publication, and circulates among readers/listeners whose attention creates social space through “the reflexive circulation of discourse” (90, qtd. in Ferguson 2010, 196). Teachers have created websites and blogs that challenge the validity of neoliberal research, promote dialogue amongst teachers and criticize public policy decisions on education at local, state and national levels. “Hundreds of teachers blog these days, uploading details from their daily lives,” creating “raw and unscripted, teacher blogs [that] are finding an audience” (Toppo, 1). Blog tracking website Technorati.com lists 3247 teacher blogs; many of which boast thousands of hits a week (7/12/13).

Bloggers say that readers, or the ‘strangers’ coalescing into a ‘counter-public,’ include state or local education officials — even gubernatorial and congressional aides (Toppo, 1). “It’s the equivalent of a dispatch from the front lines or a letter written in a foxhole,” says Alexander Russo, who writes his own education blog (Ibid). And teacher use of this type of virtual space is a source of tension between teachers and administrators: teachers have lost their jobs for using their blogs to express their feelings

about inadequate teaching resources or lackadaisical administration (Ibid). Regardless, some teachers use the space to express personal feelings of marginalization and erasure *as* teachers: "As a teacher, I feel like people don't listen to me. Parents don't listen to me, politicians don't listen to me, the media doesn't listen to me — but everybody tries to tell me how to do my job" (Ibid). Many teacher bloggers remain anonymous for fear of professional reprisal. Jay Bullock, 31, an English teacher in Milwaukee who “blogs to defend public education in general and teachers specifically,” worked anonymously for six months beginning in 2003 but ended up going public, because he has a “pretty strong union,” so he’s “not worried about reprisal” (Ibid). Joe Thomas, 37, a high school history teacher in Mesa, Ariz., similarly writes ‘Shut Up and Teach’ to defend teachers. These blogs, along with their range of readers, "allows us to understand [counter]publics as scenes of self-activity, or historical rather than timeless belonging, and of active participation rather than ascriptive belonging" (Warner, 89).

A group calling themselves the “Badass Teacher Association” (BAT), originating on the Internet site Facebook on June 18, 2013, went viral almost instantly as teachers from around the country began discussing, online, all of the ways in which the neoliberal approach to education degraded and debilitated them as professional, active and committed teachers. The organizers moderated the site as debate and discussion became heated, and it quickly became apparent that teachers within the group felt a strong need to move to political action. The group launched their first campaign on June 24, 2013, mobilizing many thousands of teachers in direct action against America's federal education policies. Having exploded from about a hundred initial members to more than fifteen thousand in less than a week, these teachers who had little face-to-face interaction

but spoke the ‘same language’ with respect to their analysis of neoliberal education reform efforts, made hundreds of calls to the White House switchboard to tell President Barack Obama to replace Arne Duncan as Secretary of Education. Through processing discussions as the action progressed, the message was tightened and honed, with diversity of perspective preserved (some argued for suggesting Linda Darling-Hammond as a replacement while others supported Diane Ravitch). The consensus shared with the White House operators, and presumably conveyed to President Obama, was that these teachers wanted a “lifetime educator who better understands and empathizes with teachers and parents” (TakePart).

The actions of the group were depicted by alternative mass media, in a story written by TakePart and featured on Yahoo.com, as “part of an ongoing revolution in education in which teachers, parents, and students are exasperated and exhausted by the Obama administration’s Race to the Top proposals and the testing they require, the Common Core State Standards, and school closings” (Ibid). Mark Naison, a professor of African-American Studies and History at Fordham University and a cofounder of the Badass Teachers Association, expressed the disillusionment of educators with Obama, whose *Race to the Top* initiative and “Blueprint for Reform” simply intensified the previous administration’s neoliberal approach to public education, “leaving teachers with no other option than to speak out in the most forceful way possible, say, ‘enough is enough,’ and demand a seat at the table in shaping education policy, which they emphatically do not have now” (Ibid). The power of this preliminary action is that it provided public space for discussion and development of shared political analysis and political critique of the status quo. Michael Peña, a public school teacher in

Washington who originally made the action proposal to the group to call the White House, expressed sentiments shared by many on the Facebook site: “I’m tired of being pointed at as the problem in education by people who don’t understand the complexity of the public education system and how decisions are made by elected and unelected officials...I’m very tired of teachers not being allowed to be a part of the decision-making process that affects our everyday lives and the lives of our students” (TakePart).

This moment for teachers was about shared critique, about speaking and hearing analysis most teachers felt as though they could and would have articulated themselves, feeling the sentiments that had been plaguing them shared with others. Marla Kilfoyle, a public school teacher from California, expressed the critical, oppositional views of many BAT members when she asserted in an interview that,

I want BAT to show everyone that we are not going away quietly, that we see the true agenda and it isn’t about better education. It is about profit and privatizing our public school system. I hope that BAT exposes that the school closings we are seeing in our inner city neighborhoods are not about helping kids but about business and money. I would like to see BAT expose that to the public and dismantle it so that we can start doing some real work that is genuine (Ibid).

Bonnie Cunard, a Florida teacher and member of BAT, also articulated a powerful shared critique when she said, “Mostly, I see depleted public schools and our public funds channeled to testing corporations and corporate, for-profit charter schools... I see high-stakes tests strangling the education of children everywhere, including my own children” (Ibid). Her purpose for getting involved in the group is to raise consciousness amongst teachers as a group, to alert them “to the fact that many of us are fighting these same issues—that we are not alone...I also hope to take proactive steps to change policies regarding high-stakes testing, privatization, and depleted funding of public schools”

(Ibid). Denisha Jones, a professor at Howard University and a teacher educator, echoed common goals expressed on the site when she said that, “I hope that through this group, teachers can come together, organize, and save the profession from the corporate takeover of public education” (Ibid). Michael Peña, one of the informal leaders of the group says he hopes to accomplish three things: reduce or eliminate the use of high-stakes testing, increase teacher autonomy in the classroom, and include teachers’ voices in legislative decision-making processes (Ibid).

This medium and the national discussions it makes possible and safe (enough) continue to generate movement for change amongst the members of this emergent teacher counter-public. Within the space of six weeks, this group of 23,000 had explored, examined and analyzed many of the core elements of neoliberal education policy. ‘Badass teachers,’ together in responses to (usually) research-based posts, have been simultaneously unpacking and challenging the terms of hegemonic neoliberal discourse, discussing the implications of what they call ‘educational deform’ for public education, processing major social and political events, such as the evisceration of the Voting Rights Act by the Supreme Court and the Trayvon Martin verdict, and trying to find common ground for action without sacrificing positions that challenge the orthodoxy of neoliberal educational reform. Substantial discussion was even generated and sustained around the sources of social and political inequality that shape the American public educational system, a topic that can only very rarely be raised within the walls of those institutions. With this development of a counter-public built around the articulation of resistance, however, this group does risk defining itself in terms of defiance rather than positive alternative vision. The mission statement, as articulated on July 18, 2013, reads as

follows:

1. Badass Teachers will fight against Common Core National Standards
2. Badass Teachers will fight against High Stakes Testing and the excessive testing of our children.
3. Badass Teachers will fight against teacher evaluations tied to student test scores
4. Badass Teachers will fight against the corporate attempt to privatize public education, which has seen the closing of schools in urban and poverty areas and the subsequent opening of charter schools for profit or a voucher system that seeks to destroy neighborhood schools.
5. Badass Teachers will fight against any federal or state educational policy or mandate that has been implemented without funding and extensive teacher input.
6. Badass Teachers will fight against any attempt to assault, hinder, or deny our right to collective bargaining (Ibid).

While the reiteration of “Badass Teachers will fight against...” throughout the mission statement does convey unity, strength of conviction, and willingness to act, its use contributes to a sense of political reactivity rather than creativity, and could limit the efficacy of the group in that it does not inspire non-teachers with a vision of a future for which they would be willing to act as teacher-allies.

This challenge to hegemonic neoliberal discourse launched by Badass Teachers is meant to be completed in three phases, and will “continue to evolve as the landscape of corporate deform evolves” (BAT). The goal of Phase One, which is currently in progress, is to “call out the entities that are harming public education (corporate deformers and government officials/lawmakers)” (Ibid). To this end, there are well-researched, semi-scripted, and clearly organized weekly ‘call-out’ drives wherein BAT members use multiple means (email, Twitter, phone) to contact those most prominent and influential within the neoliberal political formation and clarify the basis and depth of the group’s opposition to their work. This strategy will be used through August, making it an

approximately three-month cycle that enables the group to focus on the responsible agents of neoliberal change. The second cycle or phase in which the group will “educate the public about what is really going on in education policy,” promises to be more challenging. The goal in this phase is to “pursue ways, prior to the start of the school year, to educate and join in partnership with parent and student groups to actively stop the privatization of our public school system [and to] also educate those teachers who are still in the dark about privatization efforts” (Ibid). While this has already begun, through strong alliances with local and national “United Opt Out” parent groups and the creation of a parallel Badass Parents organization, with Facebook page, website and strong organizing leadership, this component is still weak and fragile with most of the parental support coming from those who oppose Common Core on conservative, states’ rights, grounds. The apparent final phase for this group, Phase Three, will involve not only continuing “to make public the hoax of that our public school system is broken and that this is one of the many lies being spread about public education,” but also active monitoring and targeting of “public figures/politicians to demand they ‘step up’ and increase support for public education” (Ibid). The actions described above also contribute to the strong sense that while this is a fighting group clear about the nature of the hegemonic political formation that they are confronting, it is also a group that is just emerging and beginning to participate in the establishment of a nascent teacher counter-public.

Conclusion

This preliminary sketch of the contours of the emergent teacher ‘counter-publics’ suggests a few directions for further consideration. First, there seems to be a shared

language developing, with a range of connotations and interpretations within the circulating ‘texts,’ that challenges the neoliberal historical formation. Second, while there is important work being done within the teacher counter-public challenging the “perversion of democratic attention” and the “representative thinking” involved in the demonization and vilification of teachers, it is still nascent (Hancock). Finally, however, if publics and counter-publics are ultimately about “poetic world-making,” circulating [counter]public discourse that not only calls a counter-public into existence, and restructures the character, language and vision of the world, there is still work to be done (Warner, 114). To the extent that there is ‘visioning’ and ‘imagination of political possibilities’ within the emergent teacher counter-public, it is generally somewhat flat and one-dimensional, in the sense that most of the participants share a very similar vision of the conflated possible, probable and preferred futures, that of ‘continued growth’ (Dator 2009; Candy). There is, however, in the most recent work of the Badass Teachers and ‘Reclaiming the Conversation” conference, the promise of creativity, vision and energy necessary not only to catalyze but also to sustain a teachers’ movement that can reclaim the conversation and the public social, political and cultural space of education in the United States.

Chapter Six: Teacher Counter-publics and Critical Futures: Moving Towards Our

Preferred Futures

[C]riticality is a way of being as well as a way of thinking, a relation to others as well as an intellectual capacity.... Because criticality is a function of collective questioning, criticism, and creativity, it is *always* social in character, partly because relations to others influence the individual, and partly because certain of these activities (particularly thinking in new ways) arise from an interaction with challenging alternative views (Burbules 1993).

From Critical Thinking to Criticality

‘Critical thinking’ is a dominant trope in the ‘texts’ circulating in the emergent teacher counter-public, if only in the sense that it is a commonly occurring motif or device that has not yet been exhausted, or become a cliché. Yet, due to the rapid rate of repetition and reuse without increased depth of the shared pool of meaning out of which it arises, there is great danger that this term is not only becoming a cliché, but is in the process of being appropriated and used to support a neoliberal educational agenda.³¹ To proactively circumvent that possibility, the meaning of this term needs to be developed as part of the textual circulations that create the teacher counter-public. Moreover, because language creates possibility, teachers involved in this counter-public ought to capitalize on the opportunity provided by the trope of ‘critical thinking’ to connect it to the power of critical pedagogy. If we move towards a broader notion of ‘criticality’ and incorporate therein ideas not only of critical thinking, but also of critical pedagogy and creative

³¹ Arne Duncan’s speech before the NCSS in 2011, entitled “The Social Studies are Essential to a Well-Rounded Education,” suggests precisely this type of appropriation (Duncan). In the speech he concurs with critics who argue that “many of today’s tests are flawed... [in that] they don’t *measure* critical thinking,” reflecting a very ‘thin’ understanding of critical thinking and its role in the educative process (1, italics added).

futures thinking, we can develop a much more exciting and inspiring process of visioning that can shape the teacher counter-public in ways that will help sustain the movement.

Critical Thinking and Critical Pedagogy

If connections can be made between the ‘critical thinking’ that is espoused by so many voices of the emergent teacher ‘counter-public’ and a radical critique of and challenge to the neoliberal approach to public education, these connections could be developed via a bridge built by the common insights of critical pedagogues. Advocates of critical thinking and critical pedagogy do share some common concerns and some shared language about emancipatory vision. By looking at common themes in the work of critical thinking scholars and some of the more central critical pedagogy theorists, the nature and potential of such linkages can be ascertained.³²

Both assume that there are people who are somehow deficient in abilities or dispositions that would otherwise allow them to discern certain kinds of inaccuracies, distortions or falsehoods and thereby limit their freedom, although for critical pedagogues, these discrepancies exist because of fundamentally unequal divisions of power in society. Critical pedagogues are concerned with the influences of educational knowledge that perpetuate or legitimate such inequality; fostering critical capacity in citizens is a way to help them resist such power effects, and they generally adopt a perspective sympathetic to those who have been disenfranchised (Burbules and Berk, 49; Kincheloe; Duncan-Andrade).

³² The scholars most frequently associated with the critical thinking tradition in the United States include Richard Ennis, John McPeck, Richard Paul, Israel Scheffler, and Harvey Siegel. While the ideas behind critical pedagogy originate with the neo-Marxist turn, the scholars most often associated with this work include Paulo Friere, Henry Giroux, Peter McLaren and Ira Schor.

For advocates of critical thinking in the public school classroom, these concerns about social inequality are secondary to the larger problem of students basing their life choices on unsubstantiated truth claims. Critical thinking, in their view, should have a “generally humanizing effect,” in that to the extent that it enables people to be more critical in thought and action, critical thinking can “help free learners to see the world as it is and to act accordingly, thereby increasing freedom and enlarging the scope of human possibilities” (Burbules and Berk 49-52; Ennis 1987).

Critical thinking is, in general, focused on the criteria of “epistemic adequacy” (Burbules and Berk, 46; Paul 1989). Because the basic problem is perceived to be ‘irrational, illogical and unexamined living,’ to be ‘critical’ is to be able to recognize and address faulty judgments, hasty generalizations, assertions lacking evidence, truth claims based on unreliable authorities, ambiguous or obscure concepts, etc., using the skills of formal and informal logic, conceptual analysis, and epistemological reflection (Paul 1989, 66). Where beliefs remain unexamined, students are not free; they act without thinking about why they act, and thus do not exercise control over their own destinies (Burbules and Berk, 46; Facione 1998). Critical thinking aims at self-sufficiency, with the assumption that a ‘self-sufficient’ person is a ‘liberated’ person, “free from unwarranted and undesirable control of unjustified beliefs” (Siegel 1988, 58).

Critical pedagogy, on the other hand, requires the examination of specific belief claims as part of systems of belief and action that have large-scale social effects, with close attention to social injustice, with an eye to transforming inequitable undemocratic or oppressive institutions and social relations. While critical thinking advocates argue that these are simply two separate issues (the individual and the social), critical

pedagogues would counter that two issues or levels cannot be kept separate and are inherently connected (Burbules and Berk, 47). They argue that the standards of epistemic adequacy themselves and particular ways in which those standards are invoked and interpreted in particular settings involve similar questions as to who, where, when and why those standards are being defended (Ibid).

The critical pedagogues' emphasis on social and political change has radical implications for advocates of critical thinking, in that for critical pedagogues, the endeavor to teach others to think critically is less a matter of fostering *individual* skills and dispositions, and more a consequence of pedagogical relations *between* teachers and students and *among* students. For critical pedagogues, the object of thinking critically is not only to challenge demonstrably false beliefs, but also to challenge beliefs that are repressive, partisan or implicated in the preservation of an unjust status quo (Burbules and Berk, 51).

Paolo Freire is one originator of the critical pedagogy movement.³³ Freire sought to distinguish between two modes of teaching, which he called the banking method and the problem-posing method (1973, 71). The 'banking' teacher approaches education with an understanding of students as passive objects or, more specifically, as receptacles awaiting fulfillment with the knowledge that is transmitted by the teacher. For Freire, this

³³ The concept of 'critical pedagogy' emerges from a long historical legacy of educational movements that aspired to link classroom practices to democratic principles and particularly to the interests of oppressed communities. Frederick Douglass, Harriet Tubman, W. E. B. Du Bois, Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Henry Thoreau, Ralph Emerson, and Emma Goldman, among others all articulated visions of freedom that were necessarily based less upon an inherited endowment, than on an "achievement through the act of choosing, naming, and creating" (Simpson, 11). The Free School movement, the 'deschooling' movement, the liberation schools, the storefront schools that surfaced and defined the Civil Rights era in this country, can be traced back to suffragists, abolitionists, socialists and anarchists of the nineteenth century, as part of an enduring effort to develop liberating ways of teaching within a fundamentally unequal society. The term 'critical pedagogy' signals a deep American history of rational, autonomous voices engaged in dialogue in hopes of forging a middle-class public sphere (Green, 97-112).

minimalization of student interaction and creativity, the treatment of the student as a *tabula rasa*, facilitates the passivity by which he or she will, in turn, broadly adopt the world as it is. This learning process is understood as a means of integrating students into a structure of oppression. For Freire, genuine or authentic education is possible only when students are engaged in a learning process that connects meaning to action (1974). Student *conscientizacao* results, for Freire, from the problem-posing method of teaching, which approaches knowledge not as a static object to be transmitted, but as a process undergoing constant transformation (1973). Students and teachers together are seen as unfinished, incomplete beings within an unfinished reality.

The teacher-student and students-teachers reflect simultaneously on themselves and the world without dichotomizing this reflection from action, and thus establish an authentic form of thought and action (76).

Freire emphasizes that education follows from the relations forged among differentiated, yet related subjects. All are implicated in a process that identifies consciousness as the act of a dialogic relationship among these mutually constructing social factors. Freedom begins, in this tradition, with the shared recognition of a system of oppressive relations, and one's place in that system. Critical pedagogues see their task as bringing members of an oppressed group to 'critical consciousness' of their situation. In this view, the "single greatest barrier against the prospect of liberation is an ingrained, fatalistic belief in inevitability and necessity of unjust status quo" (Giroux 1988, 175). Henry Giroux argues that critical pedagogy "draws attention to questions concerning who has control over the conditions for the production of knowledge, values, and skills, and it illuminates how knowledge, identities, and authority are constructed within particular sets of social relations" (McLaren 2013). In earlier work, Giroux draws a distinction between

a ‘language of critique’ and a ‘language of possibility,’ and suggests that when the focus is on the former, educators and students are unable to develop a discourse for ‘counterhegemonic practices in schools’: the aim of critical education, for Giroux, should be “to raise ambitions, desires and real hope for those who wish to take seriously the issue of educational struggle and social justice” (Giroux 1988, 177).

Neither tradition could be condemned as advocating a passive educational process, as each requires that students be moved to take action, whether that action involves seeking evidence-based reasons or seeking social justice. For advocates of critical thinking, it is not sufficient that students know how, or have the skills, to seek reasons, truth, and understanding: students need to be impassioned to pursue them vigorously. For critical pedagogues, it is not sufficient that students critically reflect upon and interpret the world: they must be willing and able to act to change it. But the relationship developed between reasoning and action differs for each: from the perspective of a critical pedagogue, the critical thinking advocate assumes an overly immediate relationship between thinking and action, whereas for critical pedagogues, changing thought and practice must occur together in praxis (Burbules and Berk, 51-52). For Freire, criticality requires praxis, both reflection and action, interpretation and change: “critical consciousness is brought about ... through praxis – through the authentic union of action and reflection” (2001, 48). It is not sufficient, for critical pedagogues, to transform habits of thought without challenging and trying to transform the institutions, ideologies and relations that engender oppressed, distorted thinking in the first place – not as additional act past the pedagogical one, but as an inseparable part of it.

The two approaches are somewhat similar in terms of methodology, in that both advocate dialogue, but the nature of dialogue varies in important ways. Richard Paul, as the figure who stands most squarely between the two traditions, discusses dialogical thinking, but all advocates of critical thinking focus on the thinking of individuals themselves. Critical pedagogues, on the other hand, seem to emphasize social context, in which dialogue occurs *between* people. Methodology for critical pedagogues is also connected to literacy, as the educational process involves learning how to read the ‘world’ as well as reading the ‘word’ through the process of decodification, critiquing social relations, social institutions, and social traditions that create and maintain conditions of oppression (Burbules and Berk, 53).

The two traditions share an assumption that there is something ‘real’ about which they can raise the consciousness of people – there is “something given, against which distorted beliefs and distorted perceptions can be tested. In both, there is a drive to bring people to recognize ‘the way things are’” (Burbules and Berk, 53). Yet the discussion of ‘the way things are’ is quite different, in that the critical thinking advocates search for empirically demonstrable facts, while critical pedagogues focus on the intersubjective development of common understandings about ‘structures of oppression’ and ‘relations of domination’ (55).

The best example of the weaknesses of the critical thinking method, however, is the relative silence of its proponents on the implications of *No Child Left Behind*. They have benefited the most, in a loose sort of way, as both neoliberals and those critical of neoliberal educational policy tout the importance of ‘critical thinking,’ and when critical thinking theorists have discussed the policy, they have treated it as if it is simply

‘incomplete’ (Paul et al). Critical pedagogues, on the other hand, have challenged the policy and its myriad implications for the classroom with a great deal of passion (Martell; Green).

Addressing the structure of the American neoliberal educational system as a set of “coercive economic and psychological relationships whose central function is the creation of human capital,” critical pedagogues speak directly to the ‘human capital’ arguments of neoliberals (Martell, 7). They illuminate, through a proliferation of scholarship produced within the movement and within the academy, ways in which the processes of NCLB and related legislation have become processes of educational standardization, “making people like machines or effective extensions of machines” (8). This standardization process is depicted as being divided into two thoroughly integrated parts. First, a two-sided control thrust moves to cut students off from their human ties and from natural world (undercutting solidarity and encouraging objectification) while it pressures them at the same time to accept their individual place within complex social hierarchy and to take orders from those above them in authority. Second, standardized action emerges out of this thrust, action that supports capitalist profit in the workplace, in the marketplace, and in the nation-state system (7). They argue that the public education system under *No Child Left Behind* not only conflates training with education, but eliminates in the process any real possibility for emancipatory education, because the capacity and willingness to take such action in all these areas, is precisely what is being suppressed in these classroom settings (9).

Academics and teacher-researchers have also been documenting the ways in which critical pedagogues are challenging this ‘human capital’ production, “the creation

of workers and citizens and consumers, who bring together in their persons that uniquely capitalist fusion of intellectual passivity and energetic action,” in their classrooms (Martell, 9). Critical pedagogues read this moment as a historic opportunity, a moment of hope, in that there is the possibility to create a much more democratic education system and challenging curriculum that genuinely opens students and teachers to the physical, social and spiritual world around them (8). They not only argue for, but act from, a “vision of a just and caring society that schooling helps to build as well as a grasp of the knowledge and wisdom necessary to build it” (8).

Henry Giroux has centered the critical pedagogy movement in the United States for the past twenty-five years with precisely this kind of ethically committed political argument. He argues for a notion of justice centered “not on maximizing individual wealth or rights but on developing and enhancing the capacity of citizens to share power and hence to collaboratively govern themselves” (Giroux 2004, 50). He articulates the need for counter-rationality, a “different figuration of human beings, citizenship, economic life and the political” (51).

For Giroux, educators are responsible for creating good citizens. Critical pedagogy tries to avoid the tendency of liberal or neoliberal pedagogy to simply reproduce dominant or hegemonic power structures by appealing to critical theory. Critical theory, for Giroux, provides “the very precondition for a critically self-conscious notion of individual and social agency as the basis for shaping the larger society” (Giroux 2004, 100). This is not a simple call to ‘social awareness,’ not “simply a call for consciousness-raising, but the initial step towards getting students to act as ‘engaged’

citizens willing to question and confront the structural basis and nature of the larger social order” (Giroux 2001, 200).

Against the neoliberal position that schools are and ought to be neutral sites, Giroux argues that schools are ‘political sites’ and ideological battles need to be fought on those grounds (Giroux 1992, 152). The project of political critique and challenge begins with teachers and their allies: Giroux argues that only teachers can bring theory and practice together to move towards “an educational practice that expands human capacities in order to enable people to intervene in the formation of their own subjectivities” and enables them to “exercise power in the interest of transforming the ideological and material conditions of domination into social practices that promote social empowerment and demonstrate possibilities” (198). Giroux asserts that the primary purpose of citizenship education, if it is to be emancipatory, “must be to stimulate passions, imaginations and intellects” so that they will be moved to political action (Giroux 2001, 201). Students should be educated to display civic courage; that is, to be willing to act *as if* they were living in a democratic society. The purpose of education, for Giroux, is political empowerment: “at its core, this form of education is political, and its goal is a genuine democratic society, one that is responsive to the needs of all and not just of a privileged few” (202).

The question of relevance could legitimately be raised here: that is, in what ways does the approach that teachers take to criticality in their classrooms connect with the emergent teacher counter-public? While some argue for a bright line drawn between the classroom and the shrinking ‘public’ space adult citizens share, most critical pedagogues would suggest that for teachers, it is neither fruitful nor honest to pretend that these

worlds do not inform each other. Rather, the language and practices of criticality that we learn and develop so that we can more effectively teach our students *how* to live in an active, participatory democracy are the very practices and language that should inform our politics *as* teachers. Just as we do not expect our students to grasp concepts and skills ‘magically,’ nor should we expect that of each other. Rather, we should work to create structures that facilitate mutuality, spaces in which we can together develop political skills, practices and strategies, creating and reinforcing a mutuality based on humility and openness to learning. The application of those skills, practices and strategies should not be confined to the classrooms or schools, but extended beyond those sites to redefine politics in the broader public sphere.

Giroux argues that pedagogy is best understood as a “configuration of textual, verbal and visual practices that seek to engage the processes through which people understand themselves and the ways in which they engage others and their environment” (Giroux 1992, 3). This incorporates a conceptualization of critical thinking as a form of “hermeneutic understanding that is historically grounded” (Giroux 1997, 27-28). In concrete pedagogical terms, this means that “educators need to situate the school, curriculum, pedagogy and the role of the teacher within the societal context that reveals both their historical development and the nature of their existing relationship with the dominant rationality” (Giroux 1983/2001, 192). Pedagogy is seen by Giroux as a cultural hermeneutic endeavor, where the critical educator is grounded in a critical understanding of the political totality. And it is this perspective that finds productive affinities with the critical/creative futures tradition.

Moving Towards Critical Futures

Critical work... attempts to ‘probe beneath the surface’ of social life and to discern some of the deeper processes of meaning-making, paradigm formation and the active influence of obscured worldview commitments (e.g. ‘growth is good,’ ‘nature is merely a set of resources,’ etc). It utilizes the tools and insights that have emerged within certain of the humanities and which allow us to interrogate, question and critique the symbolic foundations of social life and – this is the real point – hence to discern the grounds of new, or renewed, options. Properly understood, the deconstructive and reconstructive aspects of high quality critical futures work balance each other in a productive dialectic (Slaughter, 5).

Critical futures thinking, like critical thinking, seeks to “critique assumptions, analyses, and conclusions ... as a methodology of understanding,” and like critical pedagogy, to ‘undefine’ the future, and “to make existing categories and discourses problematic” (Smart 1; Ramos 13). This approach sees the present as “‘fragile’, as the victory of ‘one particular discourse’, and analyzes forms of power that underpin these discourses,” in order to more effectively consider the world of future possibilities in a systematic and thoughtful fashion (Smart 1). One productive strategy for teachers and their allies could be to push the discussion within the emergent counter-public further in the direction of futures thinking. The teacher counter-public[s] are contemporary but can also be oriented to futures, engaged in poetic world-making.

The work of educators is necessarily about futures. While teachers occupy an uncomfortable social space ‘between’ that of industrial workers, white collar professionals, street-level bureaucrats and revolutionary vanguard, they are oriented towards futures and possibilities, simply by virtue of the nature of educational work itself:

The function of education is to help students acquire the attitudes and skills necessary to become effective members of the future society in which they will live. The role of the teacher is to be a living example of such a person - to model the attitudes and skills necessary to be an

effective member of the future society in which the students will live (Dator 2002, 3).

The work of teaching and learning is such that this work is available to every citizen, in some way, and this has important political implications for what we mean by ‘pedagogy.’ Here it is sufficient to point to the widely available relational work of ‘teaching’ and its ‘necessary and proper’ relationship to futures thinking. It is through expansion of our understanding of pedagogy that we can continue to call a teacher counter-public into existence, using futures-orientation to structure the character, language and vision of the world, reproduce its power through citation, recirculation, and realization of the world understanding it articulates (Warner 96).

Futures Studies and Futures Thinking

Futures studies, like area studies, ethnic studies or women’s studies, reflects a trans-disciplinary movement within the academy to address social, political, economic, technological and cultural changes that challenge the silos within which American university education has been organized. Futures studies can and should be broadened to a broader community of public education, to help us as educators and students broaden the notion of criticality, and to develop mechanisms and a language to envision possible futures and work towards our preferred futures.

Futures visioning could be useful for the emergent teacher ‘counter-public.’ Three concepts and one distinction center this process, all of which inform, in one way or another, the work being done at the Manoa School of Futures Studies. These include the notions of ‘alternative futures,’ ‘images of the futures,’ and ‘scenarios,’ and the important

analytical distinction between ‘possible, probable and preferable’ futures in education (Dator 2009; Candy 2010).

Alternative futures

Rather than assume that there is a single future ‘out there’ towards which we are inexorably moving, it is a basic premise of the field of futures studies that there is no singular, objectifiable ‘future:’ *the* future does not exist as such. Candy argues that the future as a domain “is *as dynamic a domain as it is possible to imagine*,” changing “precisely as much as the present does, only multiplied -- because there are always more possibilities than actualities” (Candy, 37). Dator’s first law of futures states that, “‘The future’ cannot be ‘predicted’ because ‘the future’ does not exist” (1994, 1). It follows, by the logic of this dictum, that “‘The future’ cannot be predicted, but alternative futures can, and should be forecast,” and furthermore, that “preferred futures can and should be envisioned, invented, implemented, continuously evaluated, revised, and re-envisioned” (2).

An understanding of the fungibility and multiplicity of possible futures is a critical and necessary step for effective political leadership and visioning, a point that the conservatives involved in neoliberal ‘counter-public’ have used to their political advantage.³⁴ Beginning with the leadership of Friedman and others, neoliberals envisioned their preferred future and engaged in a great deal of hard work to bring that vision to fruition. Whether teachers are working with or within unions or teacher ‘public education protection’ groups (one with which I have been affiliated, the Aloha

³⁴ Newt Gingrich (2005) was the most explicit about this appropriation and colonization of possible futures.

P.O.S.S.E., comes to mind, as does the ‘Hawai‘i Teachers Work to the Rules’ movement), devoting all of our energy and attention to fighting a rear-guard action against attacks on public education constitutes a very poor political strategy, in that positive change requires vision, alternative visions, and leadership, none of which can be articulated in defensive, (seemingly self-) protective actions (c.f. Shultz on futures, visioning and leadership). *Images of the futures*

Futures studies involves exploration of ideas about possible futures, usually expressed in ‘images of the futures,’ held by individuals and groups. Futures are ‘real’ and powerful to the extent that ideas, narratives and images of the future constitute intensely productive forces shaping our self-conceptions and our actions (Candy). These ‘images of the futures’ are often “highly volatile, changing according to changing events or perceptions, ” but futures studies research suggests are generally a “finite number of basic *types of story that people tell each other*” (Dator 1994, 1; Candy, 47). These images have been categorized into four generic types, that is ‘Continued Growth,’ ‘Collapse,’ ‘Discipline,’ and ‘Transform’ (Dator 2009, 6-12). ‘Continued growth’ provides the shared model or “view of the future of all modern governments, educational systems, and organizations” in which the “purpose of government, education, and all aspects of life in the present and recent past, is to build a vibrant economy, and to develop the people, institutions, and technologies to keep the economy growing and changing, forever” (Ibid, 8). It is this type of future that the neoliberal agenda has so effectively colonized or hijacked for its own purposes, and one that is fundamentally socially and ecologically unsustainable. The second alternative future is that of ‘Collapse,’ whether “economic, environmental, resource, moral, ideological, or a failure of will or imagination” (8). The

third generic type is ‘Discipline,’ which addresses the problems of sustainability and social justice by arguing that “we need to refocus our economy and society on survival and fair distribution, and not on continued economic growth,” and that “we should orient our lives around a set of fundamental values,” ‘disciplining’ our collective lives around those values (9). The fourth alternative future, ‘Transform,’ focuses on the transformative potential of technology: “it anticipates and welcomes the transformation of all life, including humanity from its present form into a new ‘posthuman’ form, on an entirely artificial Earth, as part of the extension of intelligent life from Earth into the solar system and eventually beyond” (10).

There is precious little language or imagery in any of the circulating teacher counter-public ‘texts’ that suggests any visualization or consideration of alternative futures besides that of ‘Continued Growth.’ However, we are living in an educational present shaped by the visioning of the neoliberals, as should be evident in the public policy birth story of NCLB. It would behoove educators and citizens interested in effecting lasting positive, socially constructive change to do more conceptual, imagining work with the possibilities of the other three types of alternative futures.

Scenario Building

The four generic futures can be used in both analytical and generative modes. First, as a “heuristic for managing and investigating the otherwise bewildering range of nuanced differences among images of the future,” they provide different lenses or analytical frameworks which make possible further typological insights about different kinds of tendencies within particular types of futures (Candy, 52). More importantly for

our purposes, they can be used to generate futures scenarios, using forecasting, back-casting, or both.³⁵

In a workshop model developed by HCFRS, participants engage in a common process to help them move from a ‘language of critique’ to a ‘language of hope’ and possibility. In the first step, ‘appreciating the past,’ participants engage in a discussion to reach a common understanding of the history of the issue facing the group. The second step, ‘understanding the present,’ involves extended discussion of the problems and possibilities of the present. The third step consists of discussing major continuing trends, novel emerging issues, and significant continuities from the past. Participants then use this analysis to ‘forecast aspects of the future’ in the fourth step. ‘Experiencing alternative futures,’ the fifth step, involves creating and engaging in one or more of at least four alternative futures based upon different mixes of the trends, emerging issues, challenges and opportunities from the future. Then, based on the experiences and responses of members of the group to each of the alternative futures scenarios, the group will begin work on ‘creating the futures,’ using that vision to determine the most effective strategy to move towards their preferred future. The final step is institutionalizing futures-oriented activity, creating of body or mechanism for recurrence to the scanning process which enables members to continue to look ahead for emerging challenges and opportunities in the immediate and more distant futures (Dator 2009).

Possible, Probable and Preferable Futures

³⁵ “‘Backcasting’ was coined ‘to describe an approach to futures studies which involved the development of normative scenarios aimed at exploring the feasibility and implications of achieving certain desired end-points, in contrast to forecasting studies aimed at providing the most likely projection of future conditions’” (Robinson 2003, 841, qtd. in Candy, 54).

The final centering element that could be useful for deepening and broadening discussions within the emergent teacher counter-public is the distinction between possible, probable and preferable futures. Stuart Candy suggests that while this trio has come to be used more often as descriptors of different types of scenario, the “bounds of the *possible* and the contours of the *preferable*” are the most productive sites for reconceptualizing politics of the futures (32).

Our sense of ... ‘preferable’ futures is invisibly hemmed in by an *underdeveloped sense of the possible*, which has twin consequences: failure to perceive risks and hence take steps to avoid or mitigate them, and, more poignantly, neglect of horizons of positive potentials that could make the world better.... the ways in which we ordinarily think about the future are inadequate to our needs in circumstances of rapid and accelerating change, and our collective survival depends on grappling more successfully with potentials seemingly ‘unthinkable’ [dystopian] or ‘unimaginable’ [utopian] (58-59).

The work of Jake Dunagan and Stuart Candy is among the most exciting in this regard, as it moves to narrow the experiential gulf by “simulating possibilities in such a way that the sense of possibility comes closer to the sense of actuality” (74). Candy’s recent dissertation on their designs of experiential futures scenarios is based on the premise that “all ideas, stories, narratives, and images can be regarded as experiences” in that they are “events occurring on a common body-mind substrate” (76). He makes an argument for the need to “speak in both registers,” the affective and the rational, to open up possibilities for imagination and envisioning as a means of developing foresight.

There are multiple means at our disposal: as Candy points out,

It is one thing to be swayed by an experience that represents a single theory as to the future’s trajectory, but it is quite another to be exposed to a series of compelling experiences that express mutually exclusive logics of alternative futures. In either case one will, at least, have a richer

vocabulary of possibility, in the form of real memories (albeit of virtual experience) to draw upon from that point forward (89).

Their purpose in designing experiential futures scenarios, is ultimately “to provide *material to think with*, which is to say, shared reference points for conversation among the participants,” by paradoxically creating “*real memories of hypothetical experiences*... to learn real lessons from experiences that are in some sense constructed or simulated” (103; 114). And this

far-reaching, multifarious, ongoing process which includes generating, sharing and exploring images and narratives of various futures, whereby the collective understandings and values, hopes and fears, expectations and assumptions, of a group and its individuals may be drawn out and held up for scrutiny, debate, refinement, and further inspiration (315).

This process itself can then serve as a “*catalyst for a more foresightful society*” (Ibid).

This is the “domain of potential and of action” that creative and futuristic criticality can open up for teachers, their students and their allies. As Candy argues:

Becoming with futures is a process of nudging ourselves, and each other, towards an ever greater, and yet more grounded, ‘influence optimism.’ We, ourselves, one by one, finally engage, or not, the self-fulfilling prophecy of the preferred future...this may be the ultimate ‘political’ moment in ‘doing futures’: one’s self-reconstruction as a person with imagination, with options, with agency (315).

“Bounds of the *Possible* and the Contours of the *Preferable*”

Social, economic and ecological crises are converging and will demolish the American nation-state. The moral bankruptcy of neoliberal understandings of the individual, revealing the ‘possessive individualism’ and consumer fetishism of late American corporate capitalism, combined with the overreach of the American nation-state, both downwards into local communities and imperialistically across oceans to secure energy resources, make the American neoliberal nation-state unstable and

unsustainable in the face of a ‘tsunami of change.’ Based on the assumptions of endless ‘continued growth,’ commodification of all realms of life, and the extraction of surplus value regardless of social, human costs, the socio-economic matrix that supports this state will most likely collapse in the face of three current trends: ‘peak oil,’ ‘climate change,’ and imminent ‘global economic collapse’ (Dator 2009).

While the dominant metaphor for confronting this change in some quarters has been that of ‘surfing tsunamis,’ it may be that this imagery itself is hindering our abilities to develop powerful foresight and planning around this likely future concurrence of events. Surfing is an inherently individualistic sport, and involves not only a great deal of individual skill developed over long periods of time in different types of conditions, but also requires tools or technology (i.e. the board itself) that are almost never developed by the surfer herself. So while the social labor that makes surfing possible is rendered invisible in this metaphor, our attention is on the singular surfer, the ‘survivor’ who has the foresight and wherewithal to use the labor of others to develop tools or technology that will allow her to navigate these changes successfully (Trevenna). However, a more apt metaphor available to us in Hawai‘i may be that of canoe voyaging. This is unmistakably a social, shared endeavor, also requiring tools or equipment, the production and maintenance of which participants are much more likely to have contributed hard labor. And it is a more clearly socially purposeful endeavor, whereas the desired end or purpose of surfing is usually pleasure, meditation, or sport. As Ka’iulani Murphy and others who have voyaged around the world on the Hokulea have testified, a deep sense of the need to take care of the Earth emerges while voyaging, just “as they must take care of their canoe and its resources to survive while on a voyage” (Patterson).

This imagery will help us shift away from traditional individualism and the singular focus on the individual, which is not as useful or powerful in this current context as is a heightened focus on the *social*, on that which binds and ties, and on the *public*, the space between people within which they act. And it will help us shift our focus to a different set of skills and human capacities. Political skill, the capacity to empathize with and negotiate different perspectives and understandings, becomes critical as we see more clearly the ways in which social actors ‘fashion’ structural *relationships* and are in turn ‘fashioned’ by them.

Preparation for voyaging in previously uncharted waters, and withstanding ‘tsunamis of change,’ requires specific kinds of work. Because the ends, or preferred futures, will in many important ways be shaped by the means utilized to attain them, attention to the processes used to achieve a more equitable and sustainable range of possible futures is critical. But restructuring does require decisive intervention, even if it only to create social, political and economic structures ‘underground’ to supplant that which will be destroyed.

Public Schools

In my preferred future, public schools would be the only type of schools, as both the means and the surplus value of production are socialized. With the socialization of surplus value, the schools would be primary site of public investment, and the resources and facilities available for learning will reflect the high value accorded to the knowledge shared with future generations. Schools would serve as centers of community where many if not all young adults and older adults serve as teachers and work as collaborative learners. The focus is only secondarily on education that is ‘useful and necessary’ for the

community, with the interpretation of what this might mean for courses of study determined by consensus by the community. The primary focus of education is to serve the students themselves, of any age, and to contribute not simply to their ‘happiness’ but ultimately, to their ‘flourishing’ (Brighthouse). This redefinition of the purposes of education centers the process on “opening the world to more questions, to deeper uncertainties, to shared and contested meanings, to community engagement, to imagination and action and joy” (Madeloni).

As the principles and structures of consociation and confederalism are applied to the public school system of Hawai‘i, as I have outlined elsewhere, several dramatic changes would immediately follow (Perruso). Public schools play a critical role in any kind of democratic political system. The first implication for this new form of political organization and emphasis on community building is related to the transformed nature of the social covenant. Just as the covenanting described in my previous work is explicit and voluntary, exemplifying purposive action, so too would participation in secondary public education be voluntary and explicitly designed by students themselves with trusted mentors to best suit the students’ interests and talents, using the site of the school as it best suits his or her purposes. However, those young people who choose to opt out of free public education at the age of sixteen and are unable to identify or create a purposive path for themselves connecting their life’s work to community needs, will need to serve one or two years in social volunteer programs until they are ready to make a decision or commitment with respect to the next step in their life’s work. This requirement reflects the importance of the social commitment, the understanding of oneself as embedded in

relationships with others, without dictating that a person's education serve purposes other than his or her own.³⁶

Schooling should equip and prepare members of society to live flourishing lives, so while schools do have an obligation to ensure that children can contribute to the physical well-being of the community, they should not try to fit their mission to economic needs. All need 'work' to flourish not only because they will need to complete a minimum number of hours of labor to qualify for the 'citizen's stipend,' but more importantly, because work constitutes part of our lives and will affect our sense of well-being (29).

A key assumption informing education in this preferred future is that the central point of educating any person is for her own benefit: it should enable her to live a more rewarding life over which she will have more control. The purpose of education is decidedly not primarily for the purposes of developing 'labor power': it is to provide opportunities for young people to explore what it means to be fully human, and who they are, as humans, and in relation to the layers of social worlds around them, and to explore different ways of expressing themselves and developing meaningful relationships with the world around them. Young people should be given opportunities to acquire a wider rather than narrower range of skills, because all members of society need a range of

³⁶ The human capital approach to education is premised on the assumption that "education provides the key to growth and competitiveness" as "labor is a major force of production, better labor will be more productive, and what makes for better labor is education and training" (Brighouse, 27). The imperative of this model of education is developing a strong and competitive economy, and the means or method to achieve this end is to "educate children to be productive workers" (27). My preferred future for education is premised on a diametrically opposed vision of the purpose of education. Brighouse argues that economic growth should not be imperative for education provision, and that "the content and distribution of educational opportunities should not be tailored to interests of employers" (28). I concur.

knowledge and capacities, broad and deep enough to know how to further that knowledge should they so desire.³⁷

In my preferred future, children have a recognized right to learn about a range of ways of living and to a kind of education that will enable them to reflect on their own life in light of these alternatives. Schools should educate children so that they can be effective and reasonable participants in public decision-making and execution, and, perhaps more importantly, emphasize the *intrinsic* value of intellectual pursuits to serve the ends of life-enhancement.

Requiring a minimal education is one practical guaranteed mechanism available to (attempt to) guarantee that all children have reasonable access to education, regardless of the level of educational and social supportive their parents can and will provide. If both autonomy and commitment to solidarity are needed by most young people to enable them to interact with a reasonably wide variety of people, this should be developed outside the home, away from the family. How able people are to pursue good ways of life depends partly on whether they possess reliable ways of evaluating different ways of life. The plurality of personal constitutions means that for a society to make sure that all children live well, that society must ensure that all children are exposed to and can enter into good ways of life possibly other than those into which their parents seek to induct them. To live well, a young person needs some sense of what constitutes living well: society must educate children in the skills of rational reflection and comparison usually associated with autonomy. Autonomy has deeply social aspects, in that people do not flourish apart

³⁷ There is also a moral issue, in that restricting the education of some is wrong for distributive reasons. This type of policy constitutes using those people for the sake of others, and “without any compensating benefit accruing to them,” so all citizens need to have perpetual access to resources and opportunities to learn (Brighouse, 36).

from others, as their interests are bound up with others, and reflection takes place within a given social context (Brighouse, 13-20).

When the desired social good or outcome is human flourishing rather than economic growth, the entire design of education is transformed. Hirsch argues that the only way in which economic growth contributes to human flourishing, rather than simply to the competitive accumulation of positional goods, is when it makes possible more leisure time. The best way to use economic productivity to promote human flourishing, then, is to redistribute it and use it to underwrite leisure for all (1995). But this issue of ‘flourishing’ raises the ethical problem of potential paternalism to which Brighouse and others in the liberal tradition are unwilling or unable to respond. If we see the basis of ‘humanity’ or what it means to be human as deeply connected to creativity and expression, and trust that while most humans are not intelligent in the same way but that all are intelligent in ways that seek creative outlet and expression, the problem of paternalism is minimized. The approach to education and pedagogical praxis becomes much like that evident in the Modern Schools, Ferrer Schools or the Free Schools of the early twentieth century, where students pursued their interests with the guidance of all manner of adult community mentors (Avrich).

Potential Power of Anarchist Educational Praxis

Anarchism can be distinguished from other ideological positions in that it “unequivocally rejects the concept of the state” (7). But, as Suissa points out, the anti-canonical character of anarchism makes it hard to pin down. Historically, the “values the anarchists attempted to demolish were those of the increasingly powerful centralized, industrial state which, in the nineteenth and twentieth century, has seemed the model to

which all societies are approaching” (Joll, ix). It is this historical connection, obliterated in statist national history textbooks, that illuminates the basis for the theoretical connections to other major modern political doctrines which were crystallized around this time. While Suissa discusses five main variants of anarchism (mutualism, federalism, collectivism, communism, and syndicalism), her main contribution is to identify shared propensities in anarchist thought with respect to education: a) the principled rejection of state and its institutions without rejecting the notion of social organization per se; b) anarchists value equality and do not necessarily see individual freedom as the primary value and major goal of social change, or propose any *blueprint* for future society.

Because even the most radical work within philosophy of education in the Western academy “tends to take present basic social framework and institutional setup as given,” there have been very few attempts to examine the implications of anarchist thought for educational philosophy within mainstream Western academic circles (Suissa, 3). This failure to grapple with the political philosophies associated with anarchism unnecessarily narrows the range of discourse, especially with respect to debates on democracy and education. “Before we engage in the enterprise of philosophy of education, we must question the very political framework within which we are operating, ask ourselves what kind of society would embody, for us, the optimal vision of the ‘good life’ [and the ‘good society’], and then ask ourselves what kind (if any) of educational system would exist in the society” and how we can help bring that systemic change about (4). This kind of creative, futuristic criticality, which can be cultivated through a proliferation futures-oriented scenario building within emergent counter-public movements, is necessary to develop a vision worthy of the struggle required to achieve it.

Anarchists, working within radical social movements and experiments in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, developed elaborate and fairly comprehensive emancipatory pedagogical theories and practices. These radicals were involved in thousands of remarkable educational experiments, activities, programs, and schools in the United States. Institutional settings and physical space were created, through these ventures, for children and adults to study and learn in an atmosphere of freedom, spontaneity, and self-reliance, in contrast to the authoritarianism, discipline, and obedience of the traditional classroom of the public school. One of the most important of these was the Modern School movement. The people involved in structuring these interstitial spaces sought to abolish all forms of hierarchy and domination - political, social, and economic, as well as educational - and to replace them with a new society based on the voluntary cooperation of free individuals. These activities, and their motivating language, reveal a common set of assumptions and values, as well as a common desire for radical and even revolutionary social change. On the broadest level, this tradition can be identified by its rejection of the dominant cultural, political, social, economic and ecological relationships, and by its implicit or explicit use of education to alter these relationships.

From nineteenth century utopian experiments to working class union movements, from transcendentalist school experiments to libertarian socialist and explicitly anarchist educational ventures, an American anarchist tradition in education has developed (Avrich). There are deep connections between the philosophical roots of American liberalism and global anarchism (Ranciere; Adams). The commonalities of these political traditions are evident in distinct but overlapping philosophies of education. Nineteenth

and twentieth century American anarchists generally situated themselves in a educational tradition which, “rooted in eighteenth century rationalism and nineteenth century romanticism, involved a shift from emphasis on instruction to emphasis on the process of learning, from teaching by rote and memorization to teaching by example and experience, from education as preparation for life to education as life itself” (Avrich, 5).

Classical liberal thinkers like Locke, Rousseau and Godwin also argued for organizing education around the freedom and initiative of the child: “Man is a creature that loves to act for himself, and actions performed in this way have infinitely more sound health and vigor in them than the actions to which he is prompted by a will foreign to his own,” so a teacher should “seek to gain his interest by aiding and encouraging and by giving him the greatest possible independence of action” (10). Those late nineteenth and early twentieth century Americans who honored the memory of the Spaniard anarchist educator Francisco Ferrer by establishing ‘modern schools’ in early twentieth century America, worked in a tradition that was “hostile to dogma and superstition” and “anticoercive and antiauthoritarian” (7). This shared tradition, upheld by nineteenth and twentieth century liberals, socialists, libertarians and anarchists, “emphasized reason, observation and science, as well as independence, autonomy and self-reliance” (Ibid). The central values of this shared tradition are freedom, spontaneity, creativity, individuality and self-realization. Both anarchists and liberals draw from a shared language of freedom and equality, but anarchism, and social anarchism in particular, holds a reserve of radical and inspirational potential seemingly already exhausted by liberalism.

Moreover, the anarchist approach has remained distinct from liberal and progressive approaches to education by the way it defined a radical and even revolutionary approach to child rearing that attacked traditional notions of how children learn, grow, and develop. And this tradition is also distinctive in its harsh criticism of, and efforts to change, the dominant political, social, and economic relationships and the cultural expression of those relationships because they stifle human growth and potential. More significantly, however, the anarchist tradition has often incorporated a wide-range of activities, beliefs, and values that work to develop a culture of freedom and equality. Anarchists have often used education as a central part of the more general process of social and cultural transformation that has included changes in human relationships in the family, the school, the work place, and to nature, as well as other political, social, and economic relationships (Marshall).

Anarchist approaches to education can be initiated and carried out ‘here and now’ because “anarchism is built upon the assumption of propensities, values and tendencies which, it is argued, are already present in human social activity” (5). One purpose of public education, then, would be to elaborate on the positive propensities, values and tendencies which would make a stateless society possible. Many anarchists “have an elaborate theory of human nature which arguably supports their claims for the possibility of a society based on mutual aid and self-government,” a contextualist view of human nature that rejects essentialist notions of human nature and assumed humans to be at the same time individuals and social beings (Ibid). It is this exploration of shared assumptions, and the implications that assumptions can have for outcomes, that is so very exciting about Suissa’s work on anarchism and education. She is suggesting that the

theoretical cluster of anarchist ideas about human nature, authority, freedom and community can have a profound impact on our discussions about democracy and education.

Suissa sees anarchism as a logical extension of the ideals informing liberalism, but still a position that yields a different philosophical perspective on education from that embodied in liberal thought. But the structure of education within the American state, shaped as it has been by constitutionalism and the odd marriage between (corporate) capitalism and ‘representative democratic’ institutions, has created a dangerously repressive set of institutions and practices. Educators like Ferrer would have argued that this was a natural result of the state’s (like the church’s) effort to silence ideas that “might undermine the status quo” (8). “Rulers have always taken care to control the education of the people [because] [t]hey know better than anyone else that their power is based almost entirely on the school, and they therefore insist on their monopoly of it” (Ibid). Similarly, Godwin argued that government education stunted “the progress of knowledge and illumination” while endeavoring “to form all minds upon one model,” thereby becoming an instrument of political control (Ibid). He, like other libertarians and anarchists after him, argued powerfully that public schools were a “weapon wielded by the state to shape the will and character of its citizens and to condition students to docility and obedience, rather than to stimulate independent judgment and a critical attitude towards authority” (Ibid). Because Ferrer saw schools as instruments of “domination in the hands of the ruling class” and a site within which “government creates loyal citizens,” only enslavement through ignorance and never emancipation would ever come of education in public schools (9). Part of the problem, for Ferrer and others, is related to the role of

teacher in a public school classroom. Under a state-run system, the “teacher was merely an agent of the ruling classes, training his charges ‘to obey, to believe, to think according to the social dogmas which govern us... always imposing, compelling, and using violence’” (Ibid). This radical critique not only of the nation-state but of all forms of domination that shape institutions of education is missing from Suissa’s focus on assumptions about human nature.

The seminal thinkers of anarchism, like Bakunin, argued that education “must be founded wholly upon the scientific development of reason and not upon faith; upon the development of personal dignity and independence, not upon piety and obedience; upon the cult of truth and justice at any cost; and above all, upon respect for humanity, which must replace in everything the divine cult” (Avrich, 8). Learning, for these thinkers, could only be effectuated through the spontaneous process of self-realization, not through the rote, memorization, routinized patterns and repetition or the punishment of drill-and-kill instruction. What is required is the encouragement, by the teacher, of individualized self-realization through creativity and cultivation of initiative. The emphasis, many anarchists continue to argue, should be on improvisation and experiment (10).

Freedom in education- freedom from authority of teacher as well as of church and state – is a key element of anarchist education and as such could serve as an antidote to domination in educational institutions. Ferrer argued for the “establishment of new schools, in which, as far as possible, there shall rule the spirit of freedom which, we feel, will color the whole education of the child” (9). Thinkers as diverse as Pestalozzi, Froebel, Fourier, Owen, Proudhon, Stirner, Bakunin, Spencer, Kropotkin and Tolstoy all believed that freedom must be the cornerstone of education, that education was a process

of self-development, a drawing out rather than a driving in, a means by which the child's unique spirit was nurtured rather than shaped or suppressed. Stirner similarly argued that purpose of education not to produce 'useful citizens' but free men, autonomous, independent and self-sufficient" (11). Tolstoy likewise saw learning as a creative and liberating process, enriching the child's unique spirit rather than molding him to suit the teacher's preconceptions, and suggested that the role of teacher not to inculcate or indoctrinate but to suggest and encourage, to listen and modify what he hears (Ibid). And Bakunin argued that children *belong to themselves and their future liberty*, not parents or society, and must be treated as creators, not creatures (Ibid).

Jacques Ranciere's work on Joseph Jacotot, an exiled French schoolteacher whose unusual experiment in pedagogy challenges conventional understandings of education, provides into the possibilities for radically rethinking education. Ranciere allows the work of Jacotot in the early to mid-nineteenth century to become a "break, a rupture...interrogated only from the perspective of the here and now, and only politically" (1991, xxi). Because Jacotot was able to teach students in subjects about which he was completely ignorant, in a language he did not speak, with texts he did not understand, Jacotot quickly came to the conclusion that education is not about the 'transmission of knowledge' from one powerful, informed, educated person to a less enlightened and subordinate person, but rather about intellectual emancipation among equals. For Jacotot, any text could be the tool, or facilitator, of intellectual emancipation, as long as the teacher operates with the supposition that all humans are equally intelligent and relies not on 'explication' but on strong support for the student's exploration. The basic premise of Jacotot's approach is that "*something must be learned and all the rest*

related to it, on this principle: everyone is of equal intelligence,” but Ranciere is very clear about the distinction between learning and emancipation (12). Ranciere argues forcefully that while “learning also takes place at the stultifiers’ school,” “no party or government, no army, school or institution will ever emancipate a single person” (102).

On the other hand, Ranciere suggests that “a society, a people, a state, will always be irrational. But one can multiply within these bodies the number of people who, as individuals, will make use of reason, and who, as citizens, will know how to seek the art of raving as reasonably as possible” (98). So it is possible, in any context, for one to seize emancipation by teaching oneself. Jacotot saw himself as temporarily providing the will, and the ability to see the person before him as his equal, and it is this role that any individual, inside or out of a public school classroom, can play.

These anarchist approaches to education, when incorporated into futures scenario-building, can potentially contribute a powerful shared source of creative, futuristic criticality with respect to our contemporary educational malaise. Such ideas provide the basis for a critique of the nation-state and all forms of domination, creating a new dialogue on democracy and the purposes of education, raising the questions regarding what kind of human is required for the success of strong direct democracy, and reclaiming the public space of education for liberatory and humanistic purposes rather than the narrow economic and political interests of the American nation-state’s elite. Political restructuring requires meaningful design opportunities, sometimes provided by a vacuum of political power. The American nation-state is currently being hollowed out in the sense that the federal government seems to be abdicating the positive power to provide a basis for public support of social stability and equal opportunity, in large part by

regulating businesses for the benefit of the public, while the nation-state powers to wage war without check are being strengthened and sharpened. Yet, in another sense, neoliberal approaches to education, in all of their permutations, are a reflection of the increased intrusion of the federal government into the affairs of state government, for the purposes of increasing the economic competitiveness of the American workforce, vis-à-vis international economic powerhouses like China. Yet this moment does offer an opportunity to reshape the discussion on the purposes of, and broader vision informing, public education, as the neoconservative attack on public education is creating a vacuum of legitimate political authority on the connections between democracy and education.

Transition via Civic Education in Public Schools

Meaningful change will require development of futures-oriented pedagogical praxis through the emergent teacher counter-public, so that teachers in schools in my preferred future will be able to foster the skills and traits that contribute not only to individual flourishing but also, through participation in political life, to the flourishing of others. Civic education in this context, in my preferred future, involves some remnants of the liberal democratic political order, but will have the challenging and important purpose of making itself *obsolete*. This moment is my preferred future because it is here where I think the work will be most challenging. This is the limited time-space in which social studies remains the common element of public education, which is not to say that separate and discrete sequences of courses are necessary, but that the knowledge, dispositions and skills to transition from the collapse of the shell of ‘liberal democratic capitalist order’ to a ‘confederally coordinated green anarcho-regional-syndicalism’ (my preferred social order) are most likely necessary. There are four democratic political

dispositions necessary for confederalized citizenship at this moment of political transition.

Civic Dispositions

Three are very familiar. The first necessary disposition is the desire to learn and willingness to be creatively challenged. While the experiential learning discussed briefly in the previous section helps people connect emotionally and cognitively to new or distant ideas, possibilities or understandings, the constructive element of human knowledge is also critical. People connect to or derive meaning from work in which they have invested parts of themselves, from which they have emerged with new understandings. The disposition being described is not dependent on the *type* of learning, for as the plurality of human constitutions and multiplicity of intelligences suggests, people vary in areas of interest and strength. However, this disposition should lead people to build upon the feelings of accomplishment from learning within their dominant intelligence(s) to explore areas in which they might not feel as comfortable. While ‘learning for learning’s sake’ is encouraged, social justice, ecological sustainability and creative foresight will continue to be the defining parameters of the most important kinds of knowledge at this moment in this future.

A second important disposition, for citizens in my preferred future, is a willingness to use political participation through legal channels to raise questions about social problems and to achieve justice. Civic education, in order to facilitate the development of this disposition, should focus on illuminating the structures and purposes of different types of political systems, and “conveying strategies for gathering information, and for evaluating it by, for example, acquainting students with some of the basic principles of

statistical analysis" and historical analysis (Brighthouse, 121). A component of this particular disposition would be the willingness to comply with the 'legislative' results of direct, consensus-based decision-making as long as this decision-making creates authentically and directly democratic institutions, effective and just rule of 'law,' and reasonable protections of individual rights. And the use of legal channels requires education that develops participatory skills in those areas. This should be an overridable disposition, so that civil disobedience and political action would be the citizen's inclination when she thinks a law or policy is unjust.

Third, students need to develop the disposition to engage in public reasoning in a spirit of mutual respect and willingness to listen. "Teaching children how to reason and argue reasonably about contentious and emotionally charged issues is... difficult" so teachers "need to be well-informed about the issues themselves, to facilitate discussion and identify when it is likely to become explosive, and to become adept at thinking through the moral questions students raise on their feet" (122-123). If political debates are "disagreements about how to interpret pertinent values, how much weight to give them, and how to institutionalize them," one of the most important tasks of civic educators (i.e. all educators in my preferred future, regardless of their discipline) is to ensure that their students "come to understand precisely this, and to develop the critical skills that enable them to reflect rationally on political debate" and simultaneously to connect with others empathetically (125).

Finally, most important and most difficult, is the disposition to actively seek private as well as public freedom.³⁸ This entails not only the embrace of creativity and cultivation of the ‘life of the mind’ but the disposition to engage in the kind of creative and futuristic criticality discussed in the previous section. Both personal/private and public freedom derive from CFC (creative, futuristic criticality) because it expands our critical consciousness of the possible, and asks us to think politically and collectively about the relationships between the possible, probable and preferable.

Conclusion

The language and practices of criticality that teachers learn and develop so that we can more effectively teach our students *how* to live in an active, participatory democracy are the very practices and language that should inform our politics *as* teachers. We should struggle to create structures that facilitate not only criticality in all its dimensions, but also creativity, spaces in which we can together develop political skills, practices and strategies, creating and reinforcing mutuality based on humility and openness to learning. The work we do with these skills and dispositions within those teacher counter-public structures needs to be focused not only on challenging neoliberalism in education, but also on imagining, envisioning, and creating rich, powerful, and productive alternative futures of education. I firmly believe that we need to create institutional spaces and time for teachers to have these kinds of conversations

³⁸ Arendt discusses two relevant kinds of freedom: public freedom and private freedom. Public freedom is the freedom to participate in the activities of expressing oneself, discussing and deciding about public issues, whereas private freedom entails the freedom to think, the capacity to engage in a silent dialogue between me and myself. Arendt realized that while totalitarianism eliminated both the plurality of men and the plurality within themselves - that is, public freedom and private freedom – council democracy was fueled by these types of plurality (Mariano, 5).

amongst and for ourselves, because doing futures work together is one way we can reclaim public education for public purposes.

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