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ABSTRACT

This paper draws on the metaphor of the enclosure, a forceful reconfiguration of shared space that occurred in early modern Europe, as a model for describing the current drive for privatization of education. It examines the metaphors embedded in current school transformations and contrasts the conception of democracy held by current advocates of education markets with those of the common-school reformers who founded mass education. The study compares the values embedded in the rhetoric of leading proponents of choice and charter schools in Michigan with the values of the most prominent advocates of the common-school reforms of the last century. It is hoped that such a contrast will illuminate competing conceptions of democracy, the role of education in sustaining such conceptions, and the current efforts to redefine traditional conceptions of the "public" aspect of education in the current debate regarding the spheres of "public" and "private" resources. The paper also attempts to make sense of the incongruence between these two discourses in a democratic society. (Contains 118 references.) (RJM)

MARKET CHALLENGES TO PUBLIC EDUCATION IN THE U.S.
Michigan's Charter Schools & Enclosures of the Common Good

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MARKET CHALLENGES TO PUBLIC EDUCATION IN THE U.S.

Michigan's Charter Schools & Enclosures of the Common Good

The enclosures of the commons in Europe that immediately preceded the advent of the Industrial Revolution have been the source of much debate regarding their role in the progress and pain for the human condition. The enclosures were sudden, and often forceful reconfigurations of the shared space in an agricultural society that then had immense consequences on the realms of political economy, systems of morality, and social relations. The de facto and draconian imposition of a new way of organizing human interaction was the cause of much social dislocation, disruption of community arrangements, and the eradication of traditional conceptions of morality. However, it can also be argued that the enclosures represented the natural demise of an obsolete system, and were the necessary precursor to the dramatic rise in agricultural efficiency and production, and the release of a workforce that was then free to carry the progress of the market economy into the modern consumer society.

In this paper I propose that the current drive for the privatization of education carried in market oriented proposals represents a new enclosure of the public space of education. There has recently been a proliferation of proposals and policies that seek to import the market model on education structures and processes. Calls for choice, charters, and vouchers are the most obvious manifestations of this approach. All are put forward with the claim that they promote efficient use of resources, emancipate consumer preference, and will lead to an improvement in outcomes (e.g., Chubb and Moe, 1990, 1991). The proliferation of market-based models of education suggest that a distinct view of education has been embraced by policymakers, one that challenges the traditional symbiosis between public and private spheres.

In reviewing the academic and policy discourse circulating around education markets, these issues are often embedded in, and animated through metaphors. In this paper, I examine those metaphors, and suggest the appropriateness of the image of the enclosure of the common space represented by public education in a democracy. The work of Christopher Lasch (1995) and others in the early 1990s on the withdrawal of socioeconomic elites from the common areas of life in a democracy holds much promise for analysis of trends in education and social policy and patterns. Indeed, such an analysis does much to illuminate, for example, the recent trends towards economic and racial segregation in residential and educational patterns. However, a review of the evidence presented in this paper leads to the conclusion that Lasch's metaphor does not go far enough in understanding current market-oriented trends in educational reform, and that the pro-market rhetoric that re-casts the purpose of education both privatizes the purpose of education, and balkanizes its control.

In that regard, this paper contrasts the conception of democracy held by current advocates of education markets with those of the common school reformers who established the system of mass education in a democratic republic. Specifically, I compare the values embedded in the rhetoric of leading proponents of choice and charter schools in Michigan with the values of the most prominent advocate of the common school reforms of

the last century. This exercise is not concerned primarily with the specifics of proposals or policies, but instead examines the nature of the discourse around choice in these two contexts. This contrast highlights competing conceptions of democracy, and the role of education in sustaining it. Furthermore, it illuminates current efforts to redefine traditional conceptions of the "public" aspect of education — a reconfiguration of the relationship between common conceptions of the spheres of "public" and "private" that allows and encourages public resources to be privatized in terms of ownership and purpose. The final section of the paper attempts to make sense of the discongruence between the two discourses in the context of education in a democratic society. The concluding discussion interrogates the strategy and assumptions of reforms regarding democracy and markets, as well as the role of evidence and ideology, and suggests that a pattern of privatization of the *purpose* of public education is evident. Thus, it proposes an analytical device — the metaphor of enclosures of common spaces — as a way to understand current trends in education reform.

DISCOURSE AROUND MICHIGAN CHARTER SCHOOLS

In the policy discourse in the state of Michigan in this decade, a conservative governor and an activist state board of education have pushed market-oriented proposals as the necessary remedy for what they call "government monopoly schools." They have made the state, in the eyes of prominent choice advocates and observers both in and outside Michigan, one of the leading sites in the United States in terms of the pace and extent of their reforms (DeWeese, 1994; Andrejevic, 1995c; Center for Education Reform, 1997). The centerpiece of their efforts has been a statewide "choice" system driven by "Public School Academies" — charter schools.

Perhaps the most effective way to examine the evolution of choice proposals in Michigan in a paper such as this is to focus on the rhetoric of a few of the primary actors — politicians, policy-makers, policy entrepreneurs, and other public figures — who have been key players around the issue. Examining the most vocal and visible policy actors is appropriate because choice proposals have not harnessed widespread support or grassroots ground swells for choice. Indeed, recent events portray a population that is largely apathetic or ambivalent, at best, on this issue, since residents are essentially happy with their schools (Daubenmier, 1995a).[1] While the Michigan Constitution has one of the most strict clauses on the prohibition of using public money for private-religious schooling, repeated referenda on vouchers have met with consistent defeat at the hands of voters (Overton, 1997). Therefore, to truly understand the impetus for choice in Michigan, we must study the ideas of those policy actors who represent the genesis of that agenda.

The advent of choice proposals in this decade was largely the work of several powerful players in the policy sphere. Among the most prominent players have been the governor and several key legislators, as well as the Mackinaw Center for Public Policy — an

[1] The apparent lack of interest in charter schools forced the state to divert half a million dollars from the state's education budget to the Michigan Partnership for New Education in order to promote charter schools (Andrejevic, 1995e). (In 1995 the MPNE absorbed TEACH Michigan's Center for Charter Schools, and has since transformed itself into the Leona Group, a private charter school management agency.)

influential think tank that pushes privatization across a number of issues, particularly education.[2] However, in view of the space constraint of a paper such as this, I will focus here on the public policy pronouncements — quotes in the media, publications and other writings, etc. — of the two most eloquent, forceful, and prolific players in the field:

- Michigan's State Board of Education has been particularly instrumental in its advocacy of drastic and immediate school reform, primarily through the mechanisms of choice, competition, and charters.[3] Specifically, the president of the board, W. Clark Durant III, sponsored by the governor after several failed runs for elected office, took a publicly combative stance in attacking the public schools and espousing educational "revolution" — "We're not at 1776 yet. It's more like we're at 1774" (quoted in Andrejevic, 1995c). Durant is a founding board member of the Education Leaders Council, which is affiliated with the national Center for Education Reform (ELC, 1995). He has sought intellectual support for his ideas from members of the academic community, especially scholars affiliated with the Mackinaw Center (e.g., Allen, 1996).
- TEACH Michigan, a pressure group founded by voucher activist Paul DeWeese, has been a primary player in creating and promoting the legislation that established charter schools, and providing the support and resources to nurture those schools. TEACH Michigan is effectively networked, including cooperation with the Mackinaw Center, support to and from the Edison Project, and the charter school management industry.[4] The group publishes op-ed columns in local and regional state newspapers and business publications in support of choice and charters.[5] TEACH Michigan has been very forthright about the extent of its agenda for school choice. It does not obscure the fact that, although happy with the success of the charter school legislation (that its own attorney authored), it sees charters as only a stepping stone to more of a free market model (DeWeese, 1994).

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[2] The only potential opponent of charter schools of any prominence and coherence in Michigan, the Michigan Education Association, declined to fight charter schools so long as the legislation required that they be staffed by certified (i.e., MEA dues-paying), teachers (McMillan, 1995). The MEA instead focused on funding, union dues, certification requirements, tenure, and other aspects of the legislative agenda.

[3] The Board's Vision, Philosophy, and Mission statements (adopted 1/19/95) were laced with religious and market references, and approved, despite concerns from civil libertarians and others. Durant's response to criticisms on his mixing of religion with his responsibilities as a public official: "let 'em sue" (Americans United for Separation of Church and State, 1996). Some excerpts from the adopted document: "We, the Michigan State Board of Education, grateful to Almighty God for the blessings of freedom, do earnestly desire to secure these blessings undiminished for our children.... We, the Michigan State Board of Education, believe that to teach a child created by God is a noble calling... [WE] support school choices for parents;... we advocate the removal of barriers that constrain efforts to open, sustain, and/or expand quality schools and other quality educational opportunities in the marketplace of a free society; and we pray for wisdom..." Since a recent election shifted the balance of power on the State Board of Education, however, the Statement was rescinded on a close vote. This reversal, however, does not effect the focus of this paper regarding the role of the rhetoric in establishing choice.

[4] For the Mackinaw Center, see, for instance, Reed, & Hutchison, 1991 — a publication that included efforts from DeWeese (1991), as well as Chubb & Moe (1991). DeWeese is aided in fundraising efforts in his run for elected office by Deborah McGriff, former school superintendent of Detroit, and now VP on the Edison Project. DeWeese (1996b) has also written specifically in support of the Edison Project.

[5] See, for example, DeWeese, 1993; 1995; 1996a; 1996b; 1996c; Heiderson, 1996; Lange, 1996; also, McGriff, 1996. In addition to the abundant access it has to the press, TEACH Michigan also commissions surveys and issues press releases (e.g., TEACH Michigan, 1996).

While perhaps the most vocal representatives of the advocates for education markets, these two forces in the policy arena are also representative of the different players in the loose coalition that formed to support charter schools. The sum of their public policy pronouncements on choice are together the most logically coherent and cogent arguments for charter schools, and appear to have exercised a strong influence on the ideas and public discourse that supports education markets.

An analysis of the rhetoric in the public discourse of these two players suggests some patterns and themes. It highlights a strategy by which these policy players sought to diffuse any potential opposition, and build public support for their measures around choice. If there is a pattern to the public rhetoric of these policy players, it follows along these lines: attacks on the status quo of education; allusions to the benefits of the market assumed to be present in choice and charter plans; and efforts to reconfigure conceptions of public education by redefining the terms of the discourse. A closer look at each of these three elements will illustrate the broader public discourse on charter schools in Michigan.

Attacks on the status quo

Public attacks on current conditions of schooling in Michigan closely parallel the national discourse on education reform in the United States, and provide the premise for calls for drastic reform. It is notable that in Michigan these pro-market policy players operationalize that assumption: 1) despite the facts that the majority of Michigan residents are quite satisfied with the schooling that their children are receiving (Daubenmier, 1995a; Andrejevic, 1995a), and 2) by framing the "crisis" in terms of standards and mediocrity of "government education," rather than in terms of equity or segregation, for example.

These policy actors often voice their criticisms by referring to conventional wisdom, rather than supporting evidence. For example, DeWeese (1991: 4) notes:

> It is clear that something is fundamentally wrong with the educational system in the United States. Television, newspapers, and the newsmagazines have all given notice to the fact that we have, in fact, reached an educational crisis.

More money, or equitable distribution of educational resources, is not the issue, since "enormous resources" have already been wasted on an inefficient system (Durant, 1997: 360). They frequently employ the term "monopoly" to portray public schools as "an administrative monolith," thereby framing the problem and suggesting the necessary alternative (see Andrejevic, 1995d). For example, Durant uses the concept of monopoly frequently: "Legally enforced monopolies never deliver quality services and goods over the long haul" (quoted in Hornbeck, 1995; see, also, Daubenmier, 1995b; Durant, 1997). DeWeese (1994) calls schools "a self-protective, rule-driven, bureaucratic monopoly" (see, also, 1995; 1996c).

Advocates of education markets often utilize related concepts of bureaucratic-inspired paralysis and the idea of a self-defending "establishment." Durant's Education Leaders Council (1995) claims that choice "will fill the void that existed in the education establishment." DeWeese (1994: 30) describes school governance as an "incomprehensible amalgam of rules that have accumulated over many years." This over-regulating system is therefore responsible for "all manner of ills: student boredom,

violence, dropping out, parental dissatisfaction, academic mediocrity, teacher burnout, and a decline in personal behavior and standards" (Durant, 1997: 360). Once they establish the problem as too much government, the alternative — the market — is obvious (e.g., TEACH Michigan, 1996). Their rhetoric promotes choice in the education market as an answer for problems such as low test scores and decaying urban areas. "Government" and "bureaucracy" are located in opposition to the free market. For instance, a Durant supporter on the State Board of Education notes:

> The board does have what [critics] call an ideology and what I call a guiding principle. It's based on the proper role of government and parents in education and a belief that markets can produce....I don't see how moving to some sort of centralized bureaucracy will make poor kids, wherever they might be, better off. (quoted in Hornbeck, 1995).

A TEACH Michigan board member adds his frustration to the juxtaposition: "As a businessman, I have little patience with education bureaucrats" (Hetzler, 1997).

It is instructive to highlight two related metaphors from the rhetoric at this point. First, there are repeated references to the global political changes of recent years, especially in the former soviet economies. Durant (1997: 361) writes: "our public education system more resembles the failed command-and-control economies of Eastern Europe than our own free-market system." Second, the consequent notion of revolution is invoked. There is a consistent rhetorical device of framing the issue as "the quest for educational freedom" of parents and practitioners from the bureaucratic stranglehold of the state (DeWeese, 1994: 29-30; see also, Hetzler, 1997; Durant, 1997). But, notably, because these market-oriented reformers see schools in a crisis state, action is supposed to be immediate and draconian. So, "revolution" is the way to the "paradigm shift" (see, Andrejevic, 1995c). That this rhetoric can often get incendiary should not be surprising. For example, TEACH Michigan board member, charter school official, and businessman, Stuart Ray wants a state school chief who would, if necessary, "blow up the existing system" (Andrejevic, 1995b). DeWeese (1994: 35) sees himself as a catalyst of a broader transformation: "If we are successful, we believe that much of the rest of the nation will soon implement policies that similarly broaden educational freedom for their citizens."

Benefits of the market assumed in charter plans

The idea of liberty in the market logically follows the portrayal of an educational crisis caused by an authoritarian, bureaucratic government. Indeed, it is a common rhetorical practice here to make presumptive references to the advantages of the market to education. This is done on two levels. In the first, the policy actors make *explicit* attempts to extend the logic of the market, as it is experienced in other aspects of consumer life, to education. In the second, they *implicitly* assume that education exists naturally for and within the market's logic regarding producers, customers, and options.

Explicit extensions of the market

In the more explicit efforts, the rhetoric is more didactic and explanatory. There are many examples of these policy players referring to popular consumer culture in order to

explain the benefits of bringing the market to bear on education. Hetzler (1997), a TEACH Michigan board member, told the Michigan Chamber of Commerce:

> It is without question that competition makes businesses better and more responsive to customers' needs. Is there any reason to believe that competition will have any other effect on the quality of public education?

The director of TEACH Michigan made a similar connection: "If choice is so wrong, as opponents say, why is it so commonplace in every other part of our lives?" (Taylor, 1997). Former Detroit Superintendent and current Edison Vice President Deborah McGriff (1996), who actively supports DeWeese's political aspirations, concurs, quoting Chester Finn's claim that "it is reasonable for people to select the school they want, just as they select their home, their health-care provider, their college, their church, their clothes, and their dinner." Durant claims choice "will bring down the cost and time of education" (Durant, 1997: 364). It is noteworthy that none of these ambitious claims for the market, particularly as it would apply to schooling, is buttressed by any attempt to provide supporting evidence — it is presented as "common sense." Citing specific industries and products is a popular tactic in this approach. Both DeWeese (1995) and TEACH Michigan's director (Taylor, 1997) point to the liberation of consumer preference in higher education as an argument for its extension into K-12 schooling. Furthermore, since Michigan is the case in point, references to the automobile industry are essentially unavoidable. DeWeese (1994: 30) contrasts choice aspects of consumer life with the "captured clientele" of the "one-size-fits-all, government-run school system" (1996b). Thus, Durant (1997: 362), asks — since his definition of traditional "public" school system involves an institution that is "immediately, exclusively controlled by the state" — "would we want this definition applied to other areas of our lives?" His answer points to the transportation industry to show how the free market has made travel cheaper and safer: "I prefer to buy from Ford, General Motors, Chrysler, or from a host of other companies that succeed — or fail — based on how well they satisfy the customer."

Implicit assumptions of a market for education

In the second approach to extending market mechanisms into education, the market proponent implies (or draws a much less explicit picture of) the appropriateness of the place of public education in the realm of the market. Even though the relationship is not spelled out, the immediate link between market logic and educational organization is assumed. They leave the direct connection to the "common sense" of the reader. It does not have to be shown that the market is appropriate for the education system — its naturalness is beyond question, beyond the realm of what is thinkable.

Thus, for the executive director of TEACH Michigan, there can be only one explanation for a school losing students: "People leaving is a clear sign that the school isn't doing everything it could to satisfy parents" (quoted in Van Moorlehem, 1996). In another forum, he notes that the success of a school depends on treating education as private property (Taylor, 1996; see, also, Durant, 1997; and TEACH Michigan, 1996). DeWeese (1994: 33, 34) also conceives of educational improvement happening only in a situation that is "customer-driven" — where schools must "attract and retain their

students." DeWeese (1996c) places mass education in the category of a common economic enterprise: "Can you imagine any other industry responding to a customer's complaint...as if any dissatisfaction with the company's product must be the fault of the customer."

This allusion to the "customer" is a consistent element of the discourse. A TEACH Michigan board member presumes the place of education in the market by showing that "accountability" naturally comes from appealing to the parental "customers" (Hetzler, 1997). DeWeese (1996c) claims that a "decade of research has shown that schools run better when they treat families as valued customers."[6] In one telling instance of placing public schooling within private markets, Durant was caught between a business faction that was seeking strong central leadership from the state to set high academic standards for all students, and a more libertarian element that feared big government and valued very de-centralized control. His solution was to allow the market to set standards.

> The challenge we face in Michigan is to move to a free marketplace system of higher, world class platform standards. Mandates carry a promise of performance with no guarantees of performance. The State Board is committed to diminishing regulatory oversight, and at the same time, unleashing the power of choice and competition to education. If schools don't perform on a consistent basis up to the levels of performance desired by parents and students, their doors should be closed unless they can develop satisfactory performance. If a school cannot attract customers, it should change its ways or close its doors. (Durant, 1996; see, also, Michigan Department of Education, 1996).

In this second, implicit approach, the assumption regarding education's natural place in the market is advanced from different perspectives. For the supply side, the benefits of ownership are well-known, and that they are present in education is obvious to the policy actors (e.g., Durant, 1997). Profitability, an assumed advantage of ownership, only partly explains the attraction of so many business groups. DeWeese (1994: 33), for example, lists TEACH Michigan's alliances with "all the major business groups in the state including the National Association of Independent Businesses, the Michigan Manufacturing Association, the Michigan Chamber of Commerce, and the Michigan Small Business Association." However, TEACH Michigan's rhetoric of "raising the standards" praises the benefits of a better quality "product" — "quality," in this sense, being a better-educated and trained workforce (e.g., DeWeese, 1996c; Lange, 1996). The pro-market proponents presume that a function of the market's efficiency is that for-profit enterprise like the Edison Project, the Leona Group, Innovative Learning Solutions, Baron Schools Inc., Educare Inc., Education Development Corporation (or one of the many other charter management companies that have sprung up) can research, design, and provide such a service in an economical manner (e.g., DeWeese, 1996b; 1996c; Durant, 1997). Furthermore, there is a faith in the assumption that "competition" will be a strong dynamic of market's power in education (e.g., Durant, 1997).

However, more important, presumably, for most citizens, is the presentation of this projection from the standpoint of the "consumers" or "customers" of education. As far as

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[6] Since DeWeese cites no "research," the question arises as to which of the "stakeholders" in education represents the actual "consumer." The founder of an Afrocentric charter school sees himself as serving "the true customer — the parent and the potential employer" (Andrejevic, 1995d). One State Board of Education candidate, the CEO of a family business who was supported by Durant, had a different definition: "In our education system, the customer is the parent and child" (Mayes, 1996).

maximizing the educational experience for themselves (or their families), the market-oriented policy proponents treat the market as the mechanism by which educational accumulation or advancement is best achieved. In this sense, "quality" is not about the added-value that a businessperson realizes from a better educated workforce pool that is efficiently and effectively trained by the publicly funded schools. Instead, quality comes to signify more effective means by which an individual "consumer" or "customer" of educational provision can improve his or her educational experience and, it is hoped, the value of his or her credential or employability. "Standards," while important to the overall performance of the educational system, become relative indicators of performance and quality for consumers choosing between various educational options in the market to maximize personal gain (Durant, 1997; Lange, 1997). Thus, the policy pronouncements equate a good, wise, and effective parent with one that maximizes opportunities for educational attainment for the child — and "the market best helps the family or responsible adult to find the people and institutions who will do that for children" (Durant, 1997: 363).

Of course, under the logic held by these proponents of markets for education, there is no market without the freedom to choose, and there is no choice without different options. It is in this area where they perceive the market at its most dynamic state, in contrast to the charges of uniformity that are employed to describe the "government" schools. Market advocates (like TEACH Michigan's Lange, 1996) assume that students

> have different ways of learning and different needs when it comes to school. Trying to squeeze all our children into a one-size system doesn't serve any of them well.

Ignoring the cognitive and pedagogical suppositions in that statement, as well as the debatable assertion that public schooling is uniform, the proponents of choice make the clear assumption that the market offers choices in education. Education markets will produce diversity of provision because that is what markets do in response to consumer demand. Durant (1997: 364), for example, claims:

> Innovations invariably will result from the creativity of pioneers who develop a product or service that meets a need we might not even have known before. Competition and the innovation that it fosters will bring down the cost and time of education.

Thus, if the providers of educational services are liberated from the government bureaucracy, and market forces are allowed to work in schooling, advocates of education markets assert that the market will diversify the options available to the consumer.

Reconfiguring "public" in the discourse

Probably the most important theme in the rhetoric around charter schools in Michigan has been the overt attempt to realign the thinking about the common conceptions of "public" and "private" spheres in education. Prominent representatives of both TEACH Michigan and the State Board of Education have invested much time and energy in this effort to redefine the terms in the discourse as they are employed in advocating and defending proposals for charter schools. It is here that the logic of the market not only dominates, but is in sole possession of the agenda, with no other viable ways of thinking allowed at the policy table.

Controlling the alternatives

In this endeavor, there is a very blatant strategy to shape the discourse in order to advance markets into education. Transforming the system to a private-oriented enterprise is the vision. Charters are a means to a more radical realization of that vision. DeWeese (1994: 32), in particular, is very clear on this agenda: "The significance of the charter school reform cannot be overemphasized in terms of helping to prepare the public for broader educational reform."

But to re-configure the system, the market advocates must win over the public, or at least discourage them from opposing these "radical" reforms (DeWeese, 1994: 35). The language and, thus, the conscious realm of possible policy alternatives, needs to be controlled. DeWeese (1994: 33) is very aware of and prescriptive about this concern, as he anticipates opponents' attacks, such as the anarchy of unregulated markets: "this is critical because one of the arguments against charter schools is that they will result in chaos as 'schools open and close like retail outlets.'" Durant's Education Leaders Council (1995) is

> committed to changing the terms of the education debate in this nation.... True education reforms are those which: center on the needs and choices of families... Education reform will not be achieved through a continued fixation on increasing budgets and promulgating regulations... The true reforms that were essential to the improvement of public education...came through giving parents, teachers and local communities the ability to pursue, and be accountable for, those changes which held the best promise for their children — reforms such as charter schools, standards-setting, and teacher autonomy....fill the void that existed in the education establishment.

DeWeese (1994: 32), in his view of a malleable public opinion, claims that such changes in the charter school discourse

> have made it much easier to advocate extending the same financing system to independent schools. The administrative position is already well in place and people are developing a sense of acceptance that it works well.

Therefore, "public education" must be redefined. There are several elements to this strategy evident in the discourse. The reforms are to be seen as apolitical. The presentation and implementation of choice programs seek to intentionally blur distinctions between popular conceptions of "public" and "private." And the rhetoric of these policy pronouncements inserts a new terminology into the discourse, to support the new ways of thinking and realizing the possible.

The apparent premise for the context of this transformation is evident in that the policy players present their ideas as apolitical, or politically neutral or disinterested — as they envision the market itself. Proponents of the market often phrase this aspect as a reaction to what is presented as an overly-politicized education system — one too susceptible to political control in its monopoly status. Despite the radical nature they assign to the transformations being advocated, TEACH Michigan and the State Board of Education members do not present the changes as *political* changes, so much as a natural *economic* evolution to a superior form of social ordering. The older school governance system is, according to Durant (1997: 362), a "politicized education system" that needs to be "de-politicized" — i.e., marketized. Once they establish this neutrality or negation of any political agendas, the pro-market advocates can deny partisan motives for manipulating the

discourse. One is simply acting in the best interest of the children or their families, in pursuit of excellence.

Redefining "public" education

In applying Schattschneider's axiom — "The definition of the alternatives is the supreme instrument of power" — the control of the commanding heights of the discourse is the control of the definition of the "public" element of mass schooling in a democracy (quoted in Kingdon, 1984). This is a primary theme in the rhetoric, and also an overt part of the strategy — albeit one that is admittedly arduous in its undertaking. DeWeese (1994: 31), in his crusade to remove education from the field of popular politics, notes that "it is difficult to convince the public" of the possibility of a change in the definition. Thus, because "our citizens have come to a distorted view," he is seeking

> to establish a high-level blue ribbon commission to establish an entirely new conception of public education. This would lead to a foundational paradigm shift in the broader public understanding of public education. This new philosophical framework would establish a broad-based and fundamental restructuring of public education. (35)

The Edison Project's McGriff (1996) also sees a "redefined paradigm" as the key to a sea change in educational provision. So, if we accept that a re-conceptualization of the "public" aspect of schooling is necessary, what would that new definition look like? It is substantially defined in opposition to "the government education monopoly" that McGriff's rhetoric has portrayed. She quotes Chester Finn at length in outlining her vision of the new "public" school:

> What would this new definition of public education look like? As...Finn has written, redefining public education recognizes "that schools can and should be different from one another rather than identical, and that it is reasonable for people to select the school they want, just as they select their home, their health-care provider, their college, their church, their clothes, and their dinner. A public school...need not be managed by a government agency, staffed by government employees, and regulated by a government bureaucracy. Rather, it is only necessary for the school to be open to the public, paid for by the public, and accountable to a duly constituted public authority for its results."[7]

Durant (1997: 362) suggests that a "public school should be a school *the public chooses to have.* Universal access should mean *universal opportunities and choices"* (emphases in original). Writing for the State Board of Education, Allen (1996) takes a much clearer, yet sparse, conception: "Public Education may be defined instrumentally as the provision for well nigh universal literacy and numeracy." So, although still nebulous, the new definition asserts that the "public" role is in funding, access, and possibly some (unspecified) type of accountability.

This functional definition has become the essential conception of the reconfigured "public" education in the rhetoric. Public education is defined not primarily by common values, nor by governance, nor by equality of access and opportunity, nor as a guarantor of the public or "common" good. Instead, it is defined by the instrumentality of its mission

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[7] For an analysis coming from a vastly different perspective that reaches many of the same conclusions, see Gintis, 1995.

(see DeWeese, 1994). So how would this definition look once it is operationalized? Durant (1997: 363-4) is the most illustrative and prescriptive on this question:

> ...we must also have multiple educational providers who have the motivation of ownership and accountability. Let's have public corporations for a new kind of public education. Let's allow educational entrepreneurs to raise capital in the public markets... enormous resources are available... Banks and financial service companies might start a school of business and finance. Automobile makers and their suppliers might start a school for engineers and other related professions. Our houses of faith can create and/or expand existing schools to offer a program to touch the heart and not just the mind.

Ownership, for the "consumer" and "producer," is the key:

> It is crucial that people purchase public education directly, when and for only as long as they or their children need it.... What is crucial for the success of any of these public education enterprises? Freedom, true ownership, and personal responsibility.

Strategies in the reconfiguration of concepts

One convenient and effective way to achieve this desired end is to "blur" the common distinction between the popular conceptions of the "public" and "private" spheres. DeWeese (1994: 34) advocates charter schools "being established by faith communities [which] will blur the distinction between 'religious' and 'secular' public education.... in the public's mind it will help generate an acceptance" of his vision of "public" education. He goes on to argue

> for no prior distinction between government schools and independent schools. The importance of eliminating the distinction cannot be overemphasized because the opponents of reform have successfully argued that private schools should not receive public funds precisely because they are not under the same regulation, i.e., public accountability, as public schools.

But perhaps the most effective and typical way to precipitate a change in the popular conception of "public" education is to simply impose a new meaning on the terminology employed in the public discourse. A few specific examples of new-speak are evident, and deserve attention, not just because of the simple (albeit repetitive) hegemonic treatment of terms in the rhetoric, but because — like the "public" in public education itself — new meanings are ascribed to terms commonly used in the public discourse.

For example, one switch in the jargon involves the pronounced theme of ownership. The idea of accountability of provision through the incentive of ownership is consistent in the rhetoric. Skeptics might note that the citizens of Michigan already own, and therefore control the public schools. Advocates of the market model, however, are not employing the idea of ownership in any sense of community control. Instead, the rhetoric limits ownership to individual property rights, as indicated in Durant's (1997: 363) use of historical parallel:

> Let's do what Lincoln did for the development of the West. He let the taxpayers be the true owners of the public lands. Some may try to sidestep this and say that the taxpayers are the owners of the local public education system. They are not the *owners*. They are the *payers*. Keep in mind, however that collective ownership really means no ownership at all. (emphases in original)

Similarly, while choice advocates often employ the term "government-run school" in reference to the purported monopoly control the state has on education, it must be noted

that the term is also imbued with the purpose of expanding the definition of "public" schooling. While most of the policy players cited have attacked the government monopoly, many also claim to be supporters of "public" education, so long as it conforms to their new definition. So, as but one example, when McGriff (1996) writes of "government-run schools," she is not simply implying that public schooling is an inferior form of education, but exploding the definition of public schools, where government-run schools are only one type among many. Her proprietary charter schools can also find room within the enlarged definition. Indeed, charter schools are not legally "charter schools" in Michigan, but "Public School Academies."

A final assertion of a new meaning for terms in public discourse around education involves the values of equality and equal opportunity. These are concepts that are often referred to in the context of racial and socioeconomic politics in Michigan. Indeed, the legislation that advanced choice in Michigan was a substantial reform of the funding structures for school finance. The eventually successful drive to move the burden for school funding from locally-collected property taxes to a state sales tax was often contested around the issues of racial and economic equity — with opposing factions all referring to the failure of relying on unequally advantaged communities to equitably fund their local schools. As the rhetoric around choice came to the forefront, however, "equity" has been endowed with a new meaning. Thus, when DeWeese (1994: 29) writes of an "equitable system of educational freedom," he is not referring to any recognition of unequal needs. Instead, his vision

> is to bring about a system of public education in Michigan, whereby public resources are *equitably* invested...so that every child in Michigan may have *access* to publicly accountable schools that are freely chosen by the parents. (my emphases)

Equal educational opportunity is thus guaranteed all the way to the schoolhouse door. Therefore, when McGriff (1996) repeats the common refrain that "Low-income parents deserve choice too," it is within the context of their being confined to what were admittedly poorly funded schools. The calls for choice have changed the demand for equity from one of guaranteed resources that provide equal educational opportunity, to one that only allows families the opportunity to seek access to the more desirable schools.

A further insight into the role of terminology in the rhetoric may be realized by considering what these pro-market policy advocates do *not* write. While there are repeated references like Durant's (1997: 364) to values such as "Freedom, responsibility, and ownership [as] the keys to unlocking the capital we need," (for schools that he earlier claimed already had "enormous resources") the word "privatization" is not spoken. And while he admits that a "variety of educational enterprises, non-profit and, yes, for-profit, will emerge," he will not give acknowledgment to the fact that the "bottom line" — the *raison d'être* — is different for the two types of institutions. Only Allen (1996), the recipient of the Michigan State Board of Education's grant to legitimize the market model in education, states forthrightly in his neoliberal exuberance that "The objective of the owners of all for-profit organizations is unambiguously defined as that of maximizing profits." Still, the market proponents do not give any indication of the fact that, of the public money granted for the education of a child, these proprietors will take a portion of it for profit,

rather than education. Furthermore, DeWeese (1994: 31, 34), in his zeal for extending the "publicly funded education freedom" to the option of schools run by "faith communities," constantly refers to them as "independent schools," rather than "church" or "parochial" or "Christian" schools, since there has consistently been little popular support for vouchers for sectarian schools in Michigan. Finally, he notes that his organization also serves to "help existing independent schools become chartered" (33). In an age of opposition to welfare, subsidies, and entitlements, there is no indication that he is advocating the opening of the public purse to the affluent who already pay for their own private education.

In summary, then, the discourse around the establishment and growth of charter schools in Michigan indicates several telling assumptions and tendencies on the part of key policy players in the public arena. The discourse is consistent in promoting the perspective of traditional public education in crisis. Since the problem is framed as one of too much government involvement, the obvious and "apolitical" alternative is the market: choice and competition. Michigan charter school proponents see and portray mass public education as a business — one that has fallen into politics through its existence as a monopoly. Without ownership and free competition, they assert there can be no progress. The obvious alternative of markets, which are placed in oppositional terms to bureaucratic forms of accountability, is legitimated. Public schooling is located squarely in the logic of markets, and the definition of "public" is intentionally and explicitly reconfigured in functional terms to include institutions traditionally held to be "private" enterprises.

So, with animosity toward the provision of state schooling as it had been administered, and an agenda of radical reform, policy players in Michigan represent an important part of the wider choice movement. The values of democracy embedded in their rhetoric suggest that the Michigan proponents of policies of charter schools have a definite perspective on the political economy of school choice. They place a high priority on private (as opposed to community) ownership of both the means of provision and the benefits of schooling, and the consequent emphasis on responsibility that it is meant to engender. The "public" aspect of education is located in the availability of access, and in the funding. The primary motivation behind choice is to provide a diversity of options for the consumer, since standardization denies the ability to choose. The overall force of this rhetoric pushes an atomized view of society, one championed by such figures as Friedrich Hayek and Milton Friedman. The primary control of mass schooling should be entrusted to the individualized demands of consumers — or, more accurately, the aggregate demands of similar consumers grouped at least to the minimum extent needed to constitute a viable and serviceable market force. The pro-market advocates attach the consistent theme of a customer-driven system to the everyday experiences of consumer choice, thereby presenting public education as appropriately and effectively located in a private sphere. Their use of metaphor to affirm this supposition illuminates both a lack of concrete and compelling examples of markets in mass education, and a denial of a uniquely public aspect to mass education in a democracy. The fact that public education is to be treated as a private good indicates a pronounced view that education is not effectively provided in a non-market system. The apolitical claims of choice proponents and their recognition of the

need for a redefinition of terms and concepts point to their aversion to "monopolistic" forms of provision found in political bureaucracies, and highlight their position that markets are a superior form of organization for distributing mass education to consumers.

THE COMMON SCHOOL REFORMERS

In contrast to the current market-oriented reform agenda for education, it is particularly instructive to explore the values and assumptions of the common school reformers whose efforts served as the foundation for the system of mass education in a democratic society. Of course, these men (almost exclusively) lived in a different socio-historical context than the current reformers, and their proposals and policies reflected the concerns, possibilities, and prejudices of their day. Furthermore, it must be noted that most of what has been handed down as the legacy of the common school reformers is an idealization, one whose implementation and actual practices are significantly distanced from the lofty rhetoric that launched and nurtured the common schools.

However, just as current rhetoric might well be criticized in the future for its flimsy relation to actual practices, it is still useful in exposing the publicly presented values of the reformers. Furthermore, the differences between the circumstances of common school reformers and modern choice advocates still operate within the wider context of a market-democratic society. On closer examination, it is remarkable how many of the most substantial issues and concerns of the day are common to both contexts — socioeconomic polarization, immigration and socio-ethnic fragmentation, rapid economic transformation, and so forth. Thus, this analysis highlights how the relative conceptions and values of markets and politics are significantly different across the two cases.

Background

Much has been written about the common school reformers and their era, so it is not necessary here to go into depth in analyzing them. Instead, this section presents the relevant values of the reformers, as drawn from the interpretive research of their crusade, and then illustrates those tendencies from the historiography with some samples of the common school reform rhetoric available in the primary literature. There were many figures whose words and deeds could serve as a basis for exploring the values of these reformers: Henry Barnard in Rhode Island and Connecticut, James Carter in Massachusetts, Roberts Vaux in Pennsylvania, John D. Pierce in Michigan, and others. However, in view of space constraints, I focus on the words and values of Horace Mann who was the most prolific in his rhetoric (partly due to the fact that he had no actual authority to implement change, but only the position to make persuasive arguments for his cause), and his extant works are the most available and accessible, as is their analyses by other writers. Mann is at once, both the epitome of the common school reformers in that his zeal for standardizing and extending mass education was representative of his contemporaries, and also the prototype for these reformers in that he was a largely influential model for other reformers.

There are contradictions and complexities evident in the historiography of the common schools that make it difficult and inappropriate to make straight generalizations about the

attitudes and assumptions of early reformers. For example, while it is well known that prominent figures responsible for the establishment of the American Republic — men such as Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, Benjamin Rush and others — saw a dim future for democracy without the support of a system of mass education, there were significant differences in their specific plans for such a system, and none realized any substantive degree of actualization. Likewise, there were competing conceptions of the civic-minded "republicanism" that was to be injected into the body politic through the common schools — conceptions closely related to the political conflicts between Jacksonian Democrats and Whigs (Reese, 1995). Furthermore, when we move more into the area of interpretation of history, there is no coherent consensus in the literature regarding the role the common schools were intended to play or actually played in the emerging industrial/market economy of the 19th century. While historians such as Katznelson and Weir (1985) portray the rise of a system of mass education characterized by an absence of class conflict, and a general allegiance to mass public schooling that cut across social and economic barriers, Church and Sedlak (1976) and Katz (1968) describe the evolution of a system where the primary effect was social control of the lower classes through the functions of socializing a new industrial working class into the values of hard work, deference to authority, respect for private property, and acceptance of one's place in the hierarchical social order. Similarly, besides the motives and impact of the reformers, historians disagree over the degree of distance between the rhetoric and reality of the common schools, the priority given to competing purposes for education, and the definition of "education" itself (Sedlak & Walch, 1981; Labaree, 1988, 1997; Osgood, 1997).

However, certain generalizations can be established. For example, the common school movement came at a time of rapid and drastic socio-economic transformation. Old patterns of social interaction and control were quickly becoming obsolete and replaced in the face of industrialization, urbanization, immigration/diversification of the population, westward expansion, and socio-economic polarization (see, for example, Johnson, 1978). Furthermore, as noted above, there was a prominent theme in the popular rhetoric from the founders of the Republic, echoed in the common school movement, that popular education (albeit variously defined by race, class, gender, structure and means of provision) was integral to the growth and sustenance of democracy — the very completion of the Revolution itself (e.g., Rush, quoted in Butterfield, 1951). Additionally, and perhaps contrary to common conceptions about the history of mass education, it is easily demonstrated that there was, in fact, a discernible amalgamation of educational institutions that formed a more or less perceptible system of schooling prior to the advent of the common school movement. This was particularly true in the Northeast, in states like Massachusetts where Mann operated. So, while the common school reformers did not necessarily found a system of popular education, they advanced and expanded on a long tradition of locally controlled schooling (in the older settlements where it existed) in a number of ways. Their efforts, although varying by place and time, usually included tendencies towards standardization of provision and centralization of control, public funding through taxes, and universal open enrollment — except for frequent exclusions based on race or gender (Cremin, 1970; Church & Sedlak, 1976; Kaestle, 1983).

Thus, it can be demonstrated through the rhetoric that common school reformers saw, or at least portrayed, their contemporary version of the school "system" prior to the common school reforms as falling into a state of crisis.[8] The reformers sought to fuel their efforts by describing schools as being in a state of decay caused by neglect, especially as elites took the "anti-republican" measures of withdrawing their children and support to private academies, leaving the poor to the "charity" schools (Reese, 1995).[9] Common school advocates sought to demonstrate this crisis by comparing their schools to those of other states, or to potential rivals such as Prussia (Cremin, 1957). This phenomenon fits squarely into the ongoing American tradition of associating social crises with schooling — either as the cause of the crisis, or the potential solution to social ills (or both).

Common School Rhetoric

Within this context, figures such as Mann launched a crusade for reform couched in religious and republican terminology — a verbal barrage that was sincere, but tailored to the context (Osgood, 1997). In examining the rhetoric, we can discern several values and assumptions. First, their case for promoting the common school is indicative of an astounding faith in the power of mass education. Second, their arguments suggest a real concern for the future of the democratic experiment, and make a very close association between their reforms and the future of the Republic. Third, their conception of education for democracy centered on moral values being held in common. Fourth, those values had to be sustained through a "public" system of schooling. This last aspect involved public funding, universal access, and democratic control. Although there were private aspects to education, these reformers conceived of it as a primarily public good. In this regard, it is instructive to examine the manner in which the rhetoric was launched in opposition to privately controlled schooling. Each of these factors is discussed and illustrated below.

First, the faith that reformers like Mann had in the common school idea is well known and obvious in their rhetorical flourishes. It is not an overstatement to note that Mann saw the common schools as the savior of the Republic, and the culmination of human progress. In his *Common School Journal*, a biweekly voice for his cause, Mann (1841, emphasis in original) wrote with typical optimism:

> *The common school is the greatest discovery ever made by man.* In two grand, characteristic attributes, it is supereminent over all others: — first, in its universality; — for it is capacious enough to receive and cherish in its parental bosom every child that comes into the world; and second, in the timeliness of the aid it proffers; — its early, seasonable supplies of counsel and guidance making security antedate danger. Other social organizations are curative and remedial; this is a preventive and an antidote; they come to heal diseases and wounds; this to make the physical and moral frame invulnerable to

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[8] Mann (1849: 17) wrote: "Facts incontrovertibly show, that for a series of years previous to 1837, the school system of Massachusetts had been running down. Schoolhouses had been growing old, while new ones were rarely erected. School districts were divided, so that each part was obliged to support its schools on...a scanty allowance." The fact that, in retrospect, the validity of this "crisis" has been challenged (Church and Sedlak, 1976) is intriguing in contrast to modern times — current "crisis" conditions that have motivated the present reform effort have also been challenged (e.g., Berliner & Biddle, 1995; Bracey, 1997).

[9] See, for example, Mann's predecessor in Mass., James Carter (1826): "every private establishment... detaches a portion of the community from the great mass, and weakens or destroys their interest in those means of education which are common to the whole people."

them. Let the Common School be expanded to its capabilities, let it be worked with the efficiency of which it is susceptible, and nine tenths of the crimes in the penal code would become obsolete; the long catalogue of human ills would be abridged; men would walk more safely by day; every pillow would be more inviolable by night; property, life, and character held by strong tenure; all rational hopes respecting the future brightened.

Indeed, in a time of economic polarization, Mann forwarded this "discovery" not just as a means to alleviate class conflict, but as the device by which social divisions would be leveled:

> Education, then, beyond all other devices of human origin, is the great equalizer of the conditions of men, — the balance-wheel of the social machinery... I mean that it gives each man the independence and the means by which he can resist the selfishness of other men. It does better than to disarm the poor of their hostility towards the rich: it prevents being poor... Beyond the power of diffusing old wealth, it has the prerogative of creating new. (1849: 59-60)

The second theme in Mann's work, the concern for the democratic experiment, underlies much of his writing, but is often not explicit simply because it serves as the premise for much of his writing on other specific issues such as sectarianism, teacher training, pedagogy, and curriculum, for example. However, there were occasions where this premise had to be exposed and amplified for his audiences. He recognized the arduous but necessary task of creating a democratic citizenry through education: "It may be an easy thing to make a republic," he wrote, "but it is a very laborious thing to make republicans" (quoted in Cremin, 1980: 107). In the debate on how education should be distributed, Mann very much opposed channeling resources into the training of the talented few, at the expense of the many. Wisdom needed to be cultivated across the population:

> By a natural law, like that which regulates the equilibrium of fluids, elector and elected, appointer and appointee, tend to the same level. It is not more certain that a wise and enlightened constituency will refuse to invest a reckless and profligate man with office, or discard him if accidentally chosen, than it is that a foolish or immortal constituency will discard or eject a wise man. (1844: 77)[10]

This concern was often made most explicit in his efforts to contrast his "Massachusetts theory" of education with the evils evident in an aristocratic Europe, and particularly an industrialized (and polarized) Britain. His *Twelfth Annual Report* was his most eloquent and forceful explanation of this contrast. In this essay, Mann made not an economic, but a political, moral and religious case against the conditions in Europe that came with the enclosures, urbanization, industrialization, and polarization. The social barriers embedded in the aristocratic traditions of Europe were juxtaposed with the promise of equal opportunity for improvement inherent in the Republic. Furthermore, the social dislocation that came with industrialization in Britain — distress which was probably near its lowest point in this period — served as the antithesis for Mann's idealization of a just and "Christian" civilization. However, Mann set up this contrast only to show that a rapidly industrializing (and polarizing) Massachusetts was quickly sinking to Britain's level, with the possibility of betraying the democratic promise of the Revolution:

> I suppose it to be the universal sentiment of all those who mingle any ingredient of benevolence with their notions on political economy, that vast and overshadowing private

[10] See, also, pp. 36-47; and 1846: 138-9.

> fortunes are among the greatest dangers to which the happiness of the people in a republic can be subjected. Such fortunes would create a feudalism of a new kind, but one more oppressive and unrelenting than that of the Middle Ages. (1849: 57).

Thus, in his rhetorical crusade for mass education, Mann equated republicanism with equal opportunity. Democracy was idealized in opposition to the social stratification inherent in aristocratic or economic feudalism. In view of the socioeconomic polarization he was perceiving in Massachusetts, the socially segregated nature of the pre-common school system was blamed for contributing to the demise of democracy. For Mann (1839b: 198), the existence of a two-tiered system of schools...

> proves an injury to all classes... No one cause contributes so much to introduce the terms and the distinctions of other countries into our favored land....in this way, the distinctions of the dark ages, and of aristocratic governments, will be revived on these happy shores.

The solution to this framing of the problem, of course, was his advocacy of the common school. Thus, thirdly, Mann's rhetoric promoted a conception of public schooling that would serve as an institution for socializing a rapidly diversifying population in a shared, or common, set of moral values. As the population around him became more heterogeneous in ethnicity and economics, culture and creed, and as new immigrants were to be assimilated and new generations were to be socialized (even while the older institutions of socialization, the family, community, and church, were declining), Mann saw the need for schools to become the primary agent of social cohesion — or, as some would say, social control. Indeed, Mann was concerned with completing and complementing the Revolution that had freed the citizens as well as their now unbridled passions — "our schools foster the interests of morality, and act as a restraint upon those formidable vices which are everywhere starting up around us" (1845: 27). These evils were not just the strange customs of new immigrants, or the criminal habits of hoodlums, but the new competition engendered by industrialization and the market as community controls eroded.

> It is on this common platform, that a general acquaintanceship should be formed between the children of the same neighborhood. It is here, that the affinities of a common nature should unite them together so as to give the advantages of pre-occupancy and a stable possession to fraternal feelings, against the alienating competitions of subsequent life. (1838: 56)

This training and socialization was to be a moral mission:

> Above all others, must the children of a Republic be fitted for society, as well as for themselves. As each citizen is to participate in the power of governing others, it is an essential preliminary, that he should be imbued with a feeling for the wants, and a sense of the rights, of those whom he is to govern; because the power of governing others, if guided by no higher motive than our own gratification, is the distinctive attribute of oppression; — an attribute whose nature and whose wickedness are the same, whether exercised by one who calls himself a republican, or one born an irresponsible despot. In a government like ours, each individual must think of the welfare of the state as well as of the welfare of his own family; and therefore, of the children of others as well as his own. It becomes then, a momentous question, whether the children in our schools are educated in reference to themselves and their private interests only, or with a regard to the great social duties and prerogatives that await them in afterlife. (1846: 64).

Yet, to be truly common, a degree of standardization was required over an unwieldy and uneven system. In that sense, Whigs such as Mann promoted a stronger role for the central

government in the systemization (and bureaucratization) of education provision in order to fashion a coherent set of common values.

> These schools, at the present time, are so many distinct, independent communities; each being governed by its own habits, traditions, and local customs. There is no common, superintending power over them; there is no bond of brotherhood or family between them (1855: 19, quoted in Cremin, 1980: 155).

Finally — and perhaps most significantly for the current discussion — was the assertion that the mechanism for nourishing the common culture that sustains democracy had to be a *public* school system. As indicated in the current debates about school choice, there is much disagreement about the conception of the "public" aspect of mass education. Mann's rhetoric suggests a coherent vision of what constitutes the public aspects of schooling, especially relative to private aspects associated with education. Delving into the potpourri of free schools, academies, charity schools, and common schools in the early nineteenth century, reformers such as Mann made a strong case for the public schools to be publicly funded, tuition-free, and open to all (white males, at least) regardless of class or ability to pay. Consider this excerpt, where he concluded with allusions to the egalitarian possibilities in the teachings of Jesus from the Sermon on the Mount:[11]

> [The common school] knows no distinction of rich and poor, of bond and free, or between those who, in the imperfect light of this world, are seeking, through different avenues, to reach the gate of heaven. Without money and without price, it throws open its doors, and spreads the table of its bounty, for all the children of the State. Like the sun, it shines, not only upon the good, but upon the evil, that they may become good; and, like the rain, its blessings descend, not only upon the just, but upon the unjust, that their injustice may depart from them and be known no more. (1849: 140)

This description of the public aspects of the common schools is not particularly different from the current market-oriented reformers in Michigan, especially as they assert that public education does not necessarily have to be government-provided. In this respect, analysts of the common school reforms disagree. Waks (1996) demonstrates that "public" schooling, at least in the Northeastern states, meant publicly funded and controlled institutions, and, following Butts and Cremin (1953), notes that the common school movement was essentially an expansion of this direct public control of education. Cremin (1951) has shown that the common school reformers extended public control of education while pursuing its expansion, as well as either forcing institutions relying on public money to come under public control, or abolishing funding for institutions that refused to accept public authority. Mann's rhetoric consistently supported this position, as he spoke of the "duty of the State to provide for and control the education of youth" (Downs, 1974: 118). When he claimed that "all the children of a republic should be educated in the people's schools!" (1847: 27), he was speaking of the "people" as the citizens of a community, not simply the parents or "customers" (Cremin, 1980: 140).[12]

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[11] See, especially, the Gospel of Matthew 5:45.

[12] Cremin (1951: 137) notes that the battle for principle of community control largely preceded Mann. By the beginning of Mann's career in education, reformers were already settling on a familiar distinction between public and private education. Mann's contemporary, Theodore Edson, noted that public schools are "responsible more or less directly to the community. The private schools have no supervision, or only that of the parents."

Public and private goods in common school rhetoric

Perhaps the most effective way to understand Mann's position on the public aspect of education is to explore his ideas on the relation of private forms of schooling to his common school ideals. Mann saw private schooling as a threat to democratic schooling. While proprietary schools were not a significant presence, the academies diverted resources and support from his common schools (Cremin, 1957).[13]

> Some few persons in a village or town, finding the advantages of the common school inadequate to their wants, unite to establish a private one. They transfer their children from the former to the latter. The heart goes with the treasure....They have now no personal motive to vote for or advocate any increase of the town's annual appropriation for schools; to say nothing of the temptation to discourage such increase in indirect ways, or even vote directly against it. If, by this means, some of the best scholars happen to be taken from the common school, the standard of that school is lowered.... All this inevitably depresses and degrades the common school. ...until the common school is left to the management of those, who have not the desire or the power either to improve it or command a better. (1838: 49-50).

Mann's solution, seemingly peripheralized or forgotten in the current debate, was to make the common schools at least equal in quality to the tuition-based private academies.

Of course, Mann did not deny that private benefits could be realized from his system of common schools. Indeed, his *Fifth Annual Report* (1842) was a classic rhetorical appeal to the private interests of the influential business community for support of the common school program. While elsewhere he reminded the rich of the dangers of class envy that his common schools could alleviate, here Mann pointed employers — potential supporters of their reform ideas — to the benefits of having a trained worker educated in the values of obedience, hard work, and respect for private property, traits that would prove "capable of earning more money for his employer" (86). Likewise, he tried to mobilize public interest in the common schools by appealing to the chance for self-improvement for otherwise skeptical or apathetic working-class parents who would rather send their children to profitable employment. He did this in the language of meritocracy and personal responsibility — a language his business audience would understand and endorse as the justification for their position.

Yet, it needs to be noted that this appeal to the private advantages of public education was not the primary concern for Mann. He was far more interested, judging by the weight of his rhetoric, in promoting popular education of the public or common good. Mann's appeal to the business elites was remarkable for his backhanded and notably unenthusiastic use of economic instrumentalism as an argument for public education — an approach unique to this appeal. Furthermore, its isolated position in the body of his writings suggests Mann's view of this argument as a politically opportune and effective, albeit secondary, issue.

More importantly, Mann was at least as likely to admonish those elites for treating education as a private good as he was to court them with allusions to their potential profit.

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[13] Mann also opposed private sectarian schools on the grounds that they perverted the Christian gospel from a message of peace to one of division (1838: 56; also, Cremin, 1957)

In his appeal to "the professional men of Massachusetts," he chastised them for using the advantages of their wealth to effectively deny the common good.

> Has not the course which some of you have pursued in relation to the education of your own children tended to reduce the reputation of our excellent free school system?...The consciousness that they are attending a school unworthy of the patronage of those whom they have been led to regard as the better part of the community, will degrade the children of the less-favored classes in their own estimation, and destroy that self-respect which is essential to improvement either in science or in morals. This feeling of degradation will hang like a millstone about the necks of the children of the poor. (1839a: 143, 154; see, also, 1838: 48).

In summary, then, the discourse around the common school movement, as typified by Mann, suggests certain pronounced values and conceptions of mass education and democracy. Like the current Michigan reformers, Mann was operating in a context of rapid socioeconomic change, and appealed to education as both a solution and an institution in crisis. However, the common school reformers framed the problem as one of too much variation at the hands of local and market forces. Their solution was to shield education from the economic forces of unregulated supply and demand, cost and private benefit — to import more political or democratic control. Education was intentionally not portrayed as a business, one of the many institutions or areas of life falling under the rising forces of competition and private control in the emerging market system. Social progress was explicitly associated with public control of education. Public schooling was located squarely in the domain of public control and the common good, and the definition of "public" was intentionally and explicitly cast in terms of community control and societal benefit within a democratic system.

Therefore, with suspicion toward the narrowness of private conceptions of education as it was being administered, and an agenda of far-reaching reform, Mann represented an integral part of the wider common school movement. The values of democracy embedded in their rhetoric suggest that the common school reformers had a definite perspective on the political economy of school choice. They placed a high priority on collective (as opposed to private) ownership of both the means of provision and the benefits of schooling. The "public" aspect of education was located in the availability of access, in the funding, in the common set of values at the center of the curriculum, and in community control. The primary effect of the reforms was to centralize control, with some degree of standardization, since diversity was associated with inequality and a denial of coherence to the emerging republican society. The overall force of this rhetoric pushed an optimistically harmonious view of society. The primary control of mass schooling was to be entrusted to the citizenry. The reformers were reacting to both the milieu of the pre-common school era system that they saw as in a crisis state, as well as the social dislocation they saw in Europe after the enclosures, urbanization, and industrialization. The common school reformers consistently used the theme of a republic-nourishing system required for the strengthening of democratic and communal institutions that were being challenged by the rising forces of the market, thereby presenting public education as appropriately and effectively located in a public sphere. The political claims of common school reformers that public education was

to be treated as a public good point to their aversion to variegated and non-democratic forms of provision and highlight their position that democratic control was a superior form of organization for the provision of mass education to the Republic.

DISCUSSION

Current market-oriented reforms, as well as the values and assumptions embedded in the rhetoric around them, do not fit into the "common school" model that serves as the foundation of the system of mass public education in the US. Both Waks (1996) and Beale (1997 — specific to Michigan), note that charter schools, by being placed primarily under market mechanisms through choice and competition, are removed from the direct and immediate control of the community through democratic processes. Indeed, there is a striking discongruence between the low valuation of — even hostility toward — democracy for school governance evident in the Michigan discourse relative to the proposed place for the market in education. Because of the drastic nature of the proposed retreat from the tradition of democratic control of public schooling, the remarkable pace with which the market-oriented agenda has been advanced in Michigan, and the awesome potential of their effects, one might expect to see a preponderance of evidence employed in the discourse to justify their prominence. Instead, in place of compelling evidence on the effects of choice, Michigan's public policy discourse around charter schools — centering on issues of efficiency, effectiveness, and performance — relies on metaphorical allusions to consumer life and the market, and explicit attempts to redefine the "public" aspect of education. In this context, we may be seeing the privatization of education through the enclosures of its public aspects.

Privatization of purpose

The effects of the privatization of public education is evident, not just in the drive by elites to grab profitable aspects of a public resource, but in that their justification to do so encourages the multiple fragmentation of public education by each individual consumer. That is, the rhetoric promotes de-publicization, and a redefinition of the "public" in education away from that of an institution for the common good. In education reform, such proposals do not necessarily require the privatization of the funding or the *means* of the provision of education, but, instead, the privatization of the *purpose* of education. That is, parents are increasingly encouraged or required to treat education as a consumer good, to be obtained from a competitive market for essentially private ends. While in some states, such as Michigan and Arizona, reforms have gone so far as to open the door for private management groups to control the means of provision of publicly-funded education, choice and charter school reforms also illustrate the privatization of the purpose of education.

The attempt to redefine "public" education is a direct challenge to the traditional, popular, and common symbiosis between public and private spheres. To that extent, it should be seen as a form of privatization or marketization (Chitty, 1997). A market, representing an area of social life where individual actors may exchange goods and manifestations of value, is premised upon the exclusive right of individual owners to dispose of their privately-owned goods as they see fit. It is driven by these individual

owners seeking to maximize their self-interest. Thus, privatization seeks to put "goods" (products *or* valued benefits) — often goods that were previously under the control of the public — into the hands of individual owners who are believed to be best able (individually and in the aggregate) to manage and exchange the goods in the interest of efficiency and effectiveness of use. When it comes to education markets, however, it is generally recognized that, as of now, there are no "free" markets, where individual actors are free from all external constraints in exchanging their goods (save the constraints imposed by their own negotiations with other actors). Instead, externally imposed constraints in the public provision of education are intended to limit the rights of individuals in order to protect society from aspects of market failure that may lead to what are recognized as socially undesirable outcomes: segregation, hierarchies, or whatever may be viewed as objectionable by society. Thus, education markets are often termed "quasi-markets" since they do not achieve the libertarian ideal (Bartlett, 1993). Hence, when speaking about privatization of education through enclosures, because of the restraints remaining for the sake of the public interest, I am not speaking purely of privatization in the strictly economic sense of handing over all goods, means of provision, etc. to private owners. Instead, I am focusing on the privatization of the *purpose* of public education, which encourages citizens to view themselves as consumers of an educational product, maximizing self-interest in competition with other consumers for desirable opportunities. Although this does not necessarily require the transferring of ownership of the means of provision to private hands, the effects are essentially similar, since the "product" is still held before the "consumer" to be treated as a private good, with the same negation of the general common good that would be seen in a purely privatized system.

The metaphor of the enclosures

In the current debates over education reform, there appears to be a strong propensity to employ metaphors to get at underlying issues, explain ideas, and give nuance to abstractions. Admittedly, it is often difficult for observers to establish the meanings and significance of social patterns, phenomena, and transformations operating within their own social and historical contexts. Thus, metaphors are one device that holds some promise in allowing us to get past, at least to some extent, the constraints of our contexts and act as a mirror to reflect some truth about our circumstances. For instance, to help researchers understand the complexities of school choice in the United Kingdom, Bowe, Ball, & Gewirtz (1994) have proposed the metaphor of landscapes. They suggest this as a means by which we can try to understand the many factors which are involved in a parent's decision whether and how to engage in the market factors of school choice, the social positioning that appears to be essential in locating oneself in the landscape and informing one's perspective, and the limitations of perspective that often obscure and highlight aspects of the horizon of knowledge and information. However, in view of the class patterns that Ball and others have discerned in the dynamics of educational markets in the UK, and the rise of profiteering around public education in Michigan and the US, the metaphor of landscapes is limited in explaining the larger patterns around the privatized purpose of public education.

In lieu of the lack of a consensus on what constitutes compelling evidence or an unquestioned model for choice in the US, metaphors serve to imply a framing of a problem, its prescription, and parallels to more accessible models in everyday life (Henig, 1994). Often, for example, proponents of school choice suggest that a rising tide lifts all boats, a truism that is meant to allude to the idea that incentives for improvement presumed to exist in charter schools and other forms of choice will also have an advantageous effect on students remaining in the traditional, non-choice public system (e.g., Carl, 1998). In another instance, Margonis and Parker (1995) indicate that the very idea of a market is a metaphor, as is the communitarian ideal with which it is often contrasted in debates about school choice. Indeed, the case from Michigan both illustrates their claim about the market as metaphor, and exemplifies its limits when applied to education. The imprecision of applying market terms such as "consumer" and "product" in education conflates market concepts that are useful in everyday consumer life. If students are indeed "consumers," then their choices can be similar to aspects of consumer choice in markets. However, students are also "products" under the logic of the market in education, and the process of their "production" (and the value of themselves as a finished "product" at the end of that process) is subject to the choices they make as consumers. That is — as Mann and the common school reformers recognized in pleading with the affluent not to remove their children from the common schools — a student's consumer choice of school will have an impact on the quality of education (product) that school can generate, since a student's abilities influence the culture of the school, his or her classmates' potential educational attainment, etc.

In an attempt to understand wider social patterns in recent years, another attempt has been made to explain the threat posed to democracy by portraying the metaphorical patterns of socioeconomic segregation that have infected shared or common areas of social life in a democratic society. Lasch's (1995) work in the early 1990s on the secession of socioeconomic elites from common areas of life in a democratic society can serve as a starting point for understanding the withdrawal of support from an under-funded or poorly performing education system. His analysis has received support from several observers. Reich (1995) and McKenzie (1994), for example, note this process in residential and lifestyle patterns that preclude interaction across social boundaries. Blakely & Snyder (1997) comment on this phenomenon with respect to the rise of gated communities. Kozol (1995) critiques this pattern around areas of diminishing public services, consequent to the retraction of elites' support for such efforts through their threat of removing political backing and taxable capital. Several religious publications have also identified this apparent pattern with some concern (e.g., Aeschliman, 1994; Hulteen, 1995; Friend, 1996).

While (to my knowledge) this idea of secession or withdrawal of the rich from the public or shared areas of a democratic society has not been applied to mass education, this perspective is useful in understanding the retraction of support for public schooling in recent years. However, in view of the evidence that there is not simply a withdrawal of the presence and participation of elite and affluent segments of our society, but the re-conceptualizing of mass education from an institution for the public good to an area for private gain and investment, this perspective is somewhat limited in its explanatory value.

To build upon it, we should consider the effectiveness of the metaphor of "enclosures" of one of the primary common areas of democracy — public education.

The idea of enclosures — drawn from the socioeconomic sea change that transformed agricultural and economic life, and social relationships in Europe at the advent of the industrial revolution — has some obvious relevance to the patterns discussed in this paper. The sudden and drastic changes that were forcefully imposed upon traditional and popularly defined institutions by powerful elites reflect the "revolutionary" and speedy "paradigm shift" that reformers in Michigan and the US explicitly pursue with little regard (and some disdain) for democratic values (see, for example, Chubb & Moe, 1990; DeWeese, 1994; Allen, 1996; Durant, 1997). The draconian nature of these historical transformations have been well documented (e.g., Polanyi, 1944; Brenner, 1982; Lachmann, 1987), and the thoroughness of their effects is awesome — in Great Britain, just in the six decades after 1770, "more than six million acres of commonly-held lands...were put into private hands for private gains. So by 1830 not a single county had more than three per cent of its land open to public use" (Sale, 1996).

The metaphor of the enclosures as a philosophical prototype for a socioeconomic "paradigm shift," with parallels to the current tendencies of the elite toward the common space of public education, offers us the chance to examine the assumption that the market is the only policy alternative. Transformations of pervading ideology regarding social institutions like we saw with the enclosures can be forceful and often brutal affairs — the imposition of a de facto reconfiguration of commonly held conceptions. The speed and the sheer weight of the changes can pre-empt the examination of the assumptions and alternatives, as well as the likely consequences of "revolution." Thus, Ball (1997) invokes Thompson's (1971, 1991) concept of a new "moral economy" — a new system of values, constraints, and possible ways of thinking of human relationships — being forcefully imposed by the sudden and drastic changes in modern Britain's system of education governance. Just as the transformation in the moral economy precipitated by the enclosures transformed the conscious realm of the possible for social relations — eradicating commonly held responsibilities and rights and imposing new ones — it may be useful to ask about assumptions and evidence before acceding to claims of the market's omniscience as it constrains the conscious realm of what is possible in current policy alternatives.

The assumption of the natural superiority of the market as the only policy alternative to the "artificial" restraints imposed by democratic government control over education are interesting to explore after one considers Polanyi's (1944) demonstration that the enclosures were not the organic evolution of market systems, but were instead a conscious grab at public resources by elites. While in American education there has been a natural evolution of the relationship between the roles of public and private interests in mass education, the rhetoric from Michigan demonstrates an explicit strategy to manipulate that relationship through a reconfiguration of the terms. As an institution created to nurture democracy and the common good, public education is now the site of an explicit strategy of market penetration by political and business elites. Instead of simply removing themselves from public education, as the analysis from Lasch and others might suggest, the discourse in Michigan indicates that the re-conception of the ideas of "public" and "private" goods in

the area of education effectively legitimizes the divvying up of public education resources for primarily private gain. Such efforts require the reconfiguration of public education as an institution stripped of its mission of enhancing the common good, so essential to the common school reformers. Indeed, the common good is a value that is virtually absent in the current discourse, and effectively erased by the explicit encouragement that education be treated as a private good to be individually — and never commonly — owned (e.g., Durant, 1997).

The current enclosures of the public space of education appear in several ways. First, public resources are being turned over to private control. (And as noted above, even in the absence of direct private control, though, the effect is largely the same when the purpose, if not the means, of education has been privatized.) Second, there is evidence of the enclosure of the time and space created for the process of education, teaching and learning. Third, the public space of education as a place for democratic dialogue is balkanized by the market priorities of efficiency and effectiveness and their desire for an absence of conflict.

Enclosures of public resources

First is the obvious attempt to turn over public resources and governance to private control. The evidence presented here from Michigan is just a part of the picture, as, increasingly, aspects of education (potential advertising space, sponsorships and partnerships) are being auctioned off, and now the provision of education itself is recast as a fertile area for private investment.[14] Michael Milken, while in prison, viewed public education as a prime and untapped area for market penetration: "I think education in this country is going to be a multi-hundred-billion-dollar industry. That's where I'm going to put my time and money" (Milken, Michaels, & Berman, 1992: 100). The Edison Project and its backers are just the most obvious examples of the attention that public education is attracting from the private sector investment community (e.g., Fox, 1997; Robinson, 1997). To reconfigure "public" education in order to make investments possible, there is a steady stream of rhetoric that treats education as a private good (e.g., Bailey, 1995). The rise of the charter school management and associated market consulting services industries in Michigan is telling, in and of itself (e.g., Padden, 1996). Those entrusted with caring for the public good in Michigan have explicitly promoted the use of public education for the service of investors — as Michigan's Governor notes: "There is very, very, very little downside risk and a world of upside opportunity and potential" (quoted in MCPP, 1997b; see also, Durant, 1997; MCPP, 1997a). Not surprisingly, as the private sector rushes in, abuses of the very idea of education are bound to occur as the logic of the market dictates that maximizing self-interest on the part of providers leaves teaching and learning as a secondary consideration (Kozol, 1993). The more publicized scandals in Michigan are simply the more pronounced instances of this (see, for example, Peterson, 1996; *Lansing State Journal,* 1996a; 1996b; *The State News,* 1996; Richard, 1996a; 1997).

[14] See, for example, Molnar, 1996; Nelson, 1997; Vine, 1997; West, 1997.

Enclosures of time and space for schooling

Related to this is the enclosure of time and space reserved for instruction and learning, which is chipped away by privatizing tendencies. In re-casting education as a private good, media, instruction, and curriculum materials that take up classroom time are available to schools from the private sector — but with a price. While Channel One is but one example of this, many for-profit organizations are willing to grant much needed supplies to schools (while at the same time often advocating for a lowering of their tax burden in support of schools) in exchange for exposure to a captive audience of students, inclusion in or influence over the curriculum, or the right to limit images and ideas from alternative sources (Consumers Union, 1995; Molnar, 1996; West, 1997).

On the cultural side, the consumerization of education means that ideological, religious, ethnic, or other types of groups can shape their own school curriculum, which will probably occur at the expense of any common curriculum — eroding a tenet that Mann and his contemporaries saw as integral to democracy. I do not mean to slight critics of the common school ideology here. I agree that the common schools may well have been used as a tool for social control, and, certainly, as a means for supporting the dominant culture through the elevation of a specific curriculum. However, I simply mean to suggest that the common school reformers saw a logical link between shared cultural values and democracy, and that current reformers have done nothing to recognize, much less disprove, the existence of such a logical connection, and the balkanization of the curriculum is a further step in that direction.

Enclosures of the space for democratic dialogue

Finally, the social space of public schooling in a democracy is being balkanized by the push for a private-oriented (and anti-"political" or democratic) conception of schools. Under the common school paradigm, schools were to be the site of democratic discourse. That is, by placing schools under community control, opposing and conflicting views on schooling were to come together and, through the democratic dialogue, reach some type of consensus. They were not supposed to be used as a method to avoid discussion and shield oneself from difference. Not surprisingly, there is evidence of balkanization, and segregation on religious and racial lines within the structures set up by choice and charters in Michigan (Andrejevic, 1996; Richard, 1996b).

This last aspect is perhaps best typified by the intellectual inspiration for the reformers in Michigan. Chubb and Moe (1990, 1991) focus on efficiency and effectiveness of privately oriented education systems in advancing student learning. Education is to be treated as a private good. Parents are cast as consumers, and students as value-enhanced (or enhance-able) products. Concern for the common good is almost completely subsumed to an elevation of the private benefits of education. This is epitomized in their discussion of the value of homogeneity in education — an issue at the heart of the common school reformers' concern for the future of democracy. Chubb and Moe claim (and intend to prove) that there is a lower level of bureaucratic control over schools where the school and community population is most homogeneous in its constitution and goals for schools (1990: 61 ff.). By decreasing bureaucratic and political interference, schools are more

effective at pursuing their mission. Although this may very well be true, we must ask, To what end?

The very fact that different people may have different goals for education suggests that there is no firm consensus on the purpose(s) of schools. Certainly, student learning is a consideration, but is it the sole mission of schools in a democratic society? The common school reformers — in their much more pronounced concern for democracy and the common good — would say no. The agenda of making "choice" paramount ignores the socialization function of schools, a common school idea that, with little reflection, most modern citizens in a democracy would probably also embrace today. In a viable democratic society, the citizens, through the agency of the state, have a compelling interest in guaranteeing socialization. This should not necessarily be so that schools can cultivate support for the state, or the government, but to guarantee the viability of civil society. This is essential to democracy, because civil society is the necessary prerequisite for democracy, and not simply a convenient externality of the marketplace. Ironically, this balkanization that results from efforts to de-centralize control of education has the potential to further empower the central state as the one authority that can mediate and suppress conflict between social groups.[15]

It is no secret that the most visible proponents of these reforms see democratic control as the problem. From the perspective of Chubb & Moe, (1990, 1991) Durant (1997), and DeWeese (1994, 1996c), for example, the problem with schools is democratic — often called "political" — control. Democratic politics are messy and inefficient. As the site for debate between conflicting interests, change can happen slowly, and its direction is not seen as "progress" by all competing groups (Plank & Boyd, 1994). On the other hand, the market is seen as a pure, politically neutral mechanism for sorting conflicting claims and efficiently distributing resources. The market is thus viewed as a form of social organization superior to democratic politics. Although they present themselves and their ideas as "above" politics — embedded in the apolitical neutrality of the market — in Michigan, market reformers can still purchase political influence and manipulate democratic discourse to achieve their market ends. They deny the political implications of their plans, but the plans are immersed in politics, and have political consequences for democracy.

Thus, the faith of market-oriented reformers in the power of the market is notable. Whereas skeptics might be concerned about instances of market failure, choice advocates see the market as the basis of all progress. Disregarding claims that people engage in the market from different negotiating positions, capabilities, understandings and degrees of need, Durant (1997: 363), for example, asserts, "There is no loser in a voluntary transaction free of force or fraud. Everyone wins — otherwise the trade wouldn't take place." Such a position as this ignores the internal logic of markets, in that relative advantage can be maximized not only by seeking the most and best opportunities for one's own child, but by *limiting* such attempts by other players in the market. While the experiences of poor people, the employed, and consumers support Carl's (1994) assertion

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[15] These ideas on the relationships of civil society, democracy, education and the marketplace are largely drawn from Margolis, 1998.

that markets can be coercive, and do not necessarily generate liberty for all who engage them, the advocates of markets in education not only deny such evidence, but indicate that common sense would make it impossible to think otherwise: "Exchange in the market is characterized by win-win results. Billions of these two-sided victories take place each day all over the world" (Durant, 1997: 363).

In conclusion, then, the contrast between the values embedded in the rhetoric of the common school reformers and current market-oriented reformers raises several important issues. Certainly, there has never been a time when the ideals espoused in the rhetoric of the common school reformers were substantially realized. However, as Barber (1997) points out, this does not necessarily require that we privatize one of our last remaining public institutions. We need to interrogate the logic of the common school reformers in their linking conceptions of the common schools and democracy. Furthermore, the appropriateness of any logical connection should be re-examined in the changing context of our society. However, the strong emphasis the common school reformers put on public control of education has had a lasting impact, and stands in direct contrast to current reformers' efforts to redefine "public" education away from primarily public control. Thus, the burden of proof is substantially on the current pro-market advocates who seek what they themselves call "radical" reforms and a "paradigm shift" characterized by the low priority given to democracy as a means for ordering social life

There is at least as much logical motivation to move toward more direct democratic control, rather than away from it — an idea which has been excluded from the policy debate and the public consciousness. The lack of a consensus on evidence to justify the market-oriented reforms is highlighted by the end-around attempt to redefine the "public" aspect of education. In lieu of compelling evidence, we are asked to "leap before you look."[16] An examination of past experiences, such as the common school reformers' motivations for reform, would suggest that the problems of the pre-common school era are potentially on the horizon. As we move farther away from what they saw as the appropriate response to the polarization and fragmentation of a democratic society, those left in the public schools may experience parallels to the charity and pauper schools of the pre-common school era. The withdrawal of elites from common areas of social life in a democracy — a trend that Mann and others sought to end — is still a concern. But the potential threat to democracy is multiplied in a context of enclosures where public institutions such as education are recast as a private good for personal gain, and the common good is divided up and parceled out.

[16] Quote from former Milwaukee public schools superintendent Howard Fuller, addressing the Mich. State Board of Education before the vote on advancing the promotion of charter schools (in Daubenmier, 1995b).

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