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Selling School Reform:
Neoliberal Crisis-Making and the Reconstruction of Public Education

by

Nirali Jani

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of
the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education
in the Graduate Division of the University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:
Professor Daniel Perlstein, Chair
Professor Janelle Scott
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Abstract

**Selling School Reform:**
**Neoliberal Crisis-Making and the Reconstruction of Public Education**

by

**Nirali Saurabh Jani**

**Doctor of Philosophy in Education**

**University of California, Berkeley**

**Professor Daniel Perlstein, Chair**


This study asks how neoliberal reform became the hegemonic framework for racial justice and educational equity.  Using an interdisciplinary methodology, I examine three reform projects that operate on different terrains – or scales – of 'governmentality': that of broad public sense-making, that of district policymaking, and that of individual and community-based subjectivities.

The first project (Chapter Two) was a national publicity campaign funded by the Broad and Gates foundations.  In this chapter, I use Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to understand how reformers used language to shape public consciousness, pointing to the continuity of an educational "crisis discourse" first manufactured in the Reagan era.  Chapter Three examines the state takeover and neoliberal reconstruction of an urban school district. Using the theoretical framework of "disaster capitalism" (Klein, 2007), I trace how the neoliberal reform network penetrated the district, fundamentally reshaping its structures and processes.  In the fourth chapter, I use ethnographic methods to study the effects of 'punitive privatization' on a school site steeped in historical traditions of anti-racist and anti-capitalist critique.  I argue that neoliberal accountability is "devitalizing" (McDermott & Hall, 2007) to the political vision and practices of the school, and that it works to co-opt dissent and redirect parent participation.

Taken together, these projects demonstrate both coercive and consensual processes: the corporate reform network penetrates public institutions and democratic processes, redirecting them to do the work of marketization and capital accumulation.  At the same time, it employs sophisticated and well-funded marketing to articulate these projects across a breadth of terrains and at different scales.  Each project demonstrates how market advocates, driven by venture-philanthropic funding, position their work as the only possible means for racial justice and educational equity.  The findings point to two powerful aspects of neoliberalism: its role in creating and manipulating educational crises and its ability to absorb and reframe challenges to capitalism.

to Kavi and Kayam Jani-Patel


to Paresh Patel
*(for posterity's sake)*


and


to my village

in the Town

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# Chapter 1
## Theorizing Neoliberalism

**Introduction**

*The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (NCLB) marked a "fundamental shift" in the landscape of educational policymaking (DeBray-Pelot & McGuinn, 2009). Within schools and districts, this shift was largely defined by marketized restructuring (Lipman, 2004; Alliance to Reclaim Our Schools, 2015); high-stakes accountability regimes (Thompson, 2012; Hursh, 2007); and the narrowing of goals and discourses around "achievement" (Coles, 2002). In this new politics of education, reformers articulated market-driven school reform as a project of racial justice, or the "new civil rights" (Scott, 2013; Leonardo, 2007; Paige, 2004).

These reforms are driven primarily by a funding and advocacy network that combines historic levels of investment, a hyper-networked set of actors, and the use of corporate-style marketing, management, and community "engagement" to implement a unified policy agenda. Neoliberal discourse, manufactured and strategically disseminated by this network, operates on and within individuals. The goal of this discourse is to inform how educators (Friedman, 2000; Kerr, 1999); students and their families (Pedroni, 2007; Whittle, 2005); and civil-rights and racial-justice advocates (Duggan, 2003; Melamed, 2006) both experience and make sense of school reform.

Market-driven reform takes place through new state and institutional arrangement as well as through the co-opting and reconstruction of democratic institutions and practices. The sets of actors who participate in this transformation are variable and complex, but it is possible to sort them into broad categories based on the type of capital that they bring to the reform project. These include 1) venture-philanthropic funders (financial capital); 2) Teach For America (TFA) alumni and the intermediary advocacy organizations within which they are disproportionately represented (social capital); and 3) the national, district, and state-level policymakers (often supported by or otherwise informed by venture philanthropy and TFA) who provide new forms of access to state institutions (political capital). While it is also important to consider the families and teachers who support neoliberal reform in the hopes of educational equity, I do not identify them as key policy drivers or organizational "nodes of power" within market-driven reform. This is because these actors do not generally participate in the top-down sense-making that is the focus of this research. The 'choices' of these actors to participate in neoliberal reform are often more limited and/or more strategic (Pedroni, 2007) than ideologically driven: the policy terrain is pre-constructed, and the range of options made available by reformers does not include an authentic redistribution of resources.

Although it is only the latest incarnation of philanthropic investment in public schooling, venture philanthropy acted in new and powerful ways within the federal context of NCLB and subsequently within state and local contexts. Corporate foundations like the Broad, Walton, and Gates foundation have many similarities, such as

a policy consensus about charter schools and school choice, that cause them to act as a "de facto advocacy coalition" (Scott, 2009). In cities like Oakland, New Orleans, Chicago, Detroit, and Newark, the network has succeeded in replacing many public schools with charter schools; defunding programs for vulnerable students and their families; and transferring whole sectors of public governance and accountability to private organizations (Journey for Justice Alliance, 2014).

**Research Questions and Themes**

Broadly, this research asked how neoliberal school reform became hegemonic, particularly as a framework for educational justice (Lipman, 2004; Atasay, 2015; Legend, 2010), focusing on the concrete processes, strategies, and discourses used by reformers to gain power and create consent. These strategies have evolved as capitalism works to creatively open new markets and transform those forces that oppose it (Harvey, 2005; Brown, 2005).

Given that the power of neoliberalism lies in its ability to articulate with broad and disparate interests, it is necessary to investigate: 1) how reform takes place on multiple terrains, from public sense-making to district restructuring to interactions at the school level; and 2) how neoliberal school reform operates across different sets of actors, or "subject-positions" (Hall, 1988). While each chapter in this dissertation begins from its own research questions and therefore its own methods for research and analysis, they emerged from a common set of questions:

1. *What cultural and discursive strategies have been used to gain consent for neoliberal school reform policies?*
2. *How does neoliberal reform become hegemonic in an urban district? What concrete mechanisms have reformers used to restructure public institutions and democratic processes?*
3. *What racial, economic, and pedagogical discourses are reflected in neoliberal reform? How have particular discourses become dominant, and how do they relate to prior and competing constructions of racial, educational, and social "justice"?*

The theoretical framework that follows helps us to understand neoliberalism as both an economic and policy framework and as a set of cultural and discursive practices that govern the maintenance and reproduction of capitalism. A fuller description of the reform projects follows the theoretical framework.

**Theoretical Framework: Neoliberal Capitalism**

"Neoliberalism" is shorthand for neoliberal capitalism, or the latest form of capitalism. The following section traces how scholars of both political-economy and cultural studies have theorized what is "new" about neoliberalism: how it differs from liberal capitalism; what type of phenomena it encompasses; and what historical, political-economic, and social processes were involved in its hegemony. More specifically, I identify several ways in which neoliberalism reconstructs the operations of capitalism:

through a shift in the role of the state; through the remaking of the racial state; and through processes of governmentality that include racialized discourses of crisis, disaster, and neoliberal multiculturalism. As with liberal capitalism, neoliberalism is a "racial project" (Omi & Winant, 1994): the work of racialization and racism are formative to each of its new aspects, and thus are threaded throughout each section with an emphasis on how they illuminate new forms of inequity and domination.

In framing this research, I parse theories of neoliberalism into theories of political economy and theories of cultural reproduction. By political-economic theory, I mean materialist understandings that frame neoliberalism as a set of economic practices and the policies that emerge from them (Harvey, 2005). By cultural theories, I mean theories of neoliberalism as a form of "governmentality" constructed by and within racialized discourse (Roberts & Mahtani, 2010; Hall, 1988; Peters, M.A., Besley, A.C., Olssen, M., Maurer, S. & Weber, S. (Eds.), 2009). However, foundational to this dissertation is Duggan's (2003) point that

> [n]eoliberalism was constructed in and through cultural and identity politics and cannot be undone… [without responding] directly to that fact. Nor will it be possible to build a new social movement… as long as cultural and identity issues are separated from the political economy in which they are embedded. The progressive-left must understand that NL organizes material and political life in terms of race, gender, and sexuality as well as economic class and nationality, or ethnicity and religion (p. 3).

Broadly, the term neoliberalism "denotes new forms of political-economic governance premised on the extension of market relationships" (Larner, 2009, p. 5). In its most structural terms, neoliberalism is an economic form that emphasizes capital accumulation through the rule of a "market state," where new forms of globalized production are forcing governments to abandon their commitment to the welfare state in service of maximizing the private business sector. Its key policy structures are privatization, deregulation, and a shift in the role of the state toward these ends. This phenomenon relies on the naturalization of the free market within economic policy and practice, which in turn encourages and legitimizes the privatization of all sectors and the creation of markets in diverse settings where they previously did not exist (such as prisons, water and other natural resources, and schooling).

In neoliberal discourse, a lazy government monopoly on schooling leads to antiquated, inefficient systems that are subject to stifling bureaucracy and the complications created by democratic politics (Chubb & Moe, 1990). The purported racial project of privatization is to create racial justice by removing the bureaucratic and systemic barriers that are inherent in a democratic system. The theory of action is that removing these barriers will bring entrepreneurial freedom to schools, teachers, and students, creating access to more organized, efficient, innovative schools, thereby creating racial justice in the form of better functioning schools for marginalized students.

Families are encouraged to shop for their best rational choice based on their individual needs and preferences. The internal logic of this theory is that having the freedom to choose between options is both a necessary and sufficient criteria for educational justice. Investors fulfill their corporate social responsibility simply by clearing the way for choice or by supporting a choice option – the quality of that option is not a measure of its success. In this paradigm, there is no clear standard for what constitutes a "good" education; rather, it is that the existence of choice itself satisfies the requirements for equity and social good.

Critical education researchers, however, provide another narrative grounded in social and economic reproduction: they argue that school and district restructuring under neoliberalism has generally served to reproduce the interests of capital while sorting and socializing new generations into their intended economic and social roles. This process includes reshaping both pedagogical and management practices to fit with macro-level changes in political economy (Lipman, 2004; Anyon, 1980; Giroux, 1988, 2008). In the classroom and in other educative spaces, neoliberal practices build consent for participating in competition and legitimize the "myth of the meritocracy" (Loewen, 1995). Formal education is a key site in which to render populations useful to global capitalist interests (Tikly, 2001), and educative practices are often used to create the social mindset necessary for active participation in the "new work order" (Gee, Hull & Lankshear, 1996). Testing is used to sort winners from losers and to legitimize an all-or-nothing system (Apple, 2001), rather than to inform curriculum or teaching - thus reproducing the class positions from which students enter schools.

The "liberalism" in American neoliberalism refers to Enlightenment era ideals about the liberty of individuals. Classical economic theorists such as Adam Smith (1776) viewed economic liberty as being manifested within the marketplace, arguing that market economies are generally the healthiest, most productive, and beneficial to their societies. Smith understood markets as generally naturalistic and self-regulating. He believed that if left to themselves, the tendency of markets and competition was for the "invisible hand" to operate in the best interests of both the consumer and the producer. Smith's theory, however, is a theory of market economics rather than a theory of 'free' markets. Free-market capitalism involves the radical recentering of ideas such as the 'invisible hand,' 'rational choice,' and 'freedom,' which became elevated, decontextualized, and naturalized within economic, political, and cultural processes (Korten, 1995). Although Smith himself only mentions the invisible hand a handful of times within over 600 pages, it remains a primary metaphor for the market as a living, autonomous entity. Similarly, the naturalization of rational choice has strong implications for the project of school choice.

While neoliberal economics can be traced back to the global post-WWII projects of the Chicago School, its hegemony is generally marked by the rise of the Reagan and Thatcher administrations (and their global implications). These governments reached across global policy to ensure the convergence of market-driven ideology within restructured state forms and institutions. For example, by 1980, which Harvey calls a

"revolutionary turning point" (2001, p. 1) in the history of neoliberalism, Paul Volcker at the U.S. Federal Reserve dramatically changed monetary policy, emphasizing a shift away from the goal of full employment and towards the goal of quelling inflation/stagflation (thereby creating a climate favoring business), no matter what the cost to unemployment. This shift, both in large-scale economic reform and in local microcosms, cannot be underestimated: it is a cogent example of the way neoliberal policy shifts both material and cultural realities. Changing the measure of what makes a healthy economy, a healthy community, or a healthy person is a crucial piece of the neoliberal project. It resonates today in the ways that we problematize and propose solutions to issues such as gentrification, healthcare, and education – where the legitimacy of a project is expressed in terms of the amount of choice and 'freedom' for consumers instead of needs met or resources (re)distributed.

*The emergence of neoliberalism in education policy*

The *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2001 (NCLB) was the name of the Bush administration's reauthorization of the 1965 *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (ESEA), which is the single largest source of federal support for K-12 education. Since ESEA was first enacted in 1965, the law has been renamed and amended several times, but it remains as the framework for education legislation. Created as part of President Lyndon Johnson's "War on Poverty," the ESEA was comprised of ten Titles that authorized more than 40 kindergarten through 12th-grade programs. Each title addressed a specific realm of educational needs within the new context of civil rights. In an attempt to further educational equity through 'compensatory' programs, the ESEA created a basis for federal standards. The programs were targeted to address specific priorities that were not being met at the state and local levels, such as attempting to assure equity, improving the achievement of economically and educationally disadvantaged children, decreasing the school dropout rate, and promoting parent involvement in schools. To support these goals, the ESEA set up a system of grants and sub-grants to be distributed by the states. Awards were based on the creation of local and state programs oriented to the needs of their students and to the goals of their communities.

The 1983 publication of *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* is often posed as marking the beginning of an ideological shift in education policy. Released by a Reagan-appointed group called "The National Commission on Excellence in Education" (NCEE), the report set the discursive tone for the expansion of the education industry and for a dramatic shift in the education policy landscape that would be manifested in the *No Child Left Behind* Act of 2001.

The Reagan administration represented opportunities for business to consolidate its work around education and learn how to spend "as a class" (Harvey, 2005). In education, this process can be traced back to the 1989 formation of the Business Roundtable (BRT), when a group of about 200 of the largest U.S. corporations began to develop numerous initiatives within a national K-12 reform agenda. In the wake of *A*

*Nation at Risk*, these actors harnessed the idea of corporate citizenship to promote and legitimize the emerging market in education, posing themselves as the solution to the crisis. The Business Roundtable was instrumental in creating the platform of standards, assessments, and accountability that was foundational to NCLB. Emery (2002) argues that the BRT's educational vision was "to transform the public school system to mirror the structure of the New Economy workplace as well as to contribute to the consolidation of corporate hegemony over American political and cultural life" (p. 10).

*Remaking the racial state*

Harvey (2005) argues that the capitalist world "stumbled towards neoliberalization as the answer through a series of gyrations and chaotic experiments that really only converged as a new orthodoxy with the articulation of what became known as the 'Washington Consensus' in the 1990s" (p. 12). Under the Clinton administration, new coalitions emerged with the explicit goal of creating a coherent global system of free markets (with the goal of political stability insofar as it facilitated these markets). However, in its broadest terms neoliberalism is also part of a dialectical process: those stumbles and gyrations were oftentimes uneven responses to wide-ranging crises and challenges within post-World War II liberal capitalism. These challenges threatened capitalist logic by exposing and pushing on contradictions, forcing the reinvention of economic liberalism against them.

Historians have pointed to the breadth of these challenges, including the rise of the social welfare state (Goldberg, 2009); Keynesian economics and the threat of communism (Harvey, 2005); anti-colonial (and later, decolonial) and liberatory social movements (Winant, 2001); and radical anti-racism and ethnic nationalism (Tikly, 2004; Melamed, 2006). More recently, we might look to the global economic crisis of 2008, which exposed the unsustainability of hyper-capitalism and the culpability of the "financial services" sector.

All of the challenges described above brought the racial contradictions within capitalism to the forefront. Fundamental to each challenge is an embedded argument about the role of race and racism in maintaining inequity and stratification, or a critique of the role of capitalism in maintaining White Supremacy. Most significantly, we see a renewal of Black-led intersectional politics within the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement, which unapologetically links the domination of racialized, gendered bodies to capitalism. The power of this movement is that, like neoliberalism, it operates across spaces and articulates with many "subject-positions" (Hall, 1988; Rose, 1996). As the movement's founders and many critics point out, this means that it is also vulnerable to co-optation and assimilation by capitalism and hetero-patriarchy (Garza, 2017). For example, critics have pointed to the 'sponsorship' (better described as unlicensed co-branding, since BLM is not an organization that can be commercially sponsored) by corporations like Wells Fargo, which actively and intentionally participated in the predatory subprime lending practices that led an entire generation of Black Americans to lose their limited wealth (Rothacker & Ingram, 2012).

Neoliberalism, then, is the reinvention of liberal capitalism as it responds to and absorbs these challenges; it is a product of dialectical struggle in which capitalist economics, discourses, and technologies must either resolve or absorb contradictions. The capitalist 'thesis,' when faced with anti-theses, must synthesize or assimilate the critiques against it. Within this process, global and state institutions and their subjects are reconstructed in service of market processes such as globalization and gentrification. Brown (2005) argues that the market is the organizing and regulative principle of the state and of society, along three lines. First, the state openly responds to the needs of the market (as defined by those who prioritize capital accumulation). Second, the state itself is enfolded in and animated by market rationality and in entrepreneurial terms. The state must think and behave like a market actor across all of its functions, including the law. Finally, the health and growth of the [corporate] economy is the basis for state legitimacy.

In a materialist conception, the "neo" in neoliberalism also refers to the reconstruction of the social democratic welfare state. As the state is transformed, liberal functions such as caretaking and defense (insofar as these functions serve the capitalist nation-state) are displaced. The main function of the market state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to creating and preserving new markets in areas such as land, water, education, health care, social security, or environmental pollution (Harvey, 2005). As free-market ideology is fully incorporated into the mechanisms and practices of the state (Melamed, 2005), the work of the state is shifted to – and its legitimacy is defined by – providing the freedom to participate in these markets. The state's role shifts from one of limiting risk to providing the *opportunity* to take these risks. This discourse is dominant in charter-school politics and is exemplified by the analysis of a parent-educator in Oakland, California:

> What it comes down to is whoop, I get a bunch of shitty choices. So there you go, I'm choosing and now I'm empowered to drive around town. It's like shopping, but with a teeny tiny paycheck. And if it sucks for my kids, well, get in the car and go shopping again only there's only moldy bread on the shelves. I can keep going with this metaphor… like I buy the bread, take it home and cut off the mold and just hope she doesn't get sick. But I *choose* [author's emphasis] to take the *risk* [emphasis added] because it's that or die. Or you know, go to jail (M.J., personal communication, November 1, 2015).

While the common-sense notion of the neoliberal state is one that withdraws from social provisions entirely, theorists have also pointed to the ways in which it redirects those provisions toward private goals. Goldberg (2009) explains that neoliberalism does not seek to get rid of the state but to remake it – to "shift its priorities radically, to redirect it to represent different interests, to do different work" (p. 333). It is not so much a break with capitalist state formation as it is an intensification of some of its core features. [Liberal] social spending does not end, but gets redirected into private hands

and repressive state apparatuses; it becomes fashioned by and for the social and political interests of those with excess capital. This phenomenon was extremely visible in NCLB, which increased the federal education budget but channeled its spending to a narrow list of large-scale corporate contractors (Yatvin, 2002; Mandevilla, 2007).

It might be said that the role of the state is one of the features that distinguishes neoliberalism from its cousin, libertarianism. While both forms of capitalism are market-centered and socially liberal, libertarianism seeks to abolish the state. In contrast, neoliberalism turns the state in service of the market and maintains control over unmarketizable (surplus) racialized bodies. As demonstrated within "No Excuses" charter schools, structures for managing these bodies include modes of personal accountability and penalization, particularly for the working class, manifested across social spaces and institutions such as schools.

Legal theorists also point to ways in which this shift is reproduced within the legal system. Bobbitt (2008, 2002 as cited in Martinez, 2010) argues that the state is changing from a nation state to a market state. Critical race theorist Martinez (2010) builds on this theory, explaining that the authority of the nation state is based on the premise that the state offers to improve material well-being in exchange for the power to govern. The nation state cannot satisfy this goal because of a number of developments, creating a public "realization that the state will no longer be able to protect their citizens or to preserve their national cultures" (p. 2). The market state emerges to take its place, offering to maximize individual opportunities in exchange for power. This shift is a racial project with critical, material implications for minority populations (such as the Blackwater company on the U.S./Mexico border and in Iraq), as well as for legal conceptions of racial justice.

Assimilation is not really necessary under the market state, nor is it a project of equity: the market state only needs diversity insofar as it meets the cultural requirements of the market. Martinez (2010) argues that assimilation under *Brown v Board of Education* (1954) met the needs of the market state in that it was a Cold War strategy to prevent communism from taking advantage of racial divisions – thus, the integration project remains secondary and perpetually incomplete. Similar reasoning is reflected in the Court's reasoning that gay and minority rights can be based on workplace efficiency (such as lower maternity and healthcare costs), as well as workforce diversity to meet global needs (Duggan, 2003). Martinez uses the *Grutter v Bollinger* (2003) decision, where diversity was ruled a compelling (market) state interest, to explain the fact that affirmative action recipients are increasingly biracial or are Black immigrants and their offspring. He argues that there is less need to assimilate historically oppressed American Black people because these groups are satisfactory for market diversity.

Critical theories about the role of assimilation into capitalism can also provide some insight into the politics of racial representation in urban districts like Oakland, where a series of trustees and administrators trained by the Broad Foundation are part of a small group of Black administrators who rotate nationally through urban takeover and reform districts for one to three-years. This constant rotation provides some immunity

to community-based racial critiques while allowing reform advocates to claim that these racialized figures 'represent' the majority Black and Brown districts to which they are deployed. The Broad Foundation board, meanwhile, has only one Black member, conservative former Secretary of Education Rod Paige. Scott (2009) notes that while venture philanthropies generally share the traditionally espoused emphasis on improving educational outcomes for poor and minority children, they continue to perpetuate leadership inequalities in the race and social class backgrounds of founders and foundation officers. Although the foundation staffs might have more racial and gender diversity, the founders and heads of the foundations tend to be white, male, and wealthy.

Goldberg (2009) argues that race is foundational to the modern state and remains the "enduring occupation" of modernity. Beginning with European conquest and colonization, the state was grounded in and defined by slavery, colonization, and genocide. Race is an essential guiding project of modernity and so neoliberalism must engage with it. The principal charge facing the modern state becomes how to "conceive of and manage" its heterogenous populations. The need to discipline, marketize, and otherwise manage "surplus" bodies, then, is a fundamental project of the modern state (Goldberg, 2009; Mendoza & Finch, 2014).

The fact that the market state no longer requires assimilation explains the hyper-incarceration of racialized bodies. The shift to the market state results in the criminalization of poverty and requires a disciplining of surplus bodies through hyper-incarceration (Davis, 2016; Wacquant, 2001; Gilmore, 2002). As Wacquant (2001) argues, prison is one of three "peculiar institutions" that were created to isolate and control African-Americans after the original peculiar institution of slavery: Jim Crow laws, the ghetto, and the prison. He also argues that the astonishing growth of the penal system is the result of the "planned atrophy of the social state" under neoliberalism.

Within this paradigm, Gilmore (2002) describes a "fatal coupling of difference and power" (Hall, 1992, cited in Gilmore, 2002, p. 16) that is essential to the organization of the United States, and which asserts itself within whichever political-economic framework is hegemonic at the time. This process take place within a state in permanent crisis. In this moment in the history of capitalism, the coupling is being re-embraced through neoliberal practice, which must find new ways to absorb and discipline surplus workers. The result is the housing of these bodies in the penal system:

> Racism functions as a limiting force that pushes disproportionate costs of
> participating in an increasingly monetized and profit-driven world onto
> those who, due to the frictions of political distance, cannot reach the
> variable levers of power that might relieve them of those costs. Prisons are
> geographical solutions to social and economic crises, politically organized
> by a racial state that is itself in crisis" (p. 16).

The concept of a school-to-prison pipeline (Mora & Christianakis, 2013) reflects the relationship between neoliberal reform and marginalized ("surplus") racialized bodies

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within the new global city. School privatization has reproduced and reinforced the school to prison pipeline in a number of ways, including the defunding of programs for English Language Learners, students with special needs, and other non-dominant students; the closure of public schools and the expansion of charter schools that are not legally required to support these students; and the ongoing de-professionalization of the teaching force for marginalized students.

Many charter schools employ unqualified and less experienced teachers (Fuller et al., 2003; Goldring et al., 2013); in increasing numbers, these schools also rely on alternative online certification programs and 'in-house' teacher credentialing programs. The failure to invest in teachers is part of an ongoing de-professionalization of the teaching force (Milner, 2013). In addition, underprepared and inexperienced teachers, particularly those who do not expect to be teachers in the long-term (along the lines of Teach for America), are more likely to teach minority students and more likely to refer them for special education services, where students of color are overrepresented (Cartledge, 2005). Those charters that do serve ELLs often do not provide the number of qualified and specialized teachers needed (Fuller et al., 2003).

Research indicates that charter school students are not faring significantly better than peers at comparable traditional schools (Institute of Education Sciences, 2010; Gwynne & de la Torre, 2009; Center for Research on Education Outcomes [CREDO], 2013). Additionally, charter schools generally fail to deliver on promises of "innovation" in either student achievement or other forms of equity (Darder, 2014). Research indicates that charter schools reproduce the traditional curriculum and instructional practices of the public schools that they aim to replace, and that teachers in both models say they exert little influence over curriculum and instruction (Cuban, 2012). Within this process, narrowly defined high-stakes accountability systems function as forces of surveillance, management, and punishment for schools that serve racialized working-class students.

One important point that links Gilmore's analysis to market practices is the idea that oppressive historical blocs externalize both the risks and costs of domination and exploitation. This is especially clear in the case of schools, the primary state apparatus of childhood, where students are intimately shaped and their chances at social participation are made or broken. Neoliberal experiments, from school governance and restructuring to online curriculum, are generally profitable for investors because even when they fail, the product or experiment is bought and paid for. The risk of failure is externalized: while neoliberal reformers calculate the success of schools by "return on investment" (Childress & Amrofell, 2016, p. 20), the natural risks of experimentation and failure are borne out in concrete ways in students' lives.

*Governmentality and racial discourse*

A historical materialist, or structuralist, conception of neoliberal capitalism is helpful in understanding how and why its hegemony is reproduced through layers of policy. However, cultural theorists argue that treating neoliberalism as merely a revival or

intensification of classical liberal political economy "fail[s] to recognize the political rationality that both organizes these policies and reaches beyond the market" (Brown, 2005, p. 38), extending and disseminating market values to all institutions and social action. Ignoring this rationality obscures its powerful ideological ability to obscure democratic interests, transform democratic discourse, operate across class and identity lines, and erode liberal democratic institutions and practices.

These theorists argue that since the Reagan era, neoliberal rationality is emerging as a "governmentality": a form of governance encompassing, but not limited to the state, and one that produces subjects, forms of citizenship and behavior, and a new "organization of the social" (Brown, 2005; Rose, 1996). Governmentality is the ongoing reconstruction, dissemination, and institutionalization of this rationality; it works in tandem with political and legal measures to [re]construct and reproduce capitalism. Within this paradigm, the human being is *homo economicus* and all human action is cast as rational entrepreneurial action. Theorists of governmentality emphasize the need to interrogate the role of discourse (Foucault, cited in Burchell et al., 1991; Fairclough, 1992) and the work of racial and cultural politics (Duggan, 2003; Buras, 2008).

Neo-Foucauldians such as Nikolas Rose (1996) emphasize that while neoliberalism may mean less government (in some arenas), it does not follow that there is less governance. Neoliberal governance is a reconstruction of both the source and the subject of governance – the welfare state is 'degovernmentalized' and the citizen is reconstructed as an active agent both willing and able to exercise autonomous choices. Although the range of options is not governed or prescribed by the state, the consumers – or 'free agents' – are held accountable for their level of participation and their alignment with the available models. Brown (2005) also argues that a key project of the neoliberal project is to create the citizen-subject of a neoliberal order: it normatively constructs and interpellates individuals as entrepreneurial actors in every sphere of life, assigning full responsibility for their life-paths. It creates a new mode of depoliticizing social and economic powers by constructing social inequity as the result of a mismanaged life. Nowhere is this more obvious than in the 'options' process for public schools. If you do not have a good school, it is not because there are not enough good schools: it is because you haven't found the right school yet. And if the right school does not yet exist, then a need exists that the market should attempt to fill.

Gramsci's (1971) theory of hegemony offers a useful framework for understanding how the state and civil society produce and maintain consent to capitalism (Hall, 1992; Hall, 1996b, cited in Stoddart, 2007). Gramsci reconstructs ideology as a "terrain" of practices, principles, and dogmas having a material and institutional nature constituting individual subjects once these ideas were "inserted" into such a terrain (Ramos Jr., 1982). Hegemony, then, is

> the process whereby ideas, structures, and actions come to be seen by the
> majority of people as wholly natural, preordained, and working for their
> own good, when in fact they are constructed and transmitted by powerful

minority interests to protect the status quo that serves those interests"
(Brookfield, 2010, p. 222).

Gramsci distinguishes between coercive control, which is gained through state force or threat of force, and the more nuanced processes of consensual control that arise when individuals assimilate the worldview of the dominant group. In this conception, control of discourse and other cultural processes are fundamental to consensual control and thereby to the process of securing hegemony.

Drawing from Hall's (1988) analysis of Thatcherism, Larner (2007) explains that neoliberalism draws power from its ability to appeal to people from a broad range of social positions. Ideological hegemony is co-constructed, not simply by the state and its corporate players but through discursive exchange by multiple sets of actors, and "hegemony is only achieved through an ongoing process of contestation and struggle" (p. 10). She cites Hall's "self-identified shift from a 'base-superstructure-ideology model' to a 'discursive model'" as an example of the importance of a discursive frame to those who identify with Marxism (p. 12). In this system, discourse is understood as more than simple rhetoric or the framework within which people represent their lived experiences. Instead, it becomes "a system of meaning that constitutes institutions, practices and identities in contradictory and disjunctive ways" (p. 12). In this sense, discourse has the power to (re)construct reality and thus to aid in the project of Governmentality.

Hall's (1988) concept of articulation, and discourse theory more generally, can help to understand the specific, concrete ways that neoliberal ideology is reproduced within different groupings of people. Arguing that political configurations are more multi-vocal than previously understood (i.e., not simply ruling-, working-, and middle-class), he interrogates the way that liberal language was used to gain consent for the conservative policies of the Thatcher government. In the context of the No Child Left Behind Act, market-driven school reformers prioritized race-conscious language to frame schools and teachers as the agents of racism. For instance, President G.W. Bush's phrase "the soft bigotry of low expectations" (Washington Post, 2000) is an articulation of anti-racist sentiment with a punitive, outcomes-based testing regime. Linking this concept and this policy obscures analysis – to criticize the law is to have low standards, and to have low standards is to be a "soft bigot" (Ellen Moore, personal communication, August 12, 2013). "Soft bigotry," in turn, articulates this version of racial justice with the gendered, 'get-tough' discourse of the G.W. Bush administration and much of its constituency.

Articulation is temporal, malleable, and always shifting. In dialectical fashion, it can appear in order to try and reconcile the conflicts and contradictions posed to capitalism within a particular historical moment:

> It is a linkage which is not necessary, determined, absolute and essential for all time. You have to ask under what circumstances can a connection be forged or made? The so-called 'unity' of a discourse is really the

articulation of different, distinct elements which can be rearticulated in different ways because they have no necessary 'belongingness.' The 'unity' which matters is a linkage between the articulated discourse and the social forces with which it can, under certain historical conditions, but need not necessarily, be connected (Hall, 1996, p. 141).

Goldberg (2009) argues that in the 1960's, a broad consensus began to emerge that racism was not just individual prejudice, but was deeply ingrained in U.S. society, thereby demonstrating the necessity of sweeping structural reform. The liberal conception of racism, tied to a vocabulary of prejudice, race relations, and discrimination began to give way to a more structural understanding marked by such words as subordination, white supremacy, and institutionalized racism. In the face of this ascendant social critique, which Melamed (2006) calls "race radicalism," liberal race theory did not collapse but evolved, or was reconstructed, into what she calls "neoliberal multiculturalism": a 'still-consolidating development' of liberal race hegemony… It is a central ideology and mode of social organization that seeks to manage racial contradictions on a national and international scale for U.S.-led neoliberalism" (p. 3).

Neoliberal multiculturalism functions much like racial liberalism did for U.S. global power after World War II, seeking to manage racial contradictions by rearranging racial meanings:

> Like racial liberalism, contemporary neoliberal multiculturalism sutures official antiracism to state policy in a manner that prevents the calling into question of global capitalism. However, it deracializes official antiracism to an unprecedented degree, turning (deracialized) racial reference into a series of rhetorical gestures of ethical right and certainty. Concepts previously associated with 1980s and 1990s liberal multiculturalism — "openness," "diversity," and "freedom" — are recycled such that "open societies" and "economic freedoms" (shibboleths for neoliberal measures) come to signify human rights that the United States has a duty to secure for the world" (Melamed, 2006, p. 16).

The discourse of neoliberal multiculturalism "de-links racialization and oppression," providing the opportunity to celebrate racial diversity without challenging institutionalized racial discrimination. In this paradigm, racial reference is turned into a series of rhetorical gestures in support of policies that claim to promote equity through market inclusion.

## Structure of the Dissertation

Each of the following chapters of this dissertation traces a separate but interrelated project of market-driven school reform. These projects share broad structural characteristics that make them ideal for a study on the articulation of

neoliberalism and social justice. First, each project involves significant and expensive material restructuring and the redistribution of resources. Second, each is market-driven: it adheres to market mechanisms such as competition, deregulation, efficiency, austerity, and technical rationality and hinges on notions of scarcity and individual responsibility. Finally, as described below, each case embodies a racial project (Omi & Winant, 1994) in the form of an appeal to racial justice. These projects operate at different scales: in broad public consciousness; within district-level policymaking, and within individual and political subjectivities in a school community. Taken together, they illustrate neoliberalism's powerful ideological ability to obscure democratic interests, transform democratic discourse, operate across class and identity lines, and erode liberal democratic institutions and practices (Brown, 2005).

Chapter Two uses Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to understand how reformers construct a liberal crisis discourse around the need to transform public school governance. I analyze the *ED in 08: Strong American Schools* campaign, a $60+ million public relations campaign funded by the Broad and Gates foundations. The campaign is useful in understanding both their educational visions and their discursive strategies for achieving them. This chapter also provides some historical context for the ongoing narratives of crisis and disaster that are a major finding of this research.

Chapter Three interrogates the role of the "reform network" in the State takeover and neoliberal reconstruction of the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD). Using Klein's (2007) theory of "disaster capitalism," I describe the process of state receivership and the installation of corporate-trained State Administrators, with a focus on how the reform network participated in, defined, and utilized the district's bankruptcy to penetrate the district. Klein argues that neoliberal politicians and corporate interests both exploit existing crises and create new ones in order to push through market-based reform; I build on this analysis to demonstrate how the fiscal crisis and resulting takeover were part of a broader strategy to fundamentally restructure the district. This chapter aligns with literature that points to venture-philanthropic foundations, the Teach For America program, and intermediary advocacy organizations as fundamental drivers of district-level privatization. I describe the reform network's role in a number of concrete projects, including appointing administrators; affecting the composition and processes of the school board; the privatization of district land for the purposes of gentrification; and the creation of a "shadow state" within which non-state actors gain disproportionate access to democratic institutions and processes.

Chapter Four examines how historically situated practices of racial justice were reconstructed, redirected, and "devitalized" within the high-stakes testing regime of NCLB. Using data from a 10-month ethnographic study, I 'zoom in' on a small school in Oakland, California. This site is unique in that it was created in 1974, within a moment of emergent racial and anti-capitalist critique that has continued to inform its vision and practices. After outlining how NCLB used increasing levels of privatization to punish failing schools, I trace concrete ways in which the accountability system diluted the ability of the school to engage in its founding principles of racial justice. I contrast

the narrowly-defined, threat-driven accountability of NCLB with Superintendent Marcus Foster's notion of "shared" accountability (Spencer, 2012).

Racial articulation takes the shape of its target audience. *Ed in 08* (Chapter Two) was a broad national campaign directed at mainstream white voters – those who see a generalized form of 'supporting education' as important to their identities. Here racial discourse takes the shape of colorblind liberalism. In a hostile state takeover of a multiracial urban district (Chapter Three), it appears as neoliberal multiculturalism, which "portrays acts of force required for neoliberal restructuring to be humanitarian: a benevolent multicultural invader (the United States, multinational troops, a multinational corporation) intervenes to save life, 'give' basic goods or jobs, and promote limited political freedoms" (Melamed, 2006, p. 1) such as school choice. Finally, in the case of a small school historically steeped in discourses of Black and Brown power (Chapter Four), the appeal to racial justice appears as co-opted forms of participation and empowerment. The discourse across cases is meritocratic, divorcing notions of educational equity from the reality of structural poverty and racism.

This research hopes to contribute to an understanding of neoliberal hegemony by tracing cultural processes through which market-driven projects secure power. The findings point to two powerful aspects of neoliberalism: its ability to absorb and reframe challenges to capitalism and its power to articulate crisis, urgency, and prescribed solutions across different "subject positions" (Hall, 1988). Understanding these phenomena can help us to better evaluate the complex structural and governmental implications of reforms that claim to further equity and social justice. I hope that this work will help to inform the difficult and strategic decisions that families, teachers, and education activists must face in the struggle for educational justice.

# Chapter 2
## Marketing Crisis: A Critical Discourse Analysis of the
## *ED in 08* Campaign

**Introduction**

The *ED in 08: Strong American Schools* campaign has been called the "largest single-issue advocacy campaign in the history of education reform" (Russo, 2012). While the project was widely considered a failure in terms of generating a "buzz" about education in the election cycle, it provides a thoroughly neoliberal intervention from which to study market discourse. It is also worth reconsidering as the "underappreciated prototype for what has become a widespread approach to promoting school reform and the hidden influence over the Obama education agenda" (Russo, p. 1).

*ED in 08* was a publicity campaign launched by the "Strong American Schools" project. The project and the campaign were wholly funded by the Gates and Broad foundations, with the stated hope that it would "catapult the need for improved public education to the top of the 2008 presidential candidates' agendas" (Herszenhorn, 2007). Strong American Schools and *ED in 08* are somewhat ambiguously related, but in essence *ED in 08* was the campaign name and "Strong American Schools" was the alliance behind it. A majority of the work of the campaign took place online, primarily through the campaign website. A description found in the "About Us" section stated the following:

> Strong American Schools is a nonpartisan public awareness and action campaign aimed at offering a voice to every American who supports "*ED in 08*." Our goal is to ensure that the nation engages in a rigorous debate and to make education a top priority in the 2008 presidential election. We hope that candidates will offer genuine leadership rather than empty rhetoric and tell voters how they intend to strengthen America's schools so all students receive the education they deserve (http://www.edin08.org).

**Research Questions and Methodology**

This chapter uses Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to interrogate how venture philanthropists publicize and market neoliberal reform. After providing some historical context around "crisis" marketing in education, I examine specific discursive mechanisms within the primary text (the campaign website). This text is uniquely situated for this type of analysis, since the *ED in 08* campaign was conceived as a marketing campaign (Livingston, 2007) with the explicit goal of creating and shifting the discourse around education in the 2008 Presidential elections. This context provides a unique window into the goals and strategies of two of the most prominent venture philanthropies in education, as well as a framework for understanding neoliberal sense-making as a well-funded professional enterprise.

Broadly, the question that frames this study is the first of my overall dissertation questions: *What cultural and discursive processes are used to gain consent for neoliberal school reform policies?* More specifically, I narrowed my research questions to the following:

- *How did the ED in 08 campaign frame the problem(s) and solution(s) required for neoliberal school reform and educational equity?*
- *What specific narratives and themes are constructed and/or promoted by the campaign?*
- *What specific discursive mechanisms appear within the text, and how do they articulate with broader social contexts to reproduce discursive "unities?"*

The data for this analysis is taken from the *ED in 08* campaign website, (edin08.org), which acted as the primary hub of the campaign. I focus on three main pieces of public advertising for the campaign: Home pages A (Image 1); Home Page B (Image 2); and a newspaper print ad (Image 3). I supplement the analysis with text fragments from two other texts: a two-page downloadable "fact sheet" and a printable brochure. In analyzing this data, I concentrate on language that was persuasive in nature, using metaphors that are reflected in the public "common-sense" understanding of education reform, but which are contestable either through evidence or through argument (i.e., standards and accountability). In keeping with the practice of CDA, I make textual connections to broader social and political schema.

Using CDA, I point to "common-sense assumptions which are implicit in the conventions according to which people interact linguistically, and of which people are generally not consciously aware" (Fairclough, 2001, p. 2). These conventions, which are routinely drawn upon in discourse, "embody ideological assumptions which come to be taken as mere 'common sense,' and which contribute to sustaining existing power relations" (p. 64). I examine ways in which "common-sensical" language and visual text reproducing the hegemonic myth of a "crisis in schooling" (as opposed to a crisis in society), with a focus on how these conventions help to disguise and promote market-driven reform.

This chapter, and the dissertation as a whole, point to the constant reproduction of narratives of crisis and disaster within neoliberal reform. After describing my use of CDA as an analytical framework, I provide some historical context for these themes by tracing them to the 1983 publication of *A Nation at Risk*. However, while this literature makes important connections to broad discursive themes, it focuses mainly on structural relationships among actors while failing to interrogate the specific mechanisms by which market discourse operates. It is difficult to understand or challenge the power of market discourse without a clear picture of the how language is used to shift ideology. In the "Data Analysis" section, I engage in a close technical study of the text of *ED in 08*. I use the analytic tools offered by both critical and more traditional forms of discourse analysis to provide a more tangible, grounded description of these processes. Following Fairclough (2001), I proceed through three dimensions, or stages, of critical discourse analysis. Description (formal properties of the text); interpretation (the relationship

between text and interaction); and explanation (the relationship between interaction and social context).

## Theoretical & Analytic Framework: Critical Discourse Analysis

The broad theoretical framework for this study is discourse theory. Foucault (1972) provides a starting point for thinking about the role of language in creating and maintaining power, describing an analysis of language as "the project of a pure description of discursive events as the horizon for the search for the unities that form within it" (p. 2). I take "discursive unities" to represent common-sensical language that constructs reality in order to reify particular types and definitions of knowledge.

Foucault (1972) begins with the need to do the "negative work" of "ridding ourselves of a whole mass of notions, each of which, in its own way, diversifies the theme of continuity" (p. 21). To do so demands a highly critical analysis of the ways in which our perceptions are organized. In doing this work, he warns against accepting traditions such as defined unities, categories, and the supposed obscurity of ideas that "allows the sovereignty of the collective unconscious to emerge as the principle of unity and explanation" (p. 25). As Hall (1996) reminds us in the previous chapter, these unities are "not necessary, determined, absolute and essential for all time…The so-called 'unity' of a discourse is really the articulation of different, distinct elements which can be rearticulated in different ways because they have no necessary 'belongingness'" (p. 141).

The act of critically analyzing discourse has been codified into a discipline called Critical Discourse Analysis, or CDA, most prominently by Fairclough (2008), who describes his project as follows:

> This research is based upon the theoretical claim that discourse is an element of social life which is dialectically interconnected with other elements, and may have constructive and transformative effects on other elements. It also makes the claim that discourse has in many ways become a more salient and potent element of social life in the contemporary world, and that more general processes of current social change often seem to be initiated and driven by changes in discourse. Discourse analysis, including linguistic analysis, therefore has a great deal more to contribute to social research than has generally been recognized, especially when integrated into interdisciplinary research projects (Capdevilla, 2011, citing Fairclough).

CDA provides a basic framework for evaluating language use, using a political framework in its treatment of discursive facts (Rogers, 2004). It relies on a sociocognitive approach to understand how power is constituted through language and how relationships between texts and society are mediated. As a socially committed scientific paradigm, it emphasizes the use of systematic methodology that integrates both linguistic analysis and contexts of power (Rogers, 2004). Fundamentally, CDA represents an interest in how language works in processes of social change and in how language is

shaped by and reflects power relationships. This reflects a foundational premise of this study – that language is never neutral or arbitrary.

## Historical Context: The Crisis Discourse in School Reform

In understanding the political implications of *ED in 08* campaign, it is important to examine the historical discourses in which it situates itself, and to ask how those discourses have been managed in service of particular ideologies. *ED in 08* follows a pattern that was firmly established by the 1983 publication of *A Nation at Risk: the Imperative for Educational Reform* (NAR). Released by a Reagan-appointed task force called "The National Commission on Excellence in Education" (NCEE), this report set the ideological basis for dramatic expansion in the education industry. The report created a specific narrative about the perceived failure of public education while utilizing highly inflammatory metaphors of war, deficit, and disease to promote reforms for technical rationality, efficiency, and the marketization of education.

Major policy recommendations in NAR included raising "Standards and Expectations" in the form of mandated testing and curriculum; increasing the length of both the school day and the school year; and ensuring that salaries for teachers be "professionally competitive, market-sensitive, and performance-based," and that teachers demonstrate "competence in an academic discipline" (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). Strikingly, the *ED in 08* policy recommendations are identical.

Jackson (2003) points out that the alarmist calls of NAR were later manifested as market-based public policy in the *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2001:

> [A Nation at Risk prescribed] antidotes in the form of standards, accountability, and pluralism, competition, and choice. Bush's No Child Left Behind plan is rooted in the same kind of reasoning… Except for allusion to literacy and reading skills among inner-city fourth-graders, there is virtually no evidence presented regarding educational programs or their gravity; instead they are assumed as givens. Hence, the report is written much like a business plan with goals of the policy and steps that will be taken to improve the quality of education in American schools (Jackson, 2003, p. 225).

Jackson argues that the common shortcomings of *A Nation at Risk* and *No Child Left Behind* include a lack of attention to the broader context of schooling and the need for structural change, and that the sensationalist and nationalist language in both documents reduces a complicated matter to "unidimensionality and simplicity" (p. 230).

Two distinct but intersecting historical narratives underlie the discursive themes identified in this study. The hegemony of *certainty* and of *threat* can be identified throughout policy language and they continue to act as meta-narratives that support and reify the rest of the themes. There is certainty on multiple levels: certainty of the problem and its causes, certainty of the solution, and certainty that the solution is

working. The problem is isolated within schools, is fixable with a narrow, specific, and conveniently packaged curriculum, and there is irrefutable evidence to prove that those prescriptions will provide the one and only best cure. A poor education is the cause of poverty and other 'failures' in life, rather than the other way around. External factors are not considered. Taken together, the themes described above constitute a *crisis* discourse around public schooling.

As with certainty, threat operates on multiple levels and is reinforced by metaphors of war and disease. It can be used to create urgency and to push through dramatic reforms without engaging with public dissent. Both certainty and threat were prominent in the narrative of *A Nation at Risk*:

> The educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a nation and a people… we have, in effect, been committing an act of unthinking, unilateral disarmament (1983, p. 5).

These themes were invoked by both secretaries of education under the George W. Bush administration. Rod Paige, the first Secretary of Education and an architect of Bush's Texas reform agenda, quoted the report directly: "if an unfriendly foreign power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre performance that exists today, we might well have considered it an act of war" (Paige, 2000, quoting NCEE, 1983). He then announced the war on illiteracy: "We know the issues, we know how to handle them, and we're going to launch a full-scale attack" (Paige, 2000).

Molnar (2005) explains that the standards movement "amplified the school-failure rhetoric of *A Nation at Risk* and led the way to market-based solutions premised on the assumption that the "monopoly" held by public schools was the reason for the alleged failure… In the political environment that resulted, market competition became the favored solution" (p. 11). But in order to keep the market strong, "schools must inevitably be seen and portrayed as failing. The nature of the market is to promote dissatisfaction: Corporations create the itch, then collect the money from us to scratch it" (p. 12).

In this discursive paradigm, for-profit business partnerships are framed as altruistic. Corporations are constructed as good citizens, thereby creating the notion that their involvement represents volunteerism or charity. The notion of civic responsibility then mandates them to get involved: "Tomorrow I'm meeting with executives from around the country. I'm going to remind them that they have a responsibility, as good corporate citizens... to support public education in America" (Bush, 2001). This type of Presidential mandate serves to further legitimize the leadership of corporations in constructing public good.

Lakoff (2003) points out that conservatives began to use large-scale marketing techniques, social media, etc. much more quickly and better than liberals. This is especially true in education, where in addition to *ED in 08*, Broad and Gates have

invested heavily in marketing through social media, the funding of pro-charter, crisis-driven films like *Waiting for Superman* (2010) and *Won't Back Down* (2012), and in celebrity endorsers such as Kanye West and John Legend. Much of this marketing is targeted towards "urban" students of color and particularly Black families (or, more likely, geared toward white perceptions of Black students and their needs). By framing school reform as "the new civil rights," the school reform coalition has engaged in a narrowly targeted marketing campaign that aims to articulate with notions of racial and economic justice.

*ED in 08* maintains the hegemony of fear, threat, and uncertainty that emerged in *A Nation at Risk* and was renewed within the *No Child Left Behind* Act (2001). However, within the *No Child Left Behind* Act and later in *ED in 08,* the crisis discourse expanded to include the "softer" threat of affronts to equity, social justice, and civil rights. This was best exemplified by the fact that NCLB is itself a reauthorization of the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), which was a part of President Johnson's civil-rights legislation package. The original ESEA massively overhauled American public schooling in the name of democracy, equality, and social justice.

The "new" civil rights arguments conflate equity with competition – the fact that all schools are held to the same (external) standards is sufficient for equity. This is held to be true even if those standards contradict the best and/or community-derived interests of schools and their students, or even if it is impossible for the community to meet those standards without significantly compromising other parts of its program. In a Marxist framing, we see that this contradiction is resolved dialectically – the tension between social- and racial- justice arguments and high-stakes accountability is subsumed under the category of a "new" civil rights – the fact that all schools are held to the same standards is equal to justice.

Under NCLB's market model, schools who failed to meet standards and accountability requirements are subject to what I call "punitive privatization" in Chapter Four. Neoliberal discourse works to co-opt and redirect dissent to this agenda by articulating "get-tough" policies of school closure and charterization with the language of civil rights and social justice. The implication is that these schools are failing because of their own (racialized) laziness and incompetence, not because of structural and economic factors. Invoking this language also invokes its historical context, thereby allowing reform advocates to connect with people of color and those who value equity:

> Education is the key that unlocks opportunity and liberates human potential. It enables people of any race, religion, ethnicity, gender, income, or family background to have a chance of realizing their hopes and dreams (*ED in 08*, 2008).

In this way, the central framing of the issue shifts but remain intact: public schooling is "the problem" and the increasing "gap" between rich and poor is one of achievement between races and failure of schools – not one of distribution of resources, racism, or the expanding privatization agendas that reproduce these inequalities.

**Data Analysis**

The campaign's stated goal of raising "a rigorous debate" is stated infelicitously (Austin, 1962) – that is, it violates Austin's s*incerity condition*, wherein the speaker genuinely wants the hearer to perform the requested act. Instead, *ED in 08* uses common-sense to create a climate of fear and threat in service of a very specific set of goals. These goals, which will be discussed further below, work to create markets for an expanding privatization agenda. In this way, they are on one side of a highly polarized debate within education communities. It seems that the role of the *ED in 08* campaign is actually to set new discursive terms within which this agenda will be debated. In terms of their 'subject-position,' readers are initially positioned as participants in the debate. As the text progresses, however, there are fewer references to participating in a debate and more positioning of readers as 'joiners' in the campaign.

Of course, the notion that a campaign has the agenda of its funders is in no way surprising. This analysis points instead to the problematic ways in which *ED in 08* draws on what Fairclough (2001) calls "members' resources" in order to *mythologize* the state of, and cure for, American education. Fairclough provides an introductory definition:

> ...you do not simply 'decode' an utterance [or in the case of *ED in 08*, a visual text], you arrive at an interpretation through an active process of matching features of the utterance at various levels with representations you have stored in your long-term memory. These representations are prototypes for a very diverse collection of things – the shapes of words, the grammatical forms of sentences, the typical structure of a narrative, the properties of types of object and person, the expected sequence of events in a particular situation type, and so forth. Some of these are linguistic and some are not… let us refer to these prototypes as 'members' resources,' or MR for short (p. 9).

By re-deploying basic general terms (such as "education," "success," and "failure"), the text establishes itself as an authority on the meaning and purposes of education. The reader is meant to believe that by supporting *ED in 08*, one is signing on to support "education" in general, and who would not want to do that? In reality, however, *ED in 08* reproduces the hegemony of a particular definition of education as conceptualized by the Broad and Gates foundations. These narrowly redefined terms are used to create sweeping reforms that have real and contestable implications for how children are schooled.

*Genre/Orders of Discourse*

Kress (1993) argued for "a concept of genres (generic categories) in which grammar makes meaning of social and cultural significance." This concept entails "an understanding of what language is doing and being made to do by people in specific situations in order to make particular meanings" (p. 23). Genre theory aims to bring

social and cultural conventions into focus in order to "show what kinds of social situations produce them, and what the meanings of those social situations are" (p. 24). A given text can vacillate between conformity to and deviation from multiple genres.

Critical discourse analysis might look deeper into genre to ascertain the way in which actual discourse is determined by underlying conventions of discourse. Fairclough (2001) regards these conventions as "clustering in sets or networks which I call *orders of discourse,* a term used by Michel Foucault. These conventions and orders of discourse, moreover, embody particular ideologies" (p. 23). For the purposes of this "genre" is somewhat interchangeable with "order of discourse." The highly specific genre of *ED in 08* – that of a party-neutral marketing campaign – can help to understand the process of myth-making (Barthes, 1972). The myth is built from the common-sense conception that the campaign represents education in a broad, objective sense.

The *ED in 08* campaign operates as a "faux candidate" – *ED* is essentially the field of public schooling, running as a candidate alongside or against Barack Obama and John McCain. This framing operates within a genre of an "interactive marketing campaign," within an even broader genre of social media. These layers of identity provide the text producer with the opportunity to move between different conventions and prior discourses. The following is excerpted from the website of "Era of Conversation," an industry website that discusses developments in internet and social marketing, new media, etc. The following excerpt introduces the work of the advertising team behind *ED in 08* and thus provides some insight into the motives and discursive strategies of the text producer in relation to these identities:

> *The Gates Foundation's Approach to Social Media*
> Moffett and the Mindshare team recognized early on that interactive platforms and their young, edgy audiences would be the crucial spring board for this election's candidates and issues. Mindshare started by dropping the long "Strong American Schools" name, and proposed that a faux candidate be created to run alongside the presidential hopefuls and take the election in '08. "ED was born, gracing the Foundations' campaign with the fun, easy-to-remember name, "ED in '08."
>
> The rest of the "ED in '08" campaign followed from the same logic. To stand out among the candidates' logos, "ED in '08" assumed a cool logo that breaks from the traditional red, white, & blue themes.
>
> With the proper mood set, the "ED in '08" logo was rocketed into the public realm via rallies, social networks, viral media, photo galleries, email, the campaign website, and with multiple micro-campaigns (Livingston, 2007).

An acceptable convention in this order is that of advertising, which allows the campaign to structure itself as a faux political candidate. The obvious use of "cool" logos, branding, creating a "platform," and other strategies developed by Mindshare are part of one order of discourse directed at accessing one group of members' resources. Another, somewhat contradictory order is that of non-partisan, non-profit, and non-political – and by implication disinterested, neutral, and objective – support of (E)ducation. In an era of sophisticated, interactive, multi-modal discourse, the text producers are able to engage in multiple layers of what Briggs and Bauman (1992) call "intertextual relationships between a particular text and prior discourse (real or imagined)" (p. 149). By accessing a variety of different members' resources to make intertextual connections, *ED in 08* is able to reach multiple audiences.

*Description of the Text*

The home page(s) for the *ED in 08* website are striking. Over a period of approximately six months, the home page shifted back and forth between two images (Images 1 & 2). Across the top of both pages is printed "Strong American Schools." The central image takes up most of the page. In Home Page A (Image 1), the central image is a young blonde-haired girl sitting at her desk. The photograph is taken from behind her. The girl is raising her hand; in the distance is a blurry image of a teacher writing on the board with his back turned to her. The text is placed almost as if it were written on the blackboard. In large capital letters are the words, "AMERICA'S STUDENTS ARE LOSING OUT." Immediately below that, in capital letters which are almost double the size, is written, "IF THEY LOSE, WE ALL LOSE." Below this is a small "Watch our video feature" box. In the right margin, a "What's new" column features a blurb for a presentation that showed "the U.S. is lagging far behind other countries in science and math proficiency."

Image 1: *Home page A*
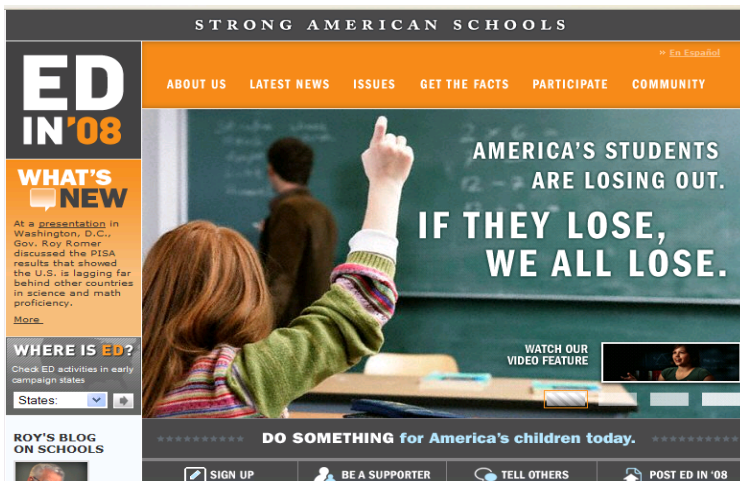


Source: edin08.org

Home page B (Image 2) depicts an African-American boy who seems to be of middle-school age. It is taken at close range from in front of him, presumably from the perspective of a teacher. He sits at a desk with his book open, arms folded in front of the book and his head resting on his hands. He looks up at the photographer or teacher with what might be interpreted as disengagement, confusion, or lack of interest. The picture evokes both sadness and concern, as it is clear that he is not learning. Across the top right of the page, extending across the boy's hair, is the text: "OF 30 INDUSTRIALIZED NATIONS, THE UNITED STATES PLACED: " Next to this text, to the right of the boy, are the words: "25TH OUT OF 30 IN MATH AND 21ST OUT OF 30 IN SCIENCE." The rest of the page is identical to Home Page A.

Image 2: *Home Page B*



Source: edin08.org

A third text in this analysis is a newspaper advertisement that was run as a part of the *ED in 08* campaign "kickoff" (Image 3). Approximately three-fourths of this advertisement consists of a black background that represents a blackboard. A child's hand extends from the right corner, holding a piece of chalk and underlining the words: "A Histery of IrAk" (sic). Across the bottom of the blackboard, in the orange color of the *ED in 08* logo is the text: "DEBATING IRAQ IS TOUGH. SPELLING IT SHOULDN'T BE." Below the blackboard is the *ED in 08* logo and the following text:

America's schools are falling behind. It's a crisis that takes leadership to solve. So to all presidential candidates we say, "What's YOUR plan to fix our schools?" We want solutions. To get them, we're launching "*ED IN 08*" and we're asking the public to join us.

"*ED IN 08*" isn't a candidate.  It's a movement.  Republicans, Democrats and Independents coming together to demand real solutions to improve our schools.  Because if candidates aren't talking about education, they're not talking about the future.

A STRONG AMERICA DEPENDS ON STRONG AMERICAN SCHOOLS.

Image 3:  *Print Ad*
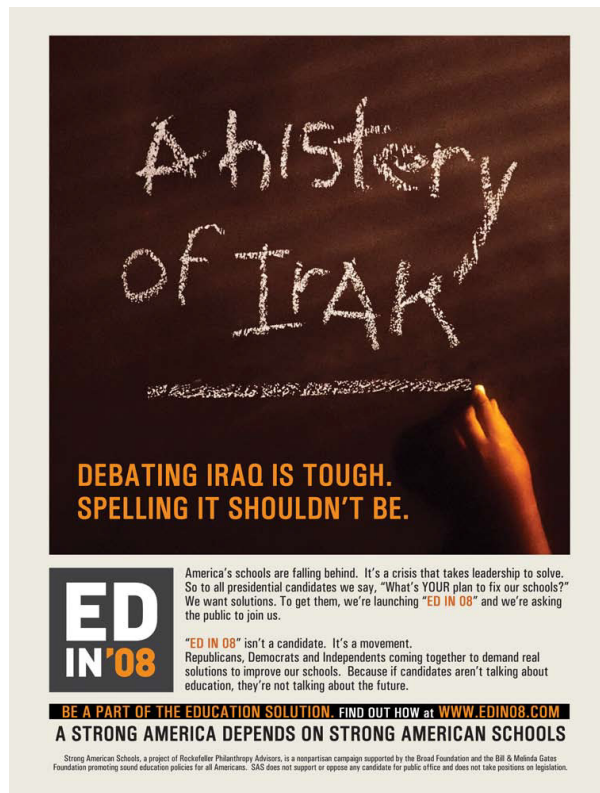


Source: edin08.org

*Interpretation of the Text*

Barthes (1972) explains that myth is "a peculiar system, in that it is constructed from a semiological chain which existed before it:  it is a *second-order semiological system*" (p. 114; *emphasis original*).  The first semiological chain is located in the surface level meanings of the text.  In the case of *ED in 08*, the representations that are assimilated into this chain are of children who are failing and being failed.  An obvious "crisis" is clearly stated on the surface of the text:  America's students are losing out.

Myth occurs when the first semiological chain becomes the first term of the second chain, or when "failure" connects to other narratives and broader social contexts.  In the second chain, "that which is a sign (namely the associative totality of a concept and an image) in the first system becomes a mere signifier in the second" (Barthes, 1972, p. 114).

In this case, the "failure" depicted in the images grafts on to the historical narrative of a crisis in education (as discussed in the previous section). The children are signs of failure, and they come to signify the broader crisis.

As a double chain, myth is able to assert itself when appropriate; yet when threatened with being revealed, it can hide behind the surface of the first semiological chain. In this sense, the second semiological chain is built from what is left *unsaid*. We know that there is failure in terms of test scores and global competitiveness. But who/what is failing, how, and for what reasons? One gets the idea that the girl in Home Page 1 is eager, willing, and engaged, but that her teacher is either unwilling or unable to meet her needs. Similarly, the boy in Home Page 2 seems to have given up on the possibility of learning. He might be interpreted as resigned to failure (his own or his teacher's). The problem, then, is not entirely the students. Who is left?

In both of the home pages, (the newspaper ad and the brochure), the problem is located strictly in the classroom, between the teacher and the student. Failure is positioned within this interaction, thereby establishing the myth that this setting (to which the Gates and Broad reforms are targeted) is the appropriate point of intervention. No mention is made of broader social inequities such as the widening wealth gap, of which achievement scores are just a reflection. Framing the issue in this way encapsulates the crisis in education as one that is solvable: "IF THEY LOSE, WE ALL LOSE." The word "if" in this sentence implies that failure can be prevented; this implication helps to reify the myth that the problem can be cured within the vacuum of the classroom.

> In discussing the experiential value of words, Fairclough (2001) notes that
>
>> classification schemes in different discourse types may differ quantitatively, in the sense of wording particular aspects of reality to different degrees, with a larger or smaller number of words. We sometimes have 'overwording'– an unusually high degree of wording, often involving many words which are near synonyms" (p. 96).

This phenomenon is demonstrated consistently in the *ED in 08* website, most notably around the construction of categories of "the facts," "the failure," and "the threat."

The six chapters of the website are categorized as: a) about us; b) latest news; c) issues; d) get the facts; e) participate; and f) community (the "community" section was empty or not functioning). The text that is placed within these categories, and the relative importance given to different concepts, seem to confirm Fairclough's (2013) notion that "overwording shows preoccupation with some aspect of reality – which may indicate that it is a focus of ideological struggle" (p. 96). The most text-heavy areas were the "About Us" and "Issues" sections, and the printable material. In examining some of the main pages for textual signifiers of facts, failure, and fear of threat (broadly, for expressive, relational, and experiential signs), (see Table 1), I found high proportions of each theme:

Table 1: *Coding in reference to ED in 08 campaign*

| Text | Total Statements | "Facts" | Failure | Threat |
|------|------------------|---------|---------|--------|
| About Us | 11 | 7 | 5 | 6 |
| Issues | 5 | 5 | 3 | 3 |
| 2- page fact sheet | 28 | 28 | 14 | 10 |
| Printable brochure | 16 | 11 | 7 | 11 |

The 2- page fact sheet is illustrative of the ways in which discourses converge to carve out a narrative. Under the heading "GET THE FACTS ABOUT AMERICA'S SCHOOLS, the first paragraph says:

> Since America's founding, schools have been a gateway to a better life for millions and millions of people, equipping them to lead the world they've inherited and accomplish goals greater than they ever could have imagined (*ED in 08*. Fact Sheet).

This narrative grafts seamlessly onto the classic (neo)liberal narratives of meritocracy and opportunity. The fact that it is the first sentence under "Get the Facts" points to the process of naturalization of discourse, where one "dictionary definition" becomes hegemonic and is reproduced by common-sense. It also shows how the ideologies behind these discourses become naturalized. Words like "education," "successful," and "struggling," are recontextualized to signify specific definitions of these terms. I capitalize these terms – i.e., (E)ducation, (S)uccessful, and (S)truggling, to denote their specificity as used by reformers. This process might also be referred to as commodification of language, since the purpose of the reformers is to redefine these terms in order to convert them into marketable commodities (commodification is discussed further in the conclusion below).

In this phenomenon, "the meaning system is sustained by power: by the power of the relevant 'experts,' medical scientists, and by the power of those sections of the intelligentsia (teachers, dictionary-makers, etc.) who are guarantors of this as of other elements of the codified standard language" (Fairclough, 2013, p. 79). In the *ED in 08* brochure, moral imperatives such as "we need…" "the time is over; "it is time to;" and "the decision must include every American with a stake in *better* schools" all deployed in the genre of a "fact sheet" – convey that the problem has already been categorized and the solution is available. Although the liberal use of the word "we" might lead us to think

that the participation framework is actually somewhat participatory, it turns out that the word "we" is often followed by the prescriptive "need," as in "we need to…" or "we must …"

We might extend Butler's (1997) idea of a "performative utterance" to this process, where the act of "naming" (a person) constitutes that person as a subject. Although in this case there is not an actual bodily interpellation, it might be said that by equating (E)ducation to education, we are naming, or drawing out, only one meaning at the expense of others. Naming (E)ducation occurs inside a matrix of failure, threat, high-stakes measurement, and global competitiveness. Narrowly constructed facts, absolutes, objective neutrality, and scientific rationality again emerge as defining ideologies for the practice of schooling. Despite a claim to "vigorous and thorough discussion," only one of many sides is presented. There is no room within the text to question that supposed objective rationality or whose interests it best serves. The naming process determines the discourse through common-sense appropriation of basic language, using terms such as (E)ducation and (F)ailure in a way that precludes other uses.

A closer look at the printable parent brochure reveals how other terms are similarly commodified. The following are some value-laden phrases that take on an objective neutrality in *ED in 08*:

(Line 6) – a "vigorous and thorough debate of the issue"
(Line 7) – the crucial mission of improving our public schools
(Line 8) – a right to attend a "high quality school."

In the reform movement, this is actually a specific and contestable standard, using mainly rigid measures of test scores to define "high quality." The process of high-stakes testing marginalizes many other measures, including many that might be more relevant to young people who are educationally disenfranchised.

Graddol (1993) describes the significance of typographic design through an understanding of its historical purposes and enduring connotations. In the case of the newspaper ad, the text reads "<u>A History of Irak</u>." The font used in this ad is meant to represent a child's writing, signifying the idea that in the current situation, American children are unprepared for a complex world at a most basic level.

Although the reader knows that this is not an actual child's writing, the association is made between childhood, literacy, and preparation for global citizenship (or preparation for global threat). We can imagine that the font in Image 3, like the similar "Child's Play Truetype" used to represent it in the preceding paragraph, is designed to be "Highly legible yet still informal with childlike sloppiness; it makes an excellent headline font for grade school newsletters or for advertising aimed at parents" (www.PCWorld.com, accessed 2008).

Beyond the font, this simple sentence is highly revealing. On a mythological level, the intentional misspellings of both "histery" and IrAK" are significant. The first semiological chain is, again, a highly overt depiction of failure. The use of Iraq, however, turns the failure into a threat. Given the context of the U.S. war in Iraq, we see the

creation of yet another semiological chain.  Ironically, the highly scripted curriculum instituted within and around NCLB relied heavily on scripted phonics programs and the mistakes in this advertisement are not unlike what a student schooled solely in this approach might make.  Also ironically, the neoliberal emphasis on curriculum reform is on measurable and memorizable "facts," not on "debating" world events (especially at the age depicted in the ad).  This rhetorical textual move mirrors the infelicitous claims of *ED in 08* that its goal is to raise a "vigorous debate" about education.

Market ideology informs not just school governance and funding, but curriculum as well.  As curriculum reform within *A Nation at Risk* and *No Child Left Behind* moved toward an all-encompassing "back to basics" ideology, broader conceptions of education were devalued.  Approaches that involve critical political and social thinking are marginalized in favor of a narrow, highly compartmentalized approach that leaves out many critical skills.  In a telling quote, G.W. Bush put forward some ideas about pedagogy:

> [We have to get] back to the basics – the building blocks of knowledge that were the same yesterday and will be the same tomorrow.  We do not need trendy new theories or fancy experiments or feel-good curriculum.  The basics work (G.W. Bush, 1996).

The strategies employed by the new alliance include the promotion of a "back to basics" pedagogy, which carries with it the return to a romantic, mythologized, pre-multicultural (read: White Christian) past.  Other myths, which are often grouped together for the purpose of discursive unity, include those of the American meritocracy, scarcity, and progress as linear development.  Rhetorical dichotomies such as "basics" vs. "trendy" serve to create artificial cultural distinctions, which can have the effect of marginalizing and demeaning more progressive theories.  Apple (1999) notes that:

> Tactically, the reconstruction of common-sense that has been accomplished has proven to be extremely effective.  For example, there are clear discursive strategies being employed here, ones that are characterized by 'plain speaking' and speaking in a language that 'everyone can understand'… these strategies involve not only presenting one's own position as 'common-sense,' but usually tacitly implying that there is something of a conspiracy among one's opponents to deny the truth or to say only that which is fashionable" (p. 8).

The G.W. Bush quote above is an example of the reconstruction of common sense.  The rhetoric of 'trendy' and 'feel-good' curriculum is meant to describe the forms that critical literacy often takes:  whole language, cooperative and project-based learning, media literacy, multicultural and anti-racist education, meaning-emphasis learning, or any acknowledgement of concepts such as "poly-rhythmic realities."  Although these elements are not sufficient to define a critical curriculum, some combination of them is

necessary.  The models of instruction that they promote are more likely to encourage critical agency in students than to create productive or consumptive classes.

**Conclusion**

Overall, the *ED in 08* website is highly cohesive with market discourse and its framing narratives of crisis and disaster.  The language of business frames the entire "conversation" requested by the campaign, interpellating the reader as a consumer rather than as an equal participant in what is characterized as a "vigorous and thorough debate." Market discourse is so pervasive that in time, it begins to envelop, or commodify, the conversation itself.  In a commodified discourse, Education becomes an objective product, something tangible that can be objectively produced and distributed: "education" becomes "(E)ducation," which becomes "Education."  Learning itself becomes a commodity.  In this discursive paradigm, the "struggle" for education is about creating the most efficient, effective, "measurable" means of distributing that good. "Strong American Schools" are those that buy into this idea, acquiescing to the market system as the "final arbiter" (Jackson, 2003) of what should be.

More broadly, *ED in 08* is important because it is one of many texts produced by venture philanthropies, who bring corporate marketing strategies–and budgets–to the project of transforming the state.  New forms of marketing and communication help drive the "common-sense" strategy exemplified by the reform network and exemplifies the neoliberal post-NCLB turn towards a fear-based consensual (rather than coercive) control.  From the privatization of education to gaining consent for the Iraq war, discourse has played a major part in the "hearts and minds" approach to making radical policy change.

Neoliberalism is a globally hegemonic economic and political regime; as such, it affects both educational policy and practice.  As demonstrated above and in the following chapters, the massive investment by venture-philanthropists drives both structural and cultural shift; it is an intentional and multi-faceted approach to creating hegemony.  It is becoming increasingly important for scholars, practitioners, and policy-makers to challenge the naturalized discourse of market imperatives; and it is especially important for education constituents and those who prioritize "social justice" to make connections between linguistic shifts and their underlying ideologies.

# Chapter 3
## Disaster Capitalism: The State Takeover and
## Neoliberal Reconstruction of OUSD

**Introduction**

This chapter traces the state takeover and neoliberal reconstruction of the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) within the context of "disaster capitalism" (Klein, 2007). Aligning with research on social networks in school reform (Ball & Junemann, 2012; Au & Ferrare, 2015), I identify major nodes of power within the post-takeover landscape: venture philanthropy (with a focus on the Broad Foundation); Teach For America; and the local advocacy organization through which they operate. Together, these groups played a major role in manufacturing, utilizing, and reproducing the district's ongoing financial "disaster" in order to "liberate" the schooling market in Oakland; they illustrate how major players in the education reform network converge at the level of the district.

The discourses of crisis and disaster, and their articulation with progress and justice, are evident across the cases of neoliberal reform in this dissertation. The quote below illuminates the relationship of TFA to the neoliberal reform network and the role of what Klein (2007) calls "Disaster Capitalism." In this model, both natural and manmade crises are exploited and exacerbated in order to carry out market-driven restructuring. Echoing other theorists of neoliberalism, Klein holds that corporate-state actors withhold from social obligations, pushing the state in its withdrawal from public provisions and thereby creating space for the creation, or "liberation," of new markets. However, she argues that it is not simply the withdrawal or even the reconstruction of the state that marks disaster capitalism. It is the cohesion with which old systems are destroyed and new, marketized structures are implemented, as well as the ways in which discourses of disaster and reconstruction structure our imaginations of what is possible.

The following quote is from the Teach For America Alumni Magazine's 20th Anniversary Special Issue (Fall 2010). The issue celebrates the 'transformative change-making' of the alumni network across the country. Entitled "The Slow, Steady Revolution," the article provides a glimpse into reform discourse in Oakland:

> Sometimes the door to change is knocked down by a battering ram. Take
> the dramatic rebirth of the New Orleans school system after Hurricane
> Katrina decimated the city, leaving in its wake a vacuum that innovators
> and reformers   have eagerly stepped in to fill. Other times, the door is
> nudged ajar by a slower and steadier pressure – one that takes years to build
> but whose momentum is nearly impossible to reverse (Tyre, 2010, p. 34).

In 2003, a technological upgrade revealed a massive budget gap in the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD).   While estimates of the deficit ranged wildly, from $35 million (the number reported by the Superintendent) to nearly $100 million, the loan brokered for the takeover was $100 million – the largest state loan ever made to a

California school district. This was despite auditor reports that the agency's bottom line was unclear because key records dating to the time of the takeover were missing or inconsistent (Murphy, 2009). Using the neoliberal crisis strategy of debt (trading governance power for emergency loans), Senator Don Perata authored a bill to put the district into state "receivership." State Superintendent Jack O'Connell removed and replaced the Superintendent, Dennis Chaconas, with a State Administrator trained by the Broad Foundation. The school board was stripped of all power and became an unpaid advisory board (DataCenter, 2004).

The role of the State Administrators was purportedly to provide financial oversight and restore fiscal responsibility to the district. After five years, however, the Alameda County civil grand jury found that the district had been "hampered by continuous staff turnover, particularly in the area of finance, numerous reorganizations and a succession of state administrators. After five years of state management, OUSD's budget remains unbalanced and the district's future is unclear" (Alameda County Civil Grand Jury, 2007-08, p. 51). In 2009, OUSD partially emerged from state receivership $89 million in debt, facing a deficit of $18 million for the 2010-11 school year. The Oakland Tribune reported that "the state administration appeared to be more focused on redesigning schools and overhauling central office services than on stabilizing the district's finances" (Murphy, 2009). Allen-Taylor (2009) pointed out that "even if you take the highest figure – $100 million – as the OUSD shortfall that triggered the takeover… Oakland Unified is in worse financial shape – by $7 million – after the state takeover than before."

After the return of hiring power, the board continued (with one exception) to hire Broad-trained Superintendents. As of April 2017, Oakland is reeling from the abrupt departure of another Broad administrator, Antwan Wilson, who left to become the Superintendent of Washington, D.C. schools (another reform district). Shortly after announcing a major budget crisis, Wilson recommended cutting $25.1 million and instituted a hiring freeze of all non-teaching positions (Tsai, 2017). Since the board does not yet have full control of OUSD, the prospect of another takeover is looming large. A statement by a parent activist group included the following:

> The past two years have seen a decline in enrollment while upper-level administrative salaries have skyrocketed more than 500%. Major changes in the Programs for Exceptional Children and Student Enrollment have come without meaningful input from parents, teachers, staff or community, and the departure of long time administrators has further destabilized the district. Planning for major district initiatives has been made in closed meetings with charter leaders, but without input from our public school community. It is time for our District to put our public schools first by hiring a superintendent who believes in our public school system, who will work to create true community schools that will support and educate the

whole child, and who will stay at least long enough to see those changes through (www.parentsunited.org, 2016).

## Research Questions & Methodology

Given the ongoing power held by reformers despite the repeated failures of their projects, it is reasonable to ask how and why this continues. This chapter aligns with the second of my overall questions:

*How does neoliberal reform become hegemonic in an urban district? What structural mechanisms have reformers used to reconstruct public institutions and democratic processes?*

This project began as a more general historical study of school reform in Oakland. I conducted 12 interviews with veteran educators and activists, from whom I hoped to learn about their lived experiences with school reform in Oakland since the 1970s. The interviews helped to shift my research questions to the ones posed above and across these chapters. One memorable argument came from Nate, a 63-year old retired Black teacher who taught in both Oakland and San Francisco. After the interview, he asked me a few questions about my research, which was framed around how educators and families "experienced and made sense of" historical waves of school reform. Nate's metaphorical critique helped me to clarify my work as a researcher and the goals of this study:

Nate:  I've worked with researchers before. But it gets to be… like, they just want to study the scattering mice in the field, they need to look up at the hawk. They need to be studying the predator instead of looking at how the mice run.

Nirali:  Ok… But don't you think a lot can be learned from the mice? About how to survive, how they work together…?

Nate:  Nah, what you don't understand is that we're always… reacting, especially in this situation [public schools]. You want to make it [this research] mean something but you really you have to ask, what good is it to the mice? Are you going to teach it back to them? They know what they need to know, they got all kinds of little complex systems you don't really need to know about unless you're in the field too… you should deal with the hawk. [laughs] Study it's flight patterns, when it gets hungry and shit.

Nirali:  So I can…

Nate:  Shoot it down

Throughout these interviews, it became clear that the post-takeover landscape was less transparent and more networked than before. Participants expressed an inevitability around the ongoing marketization of the district, pointing to predetermined outcomes and closed-door processes and describing how each new Superintendent brought in "their people." As one participant stated, "I know a corporate takeover when I see it."

After reviewing approximately 200 newspaper, blog, and other online sources, I used Timeglider software (http://timeglider.com/) to create a timeline of major moments within and surrounding the takeover. Following the literature on reform advocacy and social network mapping, I parsed the major actors in the takeover into 'nodes' through which power was constituted and disseminated. While there were several of these nodes, I grouped them into three major categories: venture philanthropists (with a focus on the Broad Foundation); Teach For America (with a focus on alumni in the reform industry); and a key advocacy organization funded by venture-philanthropy and led by TFA alumni (Great Oakland Public Schools, or GOPS). A few other relevant nodes appeared but are not directly included as a category of analysis, such as local and state politicians and investment funds who are funded by or represented within the groupings above (such as the New Schools Venture Fund). After coding the articles for reference to the major actors and conducting further background research, I conducted follow-up interviews with two previous participants (veteran educators), two current TFA corps members, and two TFA alumni. All names of interview participants are pseudonyms.

This research found that the reform network was a key driver of the State takeover and neoliberal reconstruction of the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD). Using Klein's (2007) theory of disaster capitalism, I describe the process of state receivership and the installation of corporate-trained State Administrators with a focus on how the reform network participated in, defined, and utilized the district's bankruptcy to penetrate the district. Klein argues that neoliberal politicians and corporate interests both exploit existing crises and create new ones in order to push through market-based reform; I build on this analysis to demonstrate how the fiscal crisis and resulting takeover were part of a broader strategy to fundamentally restructure the district.

This chapter aligns with literature that points to both venture-philanthropic foundations and the Teach For America program as fundamental drivers of school privatization at the district level. I describe the reform network's role in a number of concrete projects, including appointing administrators; affecting the composition and processes of the school board; the privatization of district land; and producing a 'shadow state' within which non-state actors gain disproportionate access to democratic institutions and processes. These shifts pave the way for the real estate development and gentrification that are crucial to the reconstruction of Oakland into what Lipman (2011) calls the "global city."

**Theoretical Framework:  Hurricanes, Real and Imagined**

Klein (2007) points to the origins of disaster capitalism in the work of Chicago School economist Milton Friedman, who is widely considered the 'Father of Neoliberalism':

> Only a crisis – actual or perceived – produces real change.  When that crisis occurs, the actions that are taken depends on the ideas that are lying around.  That, I believe, is our basic function: to develop alternatives to existing policies, to keep them alive and available until the politically impossible becomes politically inevitable (Friedman, quoted in Klein, p. 7).

One of Friedman's fundamental alternative policies is that of voucher programs in education; this proposition has been "lying around" and "picked up" in various instantiations since Friedman first developed it in 1962's *Capitalism and Freedom*, but it was not until Hurricane Katrina wiped the slate "clean" that a major structural shift became not only possible, but inevitable.  While this shift could have taken many forms – such as intensive rebuilding and strengthening of Louisiana's public schools – it did not, because those alternatives did not align with the interests of capital accumulation.

Education theorists have recently taken up the notion of "disaster capitalism" in relation to public schools (Klein, 2007; see also Lipman, 2011; Saltman, 2007; Shibata, 2013).  The most overt and commonly-cited example is that of post-Katrina New Orleans.  In the aftermath of Katrina, Milton Friedman made his final push for vouchers in an op-ed published the day after his death:

> Most New Orleans schools are in ruins, as are the homes of the children who have attended them.  The children are now scattered all over the country.  This is a tragedy.  It is also an opportunity to radically reform the educational system (Friedman, 2005).

While New Orleans did not adopt a voucher program, the Recovery School District (RSD) replaced the district and converted or opened the majority of the New Orleans Public Schools as charters.  In a report entitled *Out of Control:  The Systematic Disenfranchisement of African American and Latino Communities Through School Takeovers*, the Alliance to Reclaim Our Schools (AROS) described the failure of the RSD.  By the 10th anniversary of Katrina (the 2013-14 school year):

> over half (54%) of the charter schools under RSD control are either failing or "in transition" (meaning they have been taken over yet again, by a new charter management group and are not given a state ranking). Another 35% of the RSD charters are ranked "C." And, notes a recent editorial in the New Orleans Tribune, after raising the threshold for schools to qualify for state takeover in 2005, the state has now lowered that score again. "If the

RSD were judged by the same standards used to take control of schools in New Orleans 10 years ago," wrote the Tribune editors, "the RSD would be left with only 4 schools." Meanwhile, parents in New Orleans complain of a balkanized education landscape, with long commutes, constant churn, and little transparency or public access to decision-makers (AROS, 2015, p. 6).

As many pointed out, the disaster of Katrina was twofold, encompassing both the storm itself and the non-responsiveness of the federal government under President George W. Bush. While a common-sense framing of the event paints the failure to respond as 'incompetence,' the process for responding to Katrina mirrors other instantiations of Disaster Capitalism: allow or facilitate chaos and destruction, then extort resources through forced privatization of the 'rebuilding' process. This process is evident across "disasters," most clearly within the structures of debt repayment and federal aid; it often takes the form of the state-enforced no-bid or invited subcontracting of private corporations. Such debt provisions can be seen in the use of American contractors like Blackwater and Caterpillar to rebuild Iraq (Martinez, 2010) to World Bank loan provisions requiring farmers to buy Monsanto's genetically engineered "terminator" or "suicide" seeds (Shiva, 2013). In American education, a major pillar of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 was the federal creation of a narrow list of approved subcontractors (which I describe as "punitive privatization" in Chapter Four).

Two discursive processes work to create moral justification for neoliberal reform within disaster capitalism. The first is the positioning of privatizing forces as liberators from the old-fashioned bureaucracies of people of color and as saviors with the correct, advanced technological tools to ensure rebuilding in the Western Capitalist image. In this paradigm, business involvement is framed as altruistic. Corporations (who already enjoy the legal privileges of "personhood") are constructed as good citizens – a framing that aligns with the traditional conservative emphasis on personal giving as a substitute for social spending. The notion of civic responsibility then mandates them to get involved.

The second discursive process at work is, quite simply, the erasure of the voices, self-defined interests, and desires of the communities most directly affected by the disaster. Imagining a community as "wiped-out" renders it invisible and inconsequential, allowing for a sort of thought-experiment for reformers to map out a market system from the top down. Echoing the TFA alumni article on Oakland, Klein (2007) describes New Orleans reformers' talk of "blank slates" and "fresh starts," to illustrate the erasure of displaced or otherwise affected New Orleaners. In essence, disaster capitalism is "using moments of collective trauma to engage in radical social and economic engineering" (p. 9).

A report published by the conservative Center for Education Reform (Williams, 2007) explains that the during the early days of the takeover, a close-knit group of reformers, working with the newly-appointed State Administrator, made overt use of the

idea of a hurricane to guide their planning. Imagining a wiped-out school system as a starting point, they planned a series of structural reforms that were implemented by the removal of principals and district staff who disagreed with them. In this case the hurricane acted not only as not only a metaphor, but as a strategy for a complete overhaul of the district:

> The group of Oakland small school creators, activists, technocrats, and philanthropists decided that the conditions were ripe to try something big. They imagined what it would be like to deal with a dysfunctional school district that had suddenly been wiped out by a hurricane, participants in the early meetings recalled. Rather than focusing on merely providing triage for a dying school system, they decided it was time to shoot for the moon by trying to turn the Oakland Unified School District on its head… (p. 4).

The discourse of 'disruption,' marked by terms such as 'turning on its head' and 'revolution,' is a hallmark of the start-up and high-tech culture that drives Bay Area gentrification. This language articulates well with the framing of the district in crisis, or 'dying,' and the correlate that peoples' lives are so poor that gentrification and other forms of displacement are actually good for those communities. As Barbara Bush famously stated about relocation (rather than reparations) for Katrina victims: "And so many of the people in the arena here, you know, were underprivileged anyway," she said, "so this is working very well for them" (New York Times, 2005).

While many people in Oakland – and urban communities in general – would probably agree that their schools are in crisis, they remained unconvinced that market-driven disruption provides results. In what the CER report describes as "confusion" as to what was happening within the city, their own poll showed that 54% of residents said the school system had gotten worse or stayed the same (Williams, 2007, p. 7). The ongoing resistance to the reform ideology, as well as the demonstrable lack of Black and Brown community members in reform activism, demonstrates that many teachers and families do not consider privatization to be the "answer" to their crisis.

Many participants in this study identified California's *Proposition 13* (1978) as the beginning of a 'disaster' in Oakland schools, and in California as a whole. Framed as a "Taxpayer's Revolt," Prop 13 dramatically defunded public schools by rolling back and restricting property taxes, with large "loopholes" that created a disproportionate benefit to corporate property owners. Lee, a Latino teacher who taught in Oakland for seven years in the early 1980s before moving to a neighboring district, describes the effect of austerity politics brought on by Prop 13 in the 1980s, followed by the failed promises of the Clinton economy in the 1990s and the Bay Area tech economy of the 2000s. His statement points to the diversion tax money from schools and services to investment: in neoliberal theory, that investment would catalyze economies that provided, at the very least, a trickle-down effect in terms of jobs. While divestment from social provisions

often relies on the argument that 'all boats rise with the tide,' the reality is that investment capital tends to recirculate among the wealthiest classes.

> So a whole generation, now two generations, only knows this kind of poverty politics [created by Proposition 13]… Through the '80s, you know, there was a lot of emergency response – responding and not like building, putting it off, feeling the pain and then you give up, like you think the whole system is broken.

> I can see it now with Silicon Valley [as with the Clinton economy], they get rich while we get poor but the boom-rah was supposed to be this big economy, right? Spaces for all these kids, if you want to relate it to education, so jobs at a lot of levels. But there's still only 2 levels, and it ends up staying trickle-down, and bringing it back to Prop 13 we're not getting any of the property taxes for all the upper class. We get money with all their strings attached [e.g., parcel tax legislation requiring school restructuring, written by the reform network].

The State Receivership (or "Takeover") model has become a primary strategy for venture-philanthropic penetration into school districts. This strategy emerged in 1988, when the Pike County (NY) and Bridgeport (CT) school districts were among the first in the nation to have state takeovers for financial problems (Nguyen & Marshall, 2004, p. 4). By 2004, twenty-nine states had used the takeover mechanism. State takeovers have occurred for both financial and academic reasons; however, "for the most part, [they] have yet to produce dramatic and consistent increases in student performance, as is necessary in many of the school districts that are taken over" (Oluwole & Green III, 2009, p. 344). Most importantly, the great majority of state takeovers, for both financial and academic reasons, have occurred in majority-minority urban districts (Oluwole & Green, 2009; Reinhard, 1998). After the 2008 stock market crash and housing crisis, the number of districts flagged by state officials as nearing insolvency spiked:

Table 2: *California School Districts Nearing Insolvency*



http://voiceofsandiego.org/2011/10/17/how-insolvency-can-change-schools/
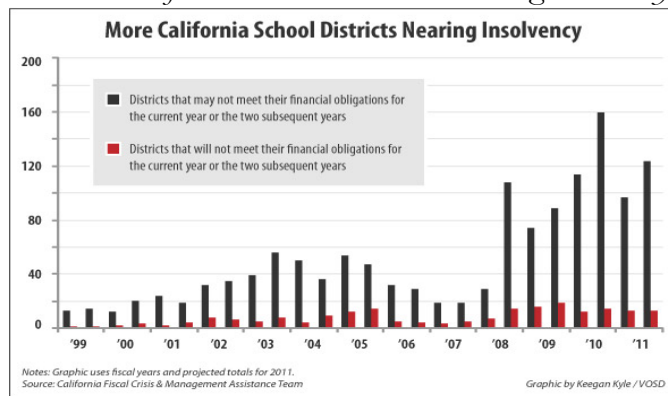
Oakland has been targeted for state takeover since the mechanism was created. In 1988, within a year of the school board gaining its first Black majority, a coalition of public officials began advocating for state intervention into OUSD. This was despite the fact that the school board had not sought out a state loan, and the budget remained balanced. The school board, led by members Sylvester Hodge and Darlene Lawson, arranged $10 million in alternative financing, thereby avoiding the need for budget cuts or a state loan (Epstein, 2012). In 1999, California State Senator Don Perata authored a bill (SB 564) for state takeover as part of a coordinated effort with then-major Jerry Brown. That bill failed; then, in 2003, Perata authored the successful takeover bill (SB 39). Significantly, both bills included a provision for the sale of public (district) land.

Like Chicago, New Orleans, Detroit, and many other post-industrial cities, Oakland's public schools serve a high percentage of low-income Black and brown families, including immigrant and refugee students. These families are a key market for philanthropic investment in education reform. Their struggles for schooling equity take place in the context of rapid and severe gentrification, in which city and state policies over at least the last decade have emphasized corporate partnership, divestment from public housing and social services, and disproportionate subsidies for upscale corporate development to attract wealthy young commuters who work in nearby San Francisco (Zimmerman, 2009). From 2000 to 2017, the city lost 30% of its black population (Allen-Price, 2017). Much of this was loss was precipitated by the nationwide mortgage crisis and subsequent recession of 2008 and the subsequent boom in real-estate investment fueled by start-up and technology capital. By the end of 2015, Oakland was the fourth most expensive rental market in the country (zumper.com, 2015).

Lipman (2011) links high-stakes accountability and other school reform technologies to global urban strategies that create "differentiated" racial populations, resulting in divestment from public schools and their low-income communities of color. Neoliberalism is inextricably connected to the globalization of capital and the opening and expansion of new and large-scale markets such as education. Lipman argues that accumulated global capital tends to act as global economic practice that "lands" on a place, creating transformations in urban political economies that have led to a model of 'global cities,' or hubs for the operation of global capital. Within this transformation, white investors and corporations seek to remake the city in their own image. Through policies such as the elimination of low-cost housing, corporatization of business districts, hyper-policing, and public-school closure, gentrification pushes poor families of color into the politically isolated, segregated, and marginalized peripheries. School reform in Oakland is subject to and often driven by the economic and cultural demands of the global city.

Since its inception, the takeover strategy in Oakland has been part of a pro-gentrification and displacement agenda. In addition to school closure and privatization, the takeover was grounded in the privatization of public land. Common to the 1999 and 2003 takeover attempts, both driven by Senator Perata, was a legal provision allowing the sale of district land. The School Board President at the time stated that "One of the

reasons many of us believed O'Connell was maintaining his authority over the Oakland schools was so that he could complete this land deal" (Allen-Taylor, 2007).

In 2002, Oakland voters passed Measure DD, a waterfront revitalization project that promised development of the land for public use. The land in this area included four major, operating public facilities including OUSD headquarters and five adjacent school properties, the Peralta Community College District headquarters, Laney College, and the City of Oakland's Kaiser Convention Center Arena and Auditorium. In a series of investigative reports, Allen-Taylor (2013) traced the district takeover as part of a plan to gain access to that land, pointing out that

> [w]ithin months after Measure DD passed… each of these public entities came under significant pressure or outright attack to be sold and converted from public spaces to private lands… Once he had his hands on Oakland's school district, State Education Superintendent Jack O'Connell tried to do just that, signing a preliminary contract with an east coast developer to build a condominium complex where the administration building and five adjacent schools now stand.

The Lake Merritt site continues to be contested, with community members flooding school board and city council meetings to protest development proposals. In 2014, under Broad Superintendent Antwan Wilson, a committee was created to determine whether a part of the OUSD parcel, which contained an alternative school and adult GED clinic, was "surplus property." Mendoza and Finch (2014) critiqued the OUSD attorney's description of the "surplussing" of Dewey:

> that is, using the word "surplus" as a verb — and described the way that the OUSD and developers could actively convert Dewey into "surplus property" in order to make it open for development… The surplus property category is being used as a means to displace Dewey students and treat them as a surplus population…This mirrors the treatment of Oakland's youth in the broader society. Seen as an expendable, incarcerable, and unemployable "surplus population," Oakland's youth are those who should be pushed to the margins in order to make way for more desirable occupants of land — those that can afford the lakeside view from the window of their 10th floor condominiums.

While activists engage in an ongoing battle for these sites, the district has struggled to justify the sale of public land that is increasingly valuable. In 2015, the district's longstanding head of Facilities and Management, Tim White, was pushed out of his position, stating that he objected to property sales being "rammed down the community's throat":

White said the issue that ultimately led to him being pushed out was his refusal to have his name associated with the school district's "community engagement process" surrounding the development and possible sale of the old district headquarters at 1025 Second Ave… "A board member said the whole community process had been a 'boondoggle,'" White said, and the process was supposed to "reset" under White's leadership and the leadership of his staff. But it turned out that the changes were only cosmetic, and he was not willing to have his name and reputation associated with them. "I didn't want to be associated with certain outcomes that I saw developing," he said (Epstein, 2015).

White earned roughly $156,000 a year ($13K/mo) when he left the district. His replacement, Lance Jackson, earned $360,000 a year ($30K/mo) (Epstein, 2015). Jackson was the chief operating officer at SGI Construction Management, the company hired to manage the district's $11 million bond program. While in the OUSD position, he operated as "both a district administrator and a contract worker, overseeing services performed by his own company, through which the $30,000 monthly fee is paid" (Tucker, 2015). The arrangement raised conflict-of-interest questions, particularly in light of the fact that SGI was sued in San Diego County over its role in a pay-to-play corruption case against public officials and also ran a $1.6 million bond program at West Contra Costa Unified School District (WCCUSD), where the county's civil grand jury found that the district was paying three times the state average per square foot for construction. WCCUSD was reportedly under federal investigation into the possible misuse of bond funds (Tucker, 2015).

## The Reform Network in Oakland
*Venture Philanthropy: The Broad Foundation.*

The successful takeover of 2003 had much in common with the unsuccessful attempt in 1988, including many of the same actors, issues, and arguments. The key difference in their successes, however, was the entrance of "venture philanthropy," which uses the foundation structure to create and implement market-driven policies and practices. In the years between the 1989 and 2003 takeovers, a convergence of funders within the emerging neoliberal billionaire class (aka the 1%) began to shift the traditional foundation structure. While business has always been a part of schooling (Shipps, 2006; Spring, 1972), the neoliberal turn of the last three decades has been to consolidate business interests into larger networks that are able to penetrate democratic institutions in 'innovative' ways. Within the reconstruction of traditional philanthropy, donors are recast as investors, who include social good defined by "educational opportunity" in their measures of return on investment. "Most distinctive," writes Scott (2009), "is the utilization of market language for social exchanges. Grants become investments, programs are ventures, and measures of impact generally involve the ability to scale up an initiative" (p. 116).

Kumashiro (2012) explains that this model positions investors more directly as experts, thereby allowing them to posit 'solutions' that better align with their vision for the education sector. Their investment, or buy-in, allows them to become involved in goal-setting, decision-making, planning, and evaluation (including setting standards for evaluation):

> Whereas traditional philanthropists view their giving as donations that support what others were doing, venture philanthropists view their giving as entryways into that work. That is, philanthropists themselves are now getting significantly involved in goal setting, decision making, and evaluating progress and outcomes to ensure that their priorities are met. This hands-on role allows venture capitalists to affect public policy more directly and substantially, particularly in a climate where their financial aid is so desperately needed (Kumashiro, 2012).

Although venture-philanthropies articulate their agendas within the discourses of racial and economic justice, they tend to have more in common strategically and philosophically to conservative philanthropies than to traditional, liberal philanthropies in that they are "interwined ideologically and programmatically with a commitment to a much greater shift to privatization of the U.S. economy overall" (Cohen, 2007, cited in Scott, 2009, p. 114). And

> perhaps the most notable strategic difference between conservative and liberal philanthropies is the expectations of how organizations will use their funds. Whereas the liberal philanthropies tend to fund a large number of organizations for specific projects of limited term and scope, the conservative ones are more likely to fund the general operations of a smaller number of organizations over longer periods of time in order to build institutional infrastructure (Kumashiro, 2012).

In general, traditional foundations take a less aggressive role in education than venture philanthropies, that engage aggressively in advocacy funding (increasingly creating their own advocacy organizations rather than going through traditional modes of community engagement).

Significantly, while foundation funding increased with the proliferation of venture-philanthropy, funding to civil rights and social action decreased. In inflation-adjusted dollars, funding for civil rights and social action fell to 1.1 percent of all foundation giving in 2001, from 1.4% in 1998. Civil rights and social action funding remain a low priority for foundations in general: compared to civil rights and social action, foundations are nearly 3.5 times as likely to support philanthropy and volunteerism, and 2.5 times as likely to support public affairs (Foundation Giving Trends 2002, cited in Pittz & Sen,

2004, p. 6).  This trend aligns with the conservative belief in charity and volunteerism over "entitlements" to social good.

Eli Broad is a California housing development and insurance billionaire.  The Edyth and Eli Broad foundation was launched in 1999; by early 2017, it has invested at least $589,500,000 in education:

Table 3:  *Broad Foundation Investments in Education*

| Public Charter Schools | | $144,000,000 (24%) |
|---|---|---|
| District Best Practices | | $123,000,000 (21%) |
| Broad Prize | | $16,000,000 (3%) |
| Communications | | $6,400,000 (1%) |
| Teachers and Teacher Quality | | $69,700,000 (12%) |
| Governance | | $36,600,000 (6%) |
| Leadership | | $136,000,000 (23%) |
| Personalized Learning | | $8,700,000 (1%) |
| Policy | | $49,100,000  (8%) |

Source:  http://broadfoundation.org/education, 2/16/17

The Broad Foundation began its training programs in 2002 with the "Broad Superintendents Academy" and the "Broad Residency in Urban Education."  The Academy originally trained a small group of administrators — about eight to 25 per year — in five intensive, four-day sessions spread over 12-18 months.  Through 2011, there were 144 Broad Academy grads, fifty-one percent of whom are people of color and 43 percent of whom are women.  About half of the participants come from the world of education, the other half from business and the military (The Broad Report, 2011).  In Eli Broad's own words,

> The Broad Center for Superintendents is a direct infusion of leadership at the highest management level of our nation's urban public school districts.  We are building an executive leadership corps to protect and to grow our nation's investment in children" (www.broadfoundation.org, 2003).

DataCenter (2004) reports that the Broad Foundation sees the main value of education in its output of skilled workers, hence its focus on standardized testing.  The Academy's graduates have gone on to a variety of high-level positions within districts, states, and advocacy organizations.   By 2011, twenty-one of the nation's 75 largest districts had Superintendents or other top leaders trained by the Broad Academy (Samuels, 2011).

Between the years of Perata's first, unsuccessful takeover bill in 1999 and the second, successful attempt in 2003, Eli Broad was extremely active in both education politics and in California politics in general.  In the same year that Broad was personally appointed to Governor Schwarzenegger's gubernatorial transition team, his foundation

"was called in by Oakland Mayor Jerry Brown and Superintendent Jack O'Connell... Brown and Broad are longtime allies, and O'Connell is a major recipient of Broad contributions" (Gammon, 2007). Broad donated at least $100,000 to O'Connell's campaign in the years leading up to the takeover. Broad, venture capitalist John Doerr, and Reed Hastings (the founder of Netflix and funder of several) donated a combined total of $655K to O'Connell's campaign (at least $100,000 from Broad); they also served together for several years on the board of directors of EdVoice, which "helps fund charter schools and advocates for education reform, but the group also has political and lobbying arms that have been very active…" (Gammon, 2007, p. 8).

From 2002-2007 (roughly the years of the takeover), Broad donated at least $359,900 of the $2.36 million for the independent expenditure committee and a political action committee of EdVoice. Much of that money, Gammon reports, went to defeating Representative Sandre Swanson's efforts to restore local control to OUSD. EdVoice lobbied against the local control bill while the committees to which Broad donated spent $47,855 in support of his opponent, John Russo. When Swanson and his staff questioned the lobbyists' opposition to the bill, "they admitted to us that a board member had requested that they oppose the bill," said Swanson (Gammon, 2007).

School board and community members have recognized the role of the Broad Foundation since the early days of the takeover: "these will always be remembered as the Broad years," says Sharon Higgins, an early critic of Broad who created a blog to track its involvement in school reform. Higgins described the deficit as an opportunity to experiment with marketization: "They gave our district to the Broad people to try out their ideas," she said. "Their reason for coming here was to alter the district, not to heal the problem that put us in state takeover to start with" (Higgins, cited in Samuels, 2011). The district did seem to be a major hub for placing and training the expanding administrator base of the Broad foundation: by 2007, a disproportionate number of Broad Foundation trainees (9 of 49) had held positions in OUSD (Higgins, 2007).

In 2009, when partial local control was returned to the district, OUSD was on its fourth State Administrator in six years, all trained and placed by the Academy. The foundation and its network continued to retain a strong hold: in the 13 years since the takeover, OUSD has had a total of seven Superintendents/State Administrators, only one of whom (Tony Smith, 2009-2013) was not trained and placed by the Broad Foundation. Each Administrator/Superintendent remained in the position for an average of 1.5 years before moving on to other Broad-controlled districts.

The first State Administrator, Randy Ward, had occupied the same position in the Compton Unified School District after its takeover. In the conservative narrative of the Center for Education Reform,

> Ward took on the role of what had previously been the missing link in the equation – the strong leader who was in a position to push reforms past foot-dragging bureaucrats in a relatively "politics-free zone" created by state control of the district (Williams, 2007, p. 3).

Conceptualizing state control in this way points to the invisibilization of concerned communities and the silencing of their dissent.

Ward's tone and agenda were shared by the Broad administrations that followed. In particular, each administration increasingly reproduced patterns of bloated administration budgets, decentralization, and austerity-driven cuts to classrooms and teachers (Gerson, 2015). The Broad administrators have faithfully executed the reform network's expensive experiments in marketization and decentralization, such as splitting campuses into specialized academies and small schools, then reconsolidating them. When these experiments failed, the administrations leaned back into austerity measures, closing and reconsolidating schools and supporting their conversion into charter schools.

Meanwhile, the number of charter schools authorized by the District increased from 9 charter schools in 2001 to 32 in 2007. In 2017 there were 37 district-authorized charters and an additional 7 authorized by the Alameda County Office of Education (ACOE). The low overall growth in charters is due to the high rate of charter-school closure (sometimes in the middle of the year) and to declining enrollment in the district in general.

As of this writing (April, 2017), the District is dealing with the sudden departure of yet another Broad Superintendent, Antwan Wilson, who left his post after spearheading the integration of charter schools into the official enrollment system and overseeing the writing and passage of a major parcel tax to benefit charter schools. One of Wilson's key projects was to implement a "Common Enrollment" system; when parents resisted, the administration began the integration process by bypassing the board to contract with a private organization, School Mint, to create a comprehensive "school finder" system and added charters as the first section in the district school options catalog. The administration also "pushed out" multiple, beloved school principals who resisted charter co-location on their sites.

Wilson, with an annual compensation package of just over $400,000, was the highest-paid K-12 public employee in the Bay Area and fourth highest in the state last year. His two-year tenure saw a decline in enrollment while upper-level administrative salaries skyrocketed more than 500% (Parents United, 2017). Although there are community demands for a cap on the next Superintendent's salary, it is expected that it will be similar. In the meantime, the district has frozen budgets at school sites, including the following cuts: all field trips; summer school; parent centers; deaf and hard-of-hearing programs; reading programs; non-teaching staff; African-American male achievement (https://www.facebook.com/demandJ4OS/).

From a personal perspective, my own child's elementary school ran out of toner in April, so our parents began donating their time and money to make copies elsewhere and to buy paper towels and table wipes for the classroom. The capstone field trip for the "expeditionary learning" model that the school uses has been canceled, pending donations or other fundraising by parents and teachers.

The TFA alumni article (Tyre, 2010) that begins this chapter functions as a promotional piece for the TFA leadership sector. It paints a powerful picture of how a

group of young reformers (most of who had taught for three years or less and did not teach in Oakland) came to Oakland and "spread out in every level" of the school system. Indeed, six years after this piece was published, at least eight of the ten people profiled have co-founded and led the organizations that have transformed the landscape of Oakland education policy by working to channel millions of dollars into and through the local reform complex. Their positions include the Superintendent of a neighboring district undergoing charter reform; the CEO of Oakland's only local Charter Management Organization (CMO); the founder of GO! Public Schools (Oakland's main education reform advocacy organization, which recently channeled almost a million dollars in conservative funding from national funders into the local school board race); the Mayor's "Education Czar," the founders of an expanding charter franchise; a new teacher networking organization; a private, subcontracted school-lunch program, and the Oakland Education Fund, which receives and channels all private donations to the district with little to no public accountability.

The past two decades have seen increased attempts by researchers to account for the complex social networks that create neoliberal reform. In particular, researchers are attempting to analyse education policy processes that no longer emanate from, or are constrained to, the geographical boundaries of nation states (Hogan, 2015). This scholarship has employed ethnographic methods, interviews, and social network mapping to illustrate the relationship between actors in "nodes of power" (Greenlining Institute, 2013; Hanneman & Riddle, 2005) that play a major role in funding, organizing, marketing, and otherwise articulating neoliberal school reform. This methodology is rooted in the concept of social networks in sociology (Hogan, 2015) and policy networks in political science (Ball, 2008; Dowding, 1995).

Through the mechanism of state takeover in Oakland and around the country, the Broad Foundation was able to bypass both bureaucratic and democratic hurdles. This penetration takes place on many levels, operating through a diffuse network of creatively funded positions in the network and in potentially oppositional spaces. The foundation privately places graduates within district, city, and county administration by subsidizing current salaries or creating privately funded positions such as 'Special Assistant' and 'Advisor (this was the case with the special assistant to the State Administrators in Oakland). These positions, as with Oakland's new mayorally-appointed "Education Czar (described below)," provide further examples of the way that venture-philanthropists make use of TFA pipelines to provide both leadership and a built-in constituency for market-driven reform.

*Teach For America*

TFA is a well-documented and increasingly powerful actor in the network, fulfilling multiple functions that aid in neoliberal restructuring (Trujillo & Scott, 2014; Kretchmar, Sondel & Ferrare, 2014; Miner, 2010). The organization has two stated goals, both of which operate to further neoliberal reform. The first goal is to provide a teaching force for high-need areas. In practice, this provides a continuous supply of new,

young, mostly white teachers for both district and charter schools, displacing teachers of color (White, 2016) and thereby reproducing racial inequity in the teaching force. TFA has an increasing presence in both charter schools and in replacing striking and veteran teachers.

In addition to providing an easy influx of new, young, mostly white temporary teachers, TFA is remarkable for its success in its second, lesser-known goal: to create a leadership force for neoliberal reform. Framed as a "movement of leaders" for "transformational systemic change at every level" (www.teachforamerica.org, 2016), the work of this leadership force was crucial to the market-driven, post-takeover reconstruction of OUSD.

TFA acts as a reproductive, connective hub for recruiting, training, and dispersing a corps of policy leaders throughout the entrepreneurial network. Once inside this network, participants gain a kind of social capital that invites them to move within a varied set of entrepreneurial reform activities. One participant in this study called this process one of "farming their own leaders," concluding that building reformers, not teachers, was the organization's priority: "really the teaching is just your jumping-off point. You can't make real change as a teacher… you need to be a *real* leader." TFA founder Wendy Kopp seemed to acknowledge these priorities:

> I think the way to understand Teach for America is as a leadership development program." She continued, "In the long run, we need to build a leadership force of people. We have a whole strategy around not only providing folks with the foundational experience during their two years with us, but also then accelerating their leadership in ways that is strategic for the broader education reform movement" (Damast, 2012).

Incorporation into this network begins at the recruitment stage, where potential applicants are encouraged to think of teaching as a stepping stone to a 'real' career. As a Graduate Student Instructor at an elite university, this author had a few Teach For America presentations to my education students. The majority of the recruitment pitch centered around using TFA as a resume-builder for business school, law school, or graduate school. One TFA teacher, Susan, described the way that corps members are drawn into the network and encouraged to pursue corporate paths instead of teaching:

> S: once you are inside, you can really just start looking for a local job.

> N: you mean instead of teaching?

> S: Yeah, like what do you actually want to do in the long term? Cause you can end up in so many places... My friend in B-school [business school] said he doesn't even need to be there, he learned all his networking skills from TFA. It's like, join this group, come to this event, free beer here,

become a teacher leader… if you think about it it's kind of insane, why would I be a leader or a teacher advisory thing - it's my second year, really? I just can't right now but if you do it they're always scouting to help you with career opportunities.

A former Corps member described an ongoing set of opportunities that operate like a buffet of chances [to meet people]…

We just have a pipeline into these new organizations, and now they're like exploding – you can do a policy fellowship or be on an advisory council or do Black Lives Matter stuff. So the activism is built-in, it's how you stay current on the issues and learn the language.

These opportunities, then, are not just career moments but moments of ideological reconstruction.

The TFA network also creates funded positions with government: for example, in June 2015, Oakland Mayor Schaaf announced the appointment of an "Education Czar," who is also one of the TFA alumni profiled in the article that begins this chapter (Tyre, 2010). This position was funded through a multi-year partnership with the Oakland Public Education Fund (founded by the founding CEO of GO! Public Schools – the local advocacy organization described below), The Rainin Foundation, New Schools Venture Fund, the Rogers Family Foundation, and the Packard Foundation. At a recent presentation to Teach for All (the international branch of TFA), the GO! Public Schools founder listed the czar's hire among its accomplishments, saying that "our network is the mayor's advisor" (Teach For All, 2016).

Because of the depth of penetration of Teach For America into the institutions, processes, and discourses of Oakland education politics, studies of neoliberal ideology within TFA can help us to understand the personal politics of reformers. Trujillo & Scott (2014) describe how TFA members frame the problems and potential solutions within public schools. In what they call "obliterating inequality through management," the authors describe "corps members' views on what they saw as the most promising responses to their identified problems":

Consistent with their views about the original sources of inequality, most preferred solutions that emphasized stronger management and accountability inside schools... most respondents communicated a similar list of reforms: scale back unions' collective bargaining agreements in order to increase principals' flexibility in personnel matters; increase teacher and principal effectiveness through tighter accountability; increase principal and teacher expectations; tie teacher compensation to student performance; hire better "talent"; standardize curricula and assessments; expand technology and data use; and generally "transform" and "shake up the system" (p. 60).

Opportunities within the reform network have drawn a huge influx of current and former Corps members to Oakland – as of April 2017, there were 2,815 corps members in the region, with only 305 actively teaching (https://bayarea.teachforamerica.org/about-us).  Gentrification, and the jobs available in the network as products of that gentrification, have kept them here.  As charters and advocacy organizations expand and their discourses become hegemonic, these discourses are reproduced in community engagement processes that function like an echo chamber.  Mel, a retired teacher and grandmother who participated in several district- and network-led community engagement meetings, found herself frustrated that:

> they're creating a whole organizing force, people are getting paid, like to be a data person – so you are white and 26 with no kids, moved here from the city to work non-profit or tech.  So that's your built-in ideology factory right there.  Like, what do you know about our schools?  Who are you?  Now all of a sudden you are on common ground with me, you get an equal say.  Bad enough you vote for the people that close our schools, but now you see how they pack these events with staff.  I don't even know, they probably get paid to go...everyone has a stake.  Ours is our kids, theirs is their jobs.  So we have taken to asking point-blank which organizations they are with.

Kretchmar et al. (2014) point out that while TFA claims to be an apolitical organization, they are explicit in their desire to drive systemic change and extremely consistent in the (often rightist) neoliberal educational policies that they pursue.  This "apolitical" positioning can be seen throughout the network, borrowing from other neoconservative discursive binaries (Pizzaro, 2015) such as the idea that dissent is unpatriotic:  If you are not *with* us (i.e., doing *something* about it), you are against change and therefore against the good.  Cherise, a biracial former teacher who was involved in the early days of GO! Public Schools, the advocacy organization discussed below, calls this the "enemy-making language" of the reformers, where "choice" is the equalizing force – if you are against this particular system of choice, you are essentially against equity and freedom for children of color:

> …it happens when there are only two sides, with us or against us.  You see it in just the way they bring people together – ok, come to this thing if you want to help public schools.  This is how and there is no other way.  You don't want your school to close?  Then you are pro-charter.  If you have concerns you are either white or white-aligned or too "highly educated" or you are not real enough… basically we should stay stuck in survival mode and let them do the long-term thinking.  …[w]e deserve to have a vision,

and mine is the public schools should serve us and the elite should pay for
it with their taxes just like we pay for them with our work.

*Advocacy Organizing:  GO! Public Schools.*

Researchers have argued that while venture-philanthropic investment in
community organizing is in some ways similar to traditional community organizing, a key
strategy for these funders is the creation of new nodes in its network in the form of
"intermediary organizations."  These organizations are the places where the neoliberalism
"lands" in cities and school systems – in a complex borderlands area that is intricately
intertwined with, yet independent of the state.  A good portion of their work is to
convert democratic participation in public institutions into 'community engagement'
(Sawchuk, 2012) with the goal of garnering support and consent for predetermined,
market-driven outcomes.

Since its founding in 2009, an advocacy organization called GO! Public Schools
(GOPS) has become a major player in the politics of the district, where it has a significant
voice in the framing of issues and in the creation and implementation of strategies and
campaigns.  GOPS has impacted policy formation and discourse in Oakland in two
primary ways.  The first is the role of APS in shifting the work of democratic processes in
public schools from one of democratic participation to one of community engagement.
The second major impact is by playing a key role in the internal development of pro-
privatization school board candidates, for whom they subsequently raised and channeled
historic amounts of money.

Community engagement shapes and limits the *scope* and the *goals* of community
involvement in decision-making.  In this model, both the processes and the character of
community organizing' is diluted, redirected, and ultimately only used to gain nominal
consent for pre-determined outcomes.  Advocacy groups such as GOPS essentially carve
out new spaces for participation within the shifted policy landscape.  In doing so, they
shape and define the rules, the tone, and ultimately the people involved in this
community.  While its founding rhetoric claimed to "represent community voices," that
tone has shifted over the years – for example, activists report being barred from
engagement meetings, being told at the door that widely-advertised events were only for
"the GOPS network."  A participant in this study recalls a "community-engagement-
something about getting quality teachers" where the mode of engagement seemed to be
to:

> squeeze everything – all our issues and major discussions that we were
> having – into their agenda.  Like we have a teacher shortage, we say we
> need to recruit and support Black teachers, you move it to the bucket that
> you want filled, like performance pay.  What the hell, that's the opposite of
> what we're saying.  We want to hold them up, you want to punish them.
> But you act like we're coming to this together – no, like we're the experts –
> it was framed as they want to gather community knowledge.  Bullshit.  You

know, it reminds me of when you go to a job interview and they tell you to bring the questions back to what you want to talk about… They know what they need you to say it, they just have to get you to say the buzzwords so they can say it back in your name.

Like its counterparts, GOPS frames its work broadly, with emphasis on emphases on providing information and engaging the Oakland community towards equity. As an information provider, it occupies an ambiguous place – both creating research and disseminating it. for example, in 2013 it led the creation of a report called the *Teacher Quality Roadmap* (2013) that pushed for performance pay and other forms of neoliberal practice. The Roadmap was written and released by the conservative, reform-driven National Council on Teacher Quality (Ravitch, 2012) and GOPS was the lead partner in requesting, disseminating, and promoting it. These multiple roles reflect the amorphous relationship of character of intermediary organizations

> not simply as organizations that are contained solely between knowledge producers and consumers, but also as larger, more comprehensive organizations that exhibit some function of influencing what and how research is promoted to policymakers — that is, they serve an intermediary function, but may be researchers, producers, and/or consumers as well" (Debray, Scott, Lubienski, and Jabbar (2014, p. 2).

These organizations are united by a common set of venture-philanthropic funders, most often including the Broad and Walton Foundations, local funders such as the Rogers Foundation in Oakland, and state-level charter school advocates such as the California Charter School Association. As with the NCTQ report and their support of Common Enrollment and the "Equity Pledge," they often share materials and templates nationally. Community engagement is reduced to displaying these well-funded reports and Powerpoint presentations with the presumption of scientific authority, then outlining the district's predetermined solutions to the crisis that is presented. Again, we see the instantiation of the Thatcher-era notion that *There Is No Alternative* (TINA) to market-driven reform.

Several factors place GO! Public Schools at the nexus of the education entrepreneur network. First, its leadership is primarily composed of Teach For America alumni who are highly networked in the reform complex. Its founder, Jonathan Klein, is one of the corps members profiled in the TFA Alumni magazine article (Tyre, 2010); his social network (based on his official positions) represents the vast majority of corporate funding power and market-driven reform in Oakland schools. He has personally co-led or been closely involved with almost all of the major neoliberal school reform efforts in Oakland in the past two decades.

Second, GOPS' primary models and modes of advocacy are drawn directly from the policy platforms and reform templates of its corporate network. For example, the

structure of the organization itself is as both a 501(c)3 AND 501(c)4 nonprofit organization. The (c)3/(c)4 status is favored primarily by the school-reform industry and by conservative groups like the National Rifle Association, the National Organization for Marriage (NOM), and Karl Rove's Crossroads GPS (an early and major player in the post-Citizens United campaign funding landscape). Representatives of GO! Public Schools, distancing themselves again from their conservative network, have made it a point to mention only the Sierra Club when challenged about this status (R.M., personal communication, 2014; CP, personal communication, 2015). With their tiered structures, the groups can "take advantage of the benefits of each entity to, for instance, publish a paper on teacher evaluation using (c)3 funds, lobby in support of a teacher-evaluation bill with 501(c)4 resources, and help elect candidates likely to support such a bill with political action committee funds" (Sawchuck, 2012). This structure, which increased exponentially after the *Citizens United* ruling of 2010, was investigated by the IRS after the 2012 election (after which the Republican, Tea Party-controlled Congress launched what it called a 'counter-investigation' into the IRS).

Although its major funders include highly conservative corporate philanthropies such as the Walton, and Rogers Foundations, and its policy partnerships are primarily with politically conservative groups such as the Center for the Reform of School Systems (CRSS), GO! Public Schools actively disassociates itself and its mission from these groups, framing them as incidental and not formative to its work. This is especially problematic in light of the funding categories that GO! Falls within (for example, it is funded by the Walton Foundation in a category called "Shaping Public Policy"). De Filippis et al. (2010) describe the assimilation of community organizing into right-wing agendas:

> Most community efforts of a progressive nature have been heavily curtailed and constrained in the past three decades, many of them have been incorporated by public and private funding, transforming the field to emphasize community building and consensus models rather than community organizing or conflict models. And, at the same time, right-wing and conservative efforts have proliferated (p. 37).

GOPS identifies as "agnostic" on charters, insisting that it focuses on "All Schools" even though it has not embarked on any projects that do not explicitly benefit charters. It is clear that some options come at the expense of others: the language of supporting "all schools" disguises fundamental conflicts over resources and governance. The staff have referred to dissent as part of a "conspiracy theory" about the privatization agenda of its funders (R.H., personal communication, 2014; C.P, personal communication, 2015). This is despite the fact that its primary advocacy and reform platforms (such as teacher quality standards, 'blended' and 'personalized' learning, common enrollment, and the most recent "Equity Pledge" (a renaming of the Gates

Foundation's "Charter Compact") are drawn almost verbatim from these funders' templates in other cities.

Since the 2012 election cycle, the election of pro-charter candidates to school boards, and the role of school boards in general, has become a major focus of the reform network. Local organizations, particularly local chapters of TFA, play a key role in 'advocacy farming' by cultivating new pro-charter school board candidates, for whom they then raise and channeled historic amounts of money. The founder of GO! Public Schools sees this as an essential answer to the question posed by TFA: What will it take to reach 'One Day'? [assuming that the theme 'One Day' signifies the realization of TFA's vision]:

> Elections truly matter. We should've gotten involved in politics much earlier. I've been in Oakland since 1999, and the first time we organized around school board elections was 2012, 13 years in. Over the last two election cycles, our candidates for school board have won five of six races. We've passed two measures that have brought over $650 million in resources to Oakland public schools. We're now one of Mayor Libby Schaaf's chief policy partners" (TFA 25th Anniversary Summit, 2016).

Since GOPS was not founded until 2009, and given the context of the event, is clear that the "we" that Klein refers to is TFA. In 1999, after two years of teaching, Klein came to OUSD from Compton (which was operating under State Receivership with Randy Ward as the State Administrator). After serving for a few years as the Director of TFA Bay Area, he joined the Broad Residency and served as "Special Assistant" to all three State Administrators (a position created and funded by the Broad Foundation). Then, while earning an MBA, he wrote the business plan for a privatized school-lunch provider that now contracts with charter and private schools in Oakland and "crystallized plans for the Oakland Schools Fund" (Berkeley-Haas, 2014), a subcontracted organization that eventually became the Public Education Fund (and which was recently given a contract by the Broad Superintendent to hold and manage all private donations to the district with minimal transparency or accountability). Klein became Chief Program Officer at the Rogers Family Foundation in 2008, leaving after one year to start GO! Public Schools with other TFA alumni. Last year, GO! Public Schools expanded to West Contra Costa County, where another one of the corps members profiled in the TFA Alumna Magazine article is currently the Superintendent. Klein's replacement as CEO of Oakland GOPS was a Broad resident and former head of a private school district (the Achievement School District) that operates its own privately-managed portfolio of schools in Memphis.

Researchers (Au & Ferrare, 2015; Lipman & Jenkins, 2011; Gilmore, 2011) have pointed to this phenomenon as the creation of a "shadow state" through which money and policy-making flows toward privatization. For example, in Mayor Kevin Johnson's Sacramento administration, a non-profit charter advocacy organization called *Stud Up!* –

founded by Johnson, funded primarily by the Walton and Broad foundations, and for which Johnson repeatedly requested and received state appropriations – provided a number of paid 'volunteer' pro-charter staff who identified themselves as high-level officials in the administration without disclosing their employer (McKenna, 2015b). This staff also helped Johnson to carry out a pro-charter "coup" against the National Black Mayor's Association, leaving the organization bankrupt and crippled (McKenna, 2015a).

This shadow strategy penetrates all levels of the state. In another example, the "Teach For America Capitol Hill Fellows" program pays corps members to work as regular staffers for senators, representatives and the House Education and the Workforce Committee. However,

> in an arrangement that Hill ethics experts call highly unusual – though not illegal – their salaries are funded by a private individual. The entire $500,000 cost is picked up by Arthur Rock, a wealthy venture capitalist in San Francisco who sits on TFA's board (Simon, 2013).

Like Michael Bloomberg, Rock contributes broadly to pro-privatization legislative and school board candidates across the country and was a crucial donor in the 2012 and 2016 Oakland School Board elections.

The 2012 OUSD school board elections represented a historic moment in the penetration of corporate money into local school politics. GOPS was instrumental in the transmission of this campaign funding, which included both local and national donors. In 2012, it raised $185,000 for a slate of three candidates in the OUSD School Board race, provided by three major funders: Arthur Rock (a San Francisco-based venture capitalist); T. Gary Rogers (founder of the Rogers Family Foundation, the primary local foundation in the Oakland reform network); and the California Charter School Association (CCSA). In comparison, the Oakland Teacher's Association (OEA) raised around $20,000 to run an opposing slate made up of working-class candidates of color who were active in their school communities (Monteverde & Vivanco, 2012).

In 2016, more than $825,000 in independent expenditures were poured into the OUSD School Board Race, which involved 12 candidates running for four district seats. Challengers in this election were highly motivated by the patterns of school closure, excessive administrative spending, and the leasing and selling of district land to charter schools and other private interests. The majority of that funding came from two organizations: Families and Educators for Public Education, established by GO Public Schools Oakland ($440K – $300K of which came from billionaire businessman and politician Michael Bloomberg), and the Parent Teacher Alliance (PTA) ($395K), run by the California Charter Schools Association. The PTA has received millions of dollars from James and Alice Walton of Wal-Mart and Reed Hastings of Netflix, via the California Charter Schools Association Advocates, the political action arm of the CCSA (Tsai, 2016). Their money supported the three most pro-charter candidates, two of

whom were previously employed by GO! Public Schools.  This strategy aligns with the the TFA model of advocacy and candidate 'farming.'

The California PTA (Parent Teacher Association) and the Presidents of local school chapters put out statements of concern about the naming of the reform network's PTA organization: "We believe they are using the name 'Parent Teacher Alliance' to mislead voters. Oakland schools are not for sale, and Oakland parent leaders will not stand by while these outside billionaires attempt to mislead voters," stated Kimi Lee, the President of the PTSA of Melrose Leadership Academy (www.parentsunited.org, 2016).

**Conclusion**

This chapter demonstrates the work of three overlapping and interconnected nodes of power within school reform: venture philanthropy (represented by the Broad Foundation); the Teach For America network; and a local advocacy organization. Together, these groups defined and continue to shape the ongoing disaster in OUSD and the forms of reconstruction, or rebuilding, that are possible.  As in Hurricane Katrina, the Iraq War, and the global politics of debt employed by the International Monetary Fund, the state takeover provided the emergency needed to sell market-driven reform as the only possible form of disaster relief.  This process, which is both structural and discursive, is illustrative of Margaret Thatcher's famous statement that "There Is No Alternative" (TINA) to neoliberal capitalism.  Within this context, the hostile corporate takeover of a school district is easily painted as both inevitable and altruistic, and the "community" is intended to act as a set of disjointed consumers.  However, as demonstrated by the school board's creative financing in the face of the failed 1989 takeover (Epstein, 2012), there sometimes are other alternatives – and democratic institutions and processes composed of "ordinary" people and their representatives continue to be an important site for contesting the neoliberal state.

While this chapter demonstrates how the reform network converges to shape reform at the level of the district, it does not examine the ways in which it is received, co-constructed, and resisted by families, teachers, and others in the Oakland community. Throughout the takeover and neoliberal reconstruction of the district, Oaklanders have objected to elements of neoliberal reform such as school closure, charter school expansion, teacher "quality" measures, and site-based funding cuts.  They have protested, shut down school board meetings, and participated in sit-ins and hunger strikes.  While reform efforts benefit from unprecedented amounts of funding and publicity, theirs are largely unfunded, unpublicized, and disjointed.

Returning us to the hurricane as metaphor, Perry (a former New Orleans charter CEO) writes that he is constantly asked:

'In lieu of a hurricane, what can be done to radically reform school districts?'  Hurricane has become the unspoken metaphor or referent that reform strategists muse upon to build apparatuses that can initiate [neoliberal reform].  The turnaround/takeover/portfolio district has

evolved to become the hurricane of reformers' desire.  As a result, community engagement has become euphemism for 'how to deal with black folk in the aftermath' (2016).

Community engagement serves to naturalize neoliberal capitalism by 1) appropriating progressive and participatory practices and 2) assimilating and re-articulating racial critique (both of which are explored further in Chapter Four).  The second point reflects the failure of the largely white, liberal anti-privatization movement to articulate their work with (and for, and under) the concerns of families of color and low-income families.  However, it also reflects the ever-increasing racial and economic segregation of Oakland and the lack of spaces for authentic, cross-racial democratic engagement.  In the context of what Rose (1996) calls the "death of the social," school reformers have reconstructed the meaning and practices of "community," "service," and "engagement."  These neoliberal forms of participation work to co-opt and redirect the public's energy, labor, and desire for equity and social justice.

As of April, 2017, OUSD seems to be headed for another takeover.  The now-predictable cycle of emergency austerity measures has begun and again, the community is demanding accountability.  All of this is taking place against the backdrop of the disaster of the Trump Presidency, creating further contradictions and further chaos.  A significant difference in this cycle, however, is the community's united opposition to another out of town Superintendent.  In a progressive city where critiques of capitalism and racial inequality have abounded (from the Black Panther Party platform to the city's participation in the Occupy movement), Oaklanders recognize the political significance of the Walton, Gates (and increasingly, Broad) names.  Concerned groups have come together to demand a local, non-Broad trained candidate and a thorough, transparent interview process (Ealey, 2017; Epstein, 2017).  How the neoliberal network responds is a subject for further study.  I hope that this research can provide a starting point for understanding who comprises that network, as well as the broad and deep strategies that they use to secure and maintain hegemony

## Chapter 4
## Radical Shifts:  High-stakes accountability and the reconstruction of racial justice

**Introduction**

The neoliberal shift in American public schooling was codified in the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (NCLB).  Within schools, this shift was defined largely by neoliberal funding and accountability regimes, school and district restructuring, and the narrowing of goals and discourses around "achievement."  These shifts also affected how students (Lipman, 2004), teachers (Freedman, 2000), and civil-rights advocates (Melamed, 2006; Duggan, 2003; Apple, 1999) formulated their agendas and subjectivities.  This chapter expands on that scholarship by exploring how calls for racial equality and educational justice are [re]constructed within the "lived experiences" of neoliberal reform.

This study focuses on Pancho Villa Urban Academy (PVUA), a small, semi-autonomous high school in Oakland, California.  Founded in 1973, PVUA is a community-based precursor to the small-school movements of the early 2000s.  Its founders were deeply rooted in historical traditions of democratic civil rights and Black- and Brown- Power and sought to provide educational alternatives to the most marginalized students through critical, politically and culturally relevant, student-centered schooling.  However, as accountability pressures escalated and high-stakes testing took hold, the school struggled to balance those pressures with its founding vision.  I demonstrate that PVUA's tradition of "critical multiculturalism" (May & Sleeter, 2010), and the pedagogies and practices that are rooted in this tradition, have been both constrained and diluted by the neoliberal reform agenda that drives state accountability.

**Research Questions and Methodology**

This chapter is framed by the third general research question posed in the Introduction (Chapter One) of this dissertation:  *What racial, economic, and pedagogical discourses are reflected in neoliberal reform? How have particular discourses become dominant, and how do they relate to prior and competing constructions of racial, educational, and social "justice"?*

This research began as an examination of how the high-stakes accountability regime of the *No Child Left Behind* Act of 2001 (NCLB) materialized at the site level.  Seeking to understand how neoliberal systems become hegemonic, I focused on concrete changes to the school's vision and practices as well as on how different members of a school community assimilated, accommodated, and/or resisted neoliberal ideology.  As demonstrated below, PVUA is well-suited for these questions because of its "race-radical" (Melamed, 2006) context and its ongoing practice of more critical forms of multiculturalism (May & Sleeter, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2004).  By grounding research on accountability within a deeply politicized school community whose founding vision was clearly not aligned with that of NCLB, I sought to understand how hegemonic processes operate within everyday work.

Data for this study was collected during an eight-month ethnographic study of PVUA in the 2007-08 school year, including: participation in staff and school community

meetings and other events; oral histories conducted with a founding teacher and principal and other veteran teachers; formal and informal interviews with teachers, administrators, students, and parents; and collection of historical documents from school archives and through internet searches.

Beginning with a description of the school's historical context and founding mission, I situate PVUA in a history of race-radicalism, a vision of "alternative" education for marginalized students, and an educational politics of shared accountability. I contrast the punitive, individualistic accountability of NCLB with the climate of "shared" accountability in which PVUA was situated, using the lens of high-stakes testing to explore liberal colorblindness and neoliberal multiculturalism. I argue that the "racial project" (Omi & Winant, 1994) of NCLB was a reconstruction of racial justice within educational policy and focus on how this reconstruction created both material and ideological shifts in school practice. This chapter also describes how race-conscious, progressive, and participatory discourses and practices were appropriated in specific, historically situated ways that indexed (Ochs, 1992) the site's politics while simultaneously promoting an agenda oppositional to its founding vision.

## Theoretical Frameworks

### Critical vs neoliberal multiculturalism

In its broadest sense, this chapter examines the dialectical evolution of capitalism as it responds to anti-racist crises and challenges (Harvey, 2005), as well as how it works creatively to transform those forces that oppose it (Rose, 1999; Brown, 2005; Melamed, 2006). Melamed (following Winant, 2001) argues that the post-WWII period constitutes a period of "racial break," or an era when "overlapping, internationalized anticolonial and civil rights movements posed challenges to the limits of racial democracy of such global magnitude that they produced a permanent crisis in white supremacy" (Melamed, 2006, p. 1). In this period of significant and dramatic resistance to racial stratification and exclusion, a convergence of movements attacked capitalism through forceful critiques of its relationship to race and racism. Schools were one area where these contestations were manifested. In the context of schools like PVUA, this "race-radicalism" led to practices that might today be called "critical multiculturalism" (May & Sleeter, 2010; Farahmandpur & McLaren, 1999).

The "racial break" created a window of opportunity for the building of counterhegemonic institutions, within which PVUA's founding was situated. However, Winant (2001) posits that these social movements produced only a *limited* transformation in world racial order, shifting the racial paradigm from one of outright domination to one of racial hegemony. Capitalist discourse and politics were forced to deal with these challenges through a variety of strategies. In Melamed's (2006) words, "Even as some liberal freedoms have expanded, racial privilege and discipline evolve to take on new forms adapted to postcoloniality and the demise of legal segregation" (p. 2).

Faced with critical forms of multiculturalism (which might today be called antiracism), capitalist language responds with *neoliberal multiculturalism*, which Melamed

describes as "the incorporation of U.S. multiculturalism into the legitimating and operating procedures of neoliberalism" (p. -). As evidenced by the rhetoric of the *No Child Left Behind* Act, neoliberal multiculturalism "portrays neoliberal policy as the key to a postracist world of freedom and opportunity"; and "portrays acts of force required for neoliberal restructuring to be humanitarian: a benevolent multicultural invader intervenes to save life, "give" basic goods or jobs, and promote limited political freedom" (Melamed, 2006, p.1). This is the essence of neoliberalism – it reproduces the racial order through reference to that order itself, creating a structural and discursive framework that claims to challenge the racial order while reproducing the capitalist structures that created it.

While there has been much written on the ideological underpinnings of NCLB and its predecessors, this work tends to focus on the rationality behind official policies. However, as Larner (2007) argues, focusing on official discourses makes it difficult to recognize the imbrication of resistance and rule. She points to the necessity of analyzing the "messy actualities" of particular neoliberal projects, focusing on the interplay between a multiplicity of political forces that are always in competition with each other. This chapter contributes to the literature on neoliberalism school reform by documenting how market-driven policy connects to – or articulates with – historical notions of racial and social justice.

The concept of articulation helps to understand how capitalist discourse accommodates and assimilates critiques. Articulation is used by critical social theorists to explain how disparate and often contradictory discourses are linked together to reproduce class positions, economic and social arrangements. Hall (1988) uses the concept to explain how modern capitalism sustains its hegemonic position. Focusing on Thatcherism in Britain, he argues that the reemergence of the "new right" was an ideological transformation. Larner (2009) outlines three explicit points in Hall's argument:

> first, that neo-liberalism is not simply a system of ideas, nor a lurch to the Right in the formulation of policy agendas; second, that power is not constituted and exercised exclusively on the terrain of the state; third, that hegemony is only achieved through an ongoing process of contestation and struggle" (p. 9).

Hall (1988) argues that political configurations are "multi-vocal," and that the power of Thatcherism was in its ability to constitute subject positions from which its discourses about the world made sense to people in a range of different social positions. This flexibility is important, given the differences of ideological formation both within and among classes. The ideological power of neoliberalism is in its ability to "articulate" between contradictory concepts and realities.

As described further in this chapter, NCLB is in large part a privatization project. The law uses a 'get-tough' approach that taps into the deep and very real frustration over persistent racial inequity in education. In its articulated form, the logic is that by holding

schools to 'high standards,' they will be forced to better serve their students. The implication is that they are currently not working hard enough or that they are doing the wrong things to meet their students' needs. The neoliberal project redefines racial justice by equating it with school closures and privatization, using high-stakes accountability as the lever that forces change:

> Regarding race, it would be tempting to dub NCLB as 'No Color Left Behind.' In principle, it is laudable to hold schools to higher standards with a promise of academic proficiency in at least the three Rs. It is about time that someone insisted on an accountability system with an attitude. For the degradation of students of color has lasted long enough and NCLB represents the chutzpah that educational reformers have been waiting for. However, consistent with a racial formation analysis, with NCLB it seems that 'the color line has not been erased so much as it has been redrawn (Freeman, 2005, p. 191)… [B]y ostensibly giving public schools a chance to show progress, NCLB gives whiteness the license to declare students of color failures under a presumed-to-be-fair system (Leonardo, 2007, p. 269).

Market-driven reform discourse builds on the success of struggles for "accountability" by marginalized communities through articulation with the language of Black and brown freedom struggles. Those struggles are historically embedded in PVUA in very direct ways, beginning with its name and encoded in its daily practice. However, as this study shows, neoliberal reform harnesses the discursive power of "accountability" while narrowing and redirecting its focus, creating a unidirectional form of accountability that reflects an increasingly limited set of interests.

NCLB is a reauthorization of the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, the civil-rights education legislation that was intended to respond to demands for educational equity. Emery (2002) describes the pedagogical priorities that were emphasized in the education activism of that period:

> …many groups were inspired to organize and demand that they be part of the decision-making processes in this country… one manifestation of this organizing was the increase in the number of educators promoting student-centered, interdisciplinary, and multicultural education and an increase in the number of school boards allowing such education into the classroom. These events threatened to challenge a dominant culture and political process that was fundamentally dependent on racism (p. 122).

Pedagogically, neoliberal education policy is in large part hostile to these priorities. Its goal is to disrupt and transform them, creating an opening for market-driven goals and practices. Neoliberalism builds on liberalism's strong conception of individual rights and responsibilities to emphasize that every human being is an entrepreneur managing

their own life, and should act as such within the meritocratic structures provided. In this construction, market behavior is the only way that freedom can be realized. As illustrated by the plan to raise test scores (discussed below), a particularly explicit version of this discourse is also used by some parents.

Apple (1999) describes the stakeholders who drive school reform as a 'new alliance' in the neoliberal project:

> In essence, the new alliance has integrated education into a wider set of ideological commitments. The objectives in education are the same as those which guide its economic and social welfare goals. They include the dramatic expansion of that eloquent fiction, the free market; the drastic reduction of government responsibility for social needs; the reinforcement of intensely competitive structures of mobility both inside and outside the school; the lowering of people's expectations for economic security; the disciplining of culture and the body; and the popularization of what is clearly a form of Social Darwinist thinking… (p. 6).

NCLB is based on a model used by G.W. Bush as governor of Texas, during which he advised teachers to get

> back to the basics… the building blocks of knowledge were the same yesterday and will be the same tomorrow. We do not need trendy new theories or fancy experiments or feel-good curriculums. The basics work. If drill gets the job done, then rote is right (G.W. Bush, 1996, quoted in Coles, 2002).

The "new basics" is a term first used in the 1983 report *A Nation at Risk*, which (as described in Chapter Two) is considered a founding document of neoliberal schooling policy. It refers to a "back-to basics" approach and a "return to traditionalism" (Apple, 1999) that was codified within NCLB.

As Coles (2002) points out, the rhetoric of 'trendy' and 'feel-good' curriculums is meant to describe critical literacy and critical pedagogy in most of its forms. This can include but is not limited to whole language; cooperative learning; media literacy; multicultural, culturally relevant, or anti-racist education; meaning-emphasis learning; or any acknowledgement of concepts such as "poly-rhythmic realities." These concepts are fundamental to PVUA's founding vision and are manifested in everyday practices and discourses. However, programs informed by these ideas have no place in NCLB. The new basics are meant to include systematic, easily packaged, "teacher-proof" instruction and include similar test preparation packages, often developed by the same companies who create standards and sell curriculum.

*Accountability as devitalization*

High-stakes accountability has been critiqued for its role in privatizing schools and promoting gentrification (Lipman, 2004), narrowing curriculum and stifling teacher creativity and autonomy (Coles, 2002; Crocco & Costigan, 2007), and reproducing inequity (Kohn, 2000; Hursh, date; Meier et al, 2000; Valenzuela et. al., 2007). McDermott and Hall (2007) connect these critiques by arguing that NCLB uses technical and scientific rationality to depoliticize education, de-linking equity from capitalism and shifting the focus from structural and systemic inequity to measurable, individualized, punitive accountability. In this system, the role of research is to reify the system and to protect it from critique. NCLB is

> a vision for achieving progress in education through increased control and standardization, a form of rational bureaucratic authority Max Weber (1958) described as central to modernity… NCLB's effort to engineer quality education through scientific management reflects how advanced capitalist states have sought to control learning through rationalization, as if to depoliticize education, and politically so (p. 10).

At PVUA, the political foci of participatory practices and discourses of multiculturalism were shifted, or softened, as well. Participatory practices, which promote learner/community led, experiential, and decentered learning from multiple perspectives, became 'best practices' for the purpose of preparing students to compete in the global marketplace (in the microcosm of high-stakes standardized testing). Practices resembling democratic dialogue, partnership, and participation were deployed as discourses and techniques to gain consent for outcomes that are often predetermined. The explicit link between education and political struggle was weakened as participatory practices are assimilated by neoliberal reforms. McDermott & Hall (2007) describe this process as one of "devitalization":

> Devitalization movement: a common-sense mystifying reform, similar but opposite to revitalization... a devitalization movement, like No Child Left Behind (NCLB), goes directly from conflict to disappointment without engaging change. Devitalization represses productive change, and the common sense that helped create a problem becomes more reinforced than defied. No new wisdom can enter the system. Those with received knowledge as probed by standard questions remain "in the know." Those with less access remain "in the No," as in No Access to resources, mobility, and displays of commodified (good to own, buy, and sell) knowledge (p. 10).

Devitalization was manifested at PVUA in numerous, complex, and often subtle ways. This chapter illuminates some of the tensions that arose when PVUA focused on

meeting accountability requirements while attempting to remain faithful to its founding mission.  These tensions reinforced the hegemony of the accountability system and served to reproduce the school's marginal and tenuous position.  Building on McDermott and Hall, I parse this concept into two interlocked processes: structural and ideological devitalization.  This typology provides an entry point into examining the more subtle and nuanced ways that high-stakes state accountability worked to undermine PVUA's founding vision and political philosophy.  As we will see below, the marketization of schooling is both a top-down policy project and the result of changes in expectations, discourses, and practices brought on by those policies.  It is both overtly coercive and a project to build consent.  In this sense, devitalization happens on both structural and ideological fronts.

**Founding Vision and Enduring Practices: "The System Has Failed You"**

The founders of PVUA aimed to meet the specific needs of urban students of color through institutional and pedagogical structures that recognized their "lived experiences" (Freire, 1970) as legitimate starting points for academic learning.  This section begins by contextualizing the school's founding.  I then describe the vision and some essential structures of the school, explaining how these structures have endured and how they have evolved to support today's students.  In the following sections, I focus on how these structures are constrained, diluted, and devitalized by high-stakes accountability processes.

PVUA is a predecessor to today's movement for small, semi-autonomous urban public high schools.  From 1959-1969, the New York Urban League created a set of "Street Academies," where 2,000 students in the "dropout" category completed high school (https://www.nyul.org/meet-the-league/milestones/).  The program was taken up for national replication in a collaboration between the National Urban League and the National Institute of Education.  In 1973, Marcus Foster, a nationally celebrated educator and Oakland's first African-American superintendent, created a community committee to pilot three such schools in the city.

Following the success of the New York Street Academy programs, the Oakland Academies were conceived of as wholly "alternative" programs whose mission was to use "student-centered" pedagogies and structures to transform former and potential dropouts into academically and politically prepared graduates.  PVUA's experimental program was structured by the moderate-liberal politics of the Urban League and the movement for democratic civil rights.  However, its ideological and pedagogical visions were rooted in more radical movements for self-determination by communities of color, including the work of Mexican revolutionary leaders and other anti-colonial movements, as well as by the local context of Oakland's racial justice activism (including the Black Panther Party, the Brown Berets, and the American Indian Movement).  Within this historical and geographical context, organizers began from an explicitly anti-deficit perspective and strong critiques of a racist school system that was meant to miseducate

urban students of color.  The school's *Statement of Philosophy* reflects the connections made by founders between racism and capitalism:

> If public education is to meet the needs of young people in urban America today, an important fact must be acknowledged:  our cities have become battlegrounds our society is at war.  The adversaries in this struggle are the haves and the have-nots; the haves are represented by economically affluent primarily white middle and upper class individuals, and the have-nots are members of our society who occupy the lower economic stratum and who are primarily people of color.  This protracted and bitter urban civil war threatens to crush the beauty, genius and creative forces which are present in the diverse and rich communities in our cities today and to leave our society culturally, intellectually, and spiritually impoverished for many generations to come (PVUA Statement of Philosophy, 2006-07).

The ideology behind this mission was summed up for me by a veteran teacher, who explains that "basically, it's the acknowledgement that 'the system has failed you' instead of saying to [the student], 'You have failed the system.'"  This belief runs throughout the school and is illuminated by the frequent use of the term 'pushouts' instead of 'dropouts.'  This use of counterhegemonic discourse effectively reframes the issue of academic achievement, emphasizing the political over (or as) the personal, while reducing the impact of deficit models that stigmatize students from low-achieving groups – or as one teacher put it, the "blame and shame game."

In beginning from a student-centered perspective, the founding staff attempted to account for the needs created by economic, racial, and political inequity.  This was reflected in institutional structures such as a shorter class day and a wraparound focus on mental and physical health and participation in community and civic life.  Jude, a 5th-year teacher at the school, explained that:

> Traditionally, these kids weren't into school… A lot of the kids were facing issues of either being a single parent themselves, or being heads of households where they had to baby-sit all the time for their parents who were working.  They had all kinds of issues that prevented them from attending regularly, so creating a short day was important, where they get their courses concentrated into [longer class periods but fewer classes each day].

The curricular vision included political and cultural relevance; anti-deficit and what are today called antiracist ideologies linking racial and class struggles; political action through community partnerships and project-based learning; and respect for cultural and linguistic diversity.  As a response to internal criticisms of low expectations, college

entrance requirements and college preparation courses were instituted into the curriculum in the 1990's.

From the beginning, cultural competence for teachers and staff was a priority. Carol, a white teacher who has been at the school since its inception, began as a Vista volunteer, a domestic teaching corps that was the predecessor to today's AmeriCorps program. She has gone on to become a highly qualified science teacher, head of the science department, and an actively involved member of the school and district communities. She remembers her first day in the program, in 1973:

> It was just an idea at the time – just enough to get funding, but we were there to work on it. I remember this guy, the project Director had this idea, this whole plan – and he was kind of right – you had all these Vista volunteers were coming in from all over the country, you know with no idea what we were getting into – we had no sense of [Oakland]. So he had all these crazy activities for us to do. Like one time he gave us a quiz about slang – did we know what a 'crib' was, what the 'dozens' were... and of course most people didn't, including me. Now I know, but I didn't then."

This type of teacher training builds a foundation for what, in today's terminology, is called "culturally relevant" pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 2004). PVUA's model has been adapted for today's school community, which is primarily Black and Latin@ but also includes a sizeable Southeast Asian population, LGBTQ students, teachers, and families, Native American families, and an occasional middle-class white student whose parents are drawn to the school's constructivist pedagogy and political curriculum. Cultural relevance, then, does not mean that the white teacher – or any teacher – engages in a monolithic or static notion of culture. Rather, it is that teachers utilize content areas and cultural referents that are meaningful to their students, thereby 'decentering' the curriculum to include multiple perspectives:

> Specifically, culturally relevant teaching is a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes. These cultural referents are not merely vehicles for bridging or explaining the dominant culture; they are aspects of the curriculum in their own right (Ladson-Billings, 2004, p. 18).

Although cultural relevance was an important piece of the founding vision, it was equally important that teachers be able to make political connections between racism and capitalism. Carol's training reflects what Leonardo (2004) calls "quality education," wherein "critical educators assist students in mapping the contours of oppression through criticism, a process which entails both a language of critique and hope" (p. 16). In addition to learning slang and culture, it helped her to understand students' out of

school lives and connect to radical political struggles happening in the broader community:

> Or he had us just walk up and down streets and do a map of a neighborhood... I remember he had us going to – it's not there anymore, but it was the headquarters of the Black Panther Party. And on the walls they had the pictures of all the martyrs… it was pretty sobering to see all these pictures of all these young men who were dead.

> I just remember walking down the streets and realizing I was just in a world that I didn't know at all. So it was a good experience… it taught me how much I didn't know.

*Shared vs. neoliberal accountability*

Oakland's first black Superintendent, Marcus Foster, was highly committed to the Urban Academies project. Foster was celebrated for mending broken alliances between public schools, community members, state and city government, and the business community (Spencer, 2012). In the years before he came into office, voters had rejected several critical bond measures, effectively divesting from the school district and demonstrating a crisis of faith in public education (McCorry, 1978). Using the language of "shared accountability," Foster was able to mobilize a broad and diverse coalition to create a massive reinvestment of capital into the district. In 1973, the year that PVUA was formed, this alliance helped pass a $43 million bond measure by a vote of 66% (Spencer, p. 215), thereby revitalizing the community's commitment to collective responsibility for public education.

Spencer (2012) argues that this push for accountability and achievement by an African-American superintendent shows that "the emphasis on academic achievement and accountability in our era is not simply a counter-reaction or corrective to the equity agenda of the 1960s; it is also in part – a *legacy* of the black freedom movement" (p. 188). The popularity of the idea of accountability within under-resourced communities of color is undeniable and understandable. However, Foster's notion of shared accountability was much different from the punitive, test-based privatization measures of today. He developed a language that demanded support from business and community institutions and created structures to support community participation. He also espoused a "forceful critique" of a narrower kind of accountability that blamed the schools (p. 188). Shared accountability involved an explicit understanding of the role of capital, compensatory education as redistribution of capital, and a focus on creative uses of capital.

Apple (1999) theorizes that under neoliberalism, people's understanding of themselves shifts from seeing themselves as members of a collective group to identifying as self-interested individuals:

For both neoliberals and neoconservatives, the educational task here is to change people's understanding of themselves as members of collective groups. Instead, to support a market economy we need to encourage everyone to think of themselves as individuals who always act in ways that maximize their own interests. At the same time, there is an additional ideological goal. People also need to be encouraged to accept that it is entirely "appropriate" to have winners and losers in the system (p. 23).

High-stakes accountability is emblematic of this shift. As described in the next sections, Neoliberal reform shifts the definition of accountability to one that is individualistic, top-down, and coercive. The following table contrasts the two forms:

Chart 1: *Shared vs. Neoliberal Accountability*

| "Shared" Accountability | Neoliberal Accountability |
| --- | --- |
| Demands that all stakeholders provide or work towards increasing material support for public education | Stakeholders are invited and incentivized to provide intellectual/creative capital in the form of "innovation" |
| Accounts for structural poverty and racism; aligns with "downwardly redistributive" policies | Demands personal responsibility for countering the effects of poverty and racism |
| Productive: assessment, funding, and structures for participation are generative | Punitive: assessment, funding, and participation are part of or in response to sanctions and rewards |

NCLB required all state departments of education to identify "schools in need of improvement" based on test scores. The plan, which was essentially a sanction and reward system, was termed "School Improvement, Corrective Action, and Restructuring." Schools were required to meet "Adequate Yearly Progress" (AYP) test-score goals, which were structured so that an "underperforming" school must meet goals that increase each year. In a punitive model, top-down accountability was enforced through increasing sanctions against schools that fail to meet requirements. The following table demonstrates the increasingly punitive, market-driven sanctions threatened by NCLB against schools in "Program Improvement" (PI) status, beginning with school choice in the form of intra-district transfer. As with the majority of schools under NCLB, PVUA went through years of PI status without the corresponding corrective actions. Most sanctions did not materialize due to lack of funding, organizational capacity, and political will at the district and state levels; however, the constant threat was a structuring force within almost all American public schools under NCLB.

Table 1: *Consequences by Year of "Needs Improvement" Status*

| Consequence | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| School Transfer Options | X | X | X | X | X |
| Supplemental Services | | X | X | X | X |
| Corrective Action | | | X | X | X |
| Restructuring (Planning) | | | | X | X |
| Restructuring (implementation) | | | | | X |

After two years, "failing" schools received "technical assistance" in the form of mandatory standardized corporate training, as well as minimal and highly restricted funding for "supplemental services" such as tutoring and test preparation. These services were required to be subcontracted out to a list of pre-approved vendors as part of what Burch (2009) calls "second-layer" or "hidden" privatization.  Title I funds were also redirected for these services, often from the school budget.  Year three involved "corrective action," including the hiring of outside consultants, firing staff, and redirecting funding.

At the time of this study, PVUA was in its fourth year of "Program Improvement" status, after which it would have been subject to corrective actions. Potential actions under NCLB included contracting to an outside trustee or managerial corporation, implementing new curriculum, decreasing management authority at the school level, replacing staff, extending the school year or day, or direct state takeover. Lists of approved sources included private schools and for-profit corporate programs such as Kaplan, which specialize in standardized test preparation, professional tutoring from publishing companies, and courses in the implementation of standardized curriculum.  The most common method of restructuring a school involves turning it into a charter or handing it over to an "Education Management Organization" (EMO). Studies have shown that neither charterizing nor closing down schools leads to higher student achievement (Gill et al., 2007; de la Torre & Gwynne, 2009).

*Structural devitalization*

The demands of NCLB produced a number of concrete changes in structure and practice at PVUA.  One small but important example is that a group of parents planned to completely revamp the physical space by cleaning and decorating the building.  This never happened, as the limited time and labor of the small group were redirected towards more immediate needs, such as creating testing 'buy-in' and cooking breakfast on test days.

A deeper example of structural devitalization can be seen in the shifting use of the "Counselor-Teacher-Mentor" model, or "CTM," which is crucial to PVUA's dropout prevention mission.  Students meet twice a day, at the beginning and end, in an Advisory session where they pick up contracts, discuss progress, and check in with their CTM about their goals and reflections from the day.  The goal of the CTM model was to

provide a point of intervention for wraparound services, so that students are not pushed out of school by virtue of neglect. This relationship is often the glue that holds students' academic lives together in the face of dramatic instabilities at home and in the world. The model has been adopted as a best practice by various charter and small schools throughout the district, many of which have sent teams to observe at PVUA. In the context of scarce resources and the complex bureaucracy of modern schools, a lack of well-trained support staff also means that the CTM has an increasingly demanding administrative role. The previous year, in response to the focus group findings discussed at the end of this chapter, the school staff decided to devote morning CTM sessions to testing practice and motivation. Test preparation was incorporated into Wednesday elective classes and a Saturday course.

A third example of structural devitalization was the derailing of a "Leadership Action Research Project" (LARP) developed by a teacher in an administrator credentialing program. The goal was to revisit, update, and renew the role of the school's social justice vision for relevance to today's students. This plan was developed through a series of teacher, student, administrator, and board member focus groups; the teacher leader determined that while there was significant support for the original vision, a whole-school realignment was needed in order to challenge a 'softening' of the political focus. She documented her early experiences in a report:

> Today, there are no such mass movements occurring and our veteran staff tends to become nostalgic for the past and complacent in the present. Our new teachers claim to have been excited about joining [PVUA] because of the philosophy of the school. However... there is no real plan for how to ensure its implementation… Times have changed since the era of the Civil Rights Movement and the 70's liberation movements. Existing and continuing to thrive in the era of high stakes testing and the No Child Left Behind Act presents a set of new challenges and [we] must prepare for the present reality.
>
> [This project] presents an opportunity for teachers to begin thinking about what they do in the classroom and how the philosophy intersects with their teaching. I left the meeting feeling energized. One staff member, Jamil, commented that it was refreshing to have finally participated in a substantive meeting… (J.D., personal communication, January 22, 2017).

The entire staff was actively involved in the project; they met as a group and by department to create "ESLRs," or "Expected Schoolwide Learning Results." This process was aligned with WASC (Western Association of Schools and Colleges, the accreditation body for K-12 schools and colleges in California) requirements. I observed the ESLR process and was eager to trace its evolution through the school year.

The Leadership Action Research Project was an opportunity for the staff to momentarily pull back from 'survival mode,' where meeting multiple, complex accountability requirements takes precedence over in-depth discussion of pedagogy or educational vision. However, although the project was one of accountability (to the mission and vision of the school) as well as a positive movement toward critical reflection on the practice of social and racial justice, it was pushed aside by the work of learning about, assessing, and trying to meet impossible test-score requirements. There was simply no time for follow-through. When I asked for the ESLRs that were developed, I was given a messy stack of handwritten ideas – small dreams deferred. This is exemplary of the ways in which all-consuming accountability reforms co-opt the time, labor, and creative potential of school staff, and of the ways in which structural and ideological devitalization are related.

**Ideological Devitalization and the Reconstruction of Participation**

In the following sections, I focus on a school meeting that epitomizes the ways in which progressive discourses and practices are co-opted in order to gain consent for the accountability system. The meeting was seen by school community members as an opportunity to help "save the school" by meeting with district representatives. Different parents came with different beliefs and agendas, but it was clear that the parents believed that they were participating in a two-sided conversation. What they got was precisely the opposite – while the conversation was framed as a learning experience focusing on "mutual accountability," it was really about harnessing and redirecting parent, student, and teacher activism. As part of a new strategy to raise test scores, the Oakland Unified School District had recently begun a program to "educate" parents about the accountability system and to "get everyone on board" with its goals. PVUA was one of the first sites to request the new service, which was essentially a meeting between the school community (parents, students, staff) and district representatives. A district official told teachers that representatives would come out to talk about accountability, to "introduce the terms and acronyms," and to talk about the school report card (a district-mandated form of accountability created to help parents evaluate and choose between competing schools).

Approximately 25 parents, 10 students/alumni, and 5-7 staff members were in attendance, with four district representatives who introduced themselves as consultants and parent liaisons. A teacher began by stating, "The purpose of this meeting is to get as many parents, alumni, and students involved in helping the current PVUA students to increase their performance on the California Standards Test, or CST" (fieldnotes, January 31, 2008).

Parents were relatively quiet for the first half of the meeting, while the representatives taught them what a percentage meant and showed them (but did not explain) a list of acronyms. A parent from a wealthier, more integrated 'successful school' facilitated a role-play around mutual accountability between the school, parents, teacher, and student. In a short discussion afterwards, parents complimented PVUA for

the accessibility of teachers and compared it to larger schools that had never returned their phone calls or known when their student was absent. The representatives expressed surprise that complaints were not directed at the school staff: it was clear that they had come prepared to deal with antagonistic relationships between the school and its families.

The representatives then continued to quiz the audience. Some students knew what the CAHSEE (California High School Exit Exam) was, while almost no one knew about "A-G" requirements for college admissions. This was unfortunate, given the school's college prep emphasis, but not really surprising, since the volunteer college counselor from UC Berkeley's Office of College Guidance had not yet been to the school that year. The district reps did not go on to explain, even briefly, either the CAHSEE or A-G requirements. This leads to the question of how they perceived their own job and their goals for the presentation. Was it to inform? To motivate? They were not doing a good job at either of those, and it seemed that they were creating a barrier to parents' bureaucratic access by pointing out what they didn't know and then not providing structured information. Presenting a list of acronyms does not in any way meet the stated goals of "educating parents" and "helping students to achieve."

There was significant school site data missing from the district and site records, making it difficult to talk about test-score achievement in terms of real numbers. After a stern questioning from the representatives about why the numbers were missing, it was clarified that the problem was on the district side. The district representatives were quick to make excuses, saying that the struggling district should be "given a break" because they were undergoing a difficult transition. They went on to suggest that parents organize to write a letter to the district requesting the missing data. This action was framed as one of parents organizing to enact their power: "I'm sure that a strong staff like this like this can call on these active parents and say we need you to sign this letter… they can't ignore an organized set of demands" (fieldnotes, January 31, 2008).

This language reflects that of social justice work – organizing to put forward a set of demands. Deploying this trope redirects that power away from more critical, political, and aspirational projects. It frames educational justice as fulfilling administrative tasks and filling resource gaps, and promotes largely procedural forms of democracy over more substantive versions. By appropriating the language of equity and social justice, neoliberal discourse works to assimilate a major obstacle to agendas for privatization and standardization, and to get parents to actively participate in high-stakes accountability, thereby creating and signaling consent to the regime.

Dealing with the bureaucracy of accountability shifts parent time and work towards relatively meaningless ends. The narrative that labels this as meaningful parent involvement is devitalizing to the tradition of critical multiculturalism; it serves to prevent the school community from manifesting more direct and conscious involvement. Remembering that many of these students and some of their parents have participated in political action such as walkouts, teach-ins, protests, and community organizing, we can see this act as attempting to harness that power. At its best, this is frustrating; at its worst, it is reproductive and oppressive.

Development theorists and other critics have criticized the role of "participation" and "empowerment" in reform projects (Gregory, 2000; Leal, 2007; Miraftab, 2004). Greaves & Brownley focus on "points of intersection and gatekeeping" to show, in part, that "the notion within participatory theory that participation means a horizontal flow of involvement, communication and power is inadequate" (p. 3).   Anderson (1999) describes participation as a "broad discourse that has come to be what poststructuralists call a "floating signifier," meaning the term participation often is appropriated by different groups promoting different agendas" (p. 191).  Boner (2011) contrasts the neoliberal use of "participation" with its use as a tool for racial and economic liberation:

> Freire and Macedo's (1987) practice of "Reading the World" begins from an explicit critique of inequality and capitalism.  In participation as a set of "best practices," one reads the world for individual opportunity.  Where education was linked to political struggles, it is now linked to participation in the neoliberal world order.  And where Freire emphasized a pedagogy that de- and re- centered knowledge, the responsibility (and the consequences) have now shifted from school and society to teacher and student (p. 167).

These critiques became glaringly obvious in the exchanges below, where parents' analysis and objections were repeatedly deflected by the district representatives.

Following the official presentation, parents began to discuss the (im)possibility of meeting the state's goals.  This evolved into a broader critique of the end-goal of the accountability system that involved discussion about the meaning and purposes of schooling.  The following set of exchanges (presented chronologically) illuminates some tensions between two accounts of 'social justice,' 'accountability,' and 'good quality' education and assessment.

**Exchange #1:**
**1a**  Parent 1: …it's not just about our school meeting last year's requirement.  We have to hit that plus this year's requirement, and so it's really doubling up… and that's the kinds of things we don't talk about, is that those are the kinds of things that aren't said out there… and so really it's like us trying to meet this goal… once you hit this point where you're in Program Improvement, really trying to catch that ball that's going down the hill… we all know how impossible that is.
         …
**1b**  District Parent Liaison:  Right, so… you could show really good improvement at that point and still not get to that target that's now 2 or 3 years out.

**1c**  Parent 2 - And then it gets to be a harder and harder target – if you miss AYP for one year that's okay, but by the next year you're in PI status and then they keep moving the targets.

**1d**  Parent 3 – But the other part on this whole thing is, I mean, I really hate having to be here dealing with trying to get these kids to pass these standardized tests, in the face of having schools destroyed if they don't do it ((agreement from audience))… my kids were in a middle school with an excellent program… just like this school, it's excellent and they were doing just fine.  But you know, No Child Left Behind comes along and they just *sterilize* that school and that's the end of the program.

**1d**  Parent 1 – well that's the design, it's really kind of designed that way.  That's what some people are saying – that it's basically designed for people to fail and then basically destroy most of the schools.

**1e**  Rep 1:  Yeah, and I kind of fight that one every day, wondering if that's really designed, or you know, made that way (fieldnotes, January 31, 2008).

In Exchange #1, parents raise legitimate concerns about their chances for making their API (Academic Progress Index) targets.  The metaphors of "moving targets," "chasing a ball down a hill," and "putting out fires" describe the fact that the API goal continues to increase with no reference to the school's actual growth.  Underlying this view is the perspective that power relationships work to stunt the agency of the school community, redirecting both material and human resources towards a monolithic goal of keeping pace with the moving targets.  This understanding echoes critics who suggest that it is a 'setup for failure'– that the law was essentially constructed to create the conditions for privatization.  This sentiment was echoed by members of the school community.

**Exchange #2:**
**2a**  Rep 1:  And you know, the only thing that helps me out is just – just being there.  Because I share that sentiment, but I also know that – schools – every school, no matter the income level, who's in the school, they can turn these numbers around, and there is something to be said about national standards – that it's nice to know that, you know, a child in the suburbs is getting that same level of education as the child in the urban school.

**2b**  Parent 2:  I don't agree with that, I think people are teaching to the test and that's why people are passing this stuff.  They're not teaching good education – stuff that kids can learn and use in their life – they're teaching to the test so that they can make the scores.  I know that's true over at the **** Charter School, they teach to the test.  You teach to the test, you teach to the test and of course your grades are going to go up.  But if you're not learning anything that's stimulating, that's teaching you about world and life – you're only learning how to take the test, it's not gonna get you far…(fieldnotes, January 31, 2008).

In Exchanges (1b) and (1d), the district parent liaison expresses personal agreement with the idea that the system seems set up for failure. Back in her bureaucratic role (2a), however, she echoes the official discourse of NCLB by invoking racial and economic equity. The central framing of the issue shifts but remain intact: public schooling is "the problem" and the increasing "gap" between rich and poor is one of achievement between races and failure of schools – not one of distribution of resources, structural racism, or the expanding privatization agendas that reproduce these inequalities.

The representative's argument hinges on the idea that "*all children*" will get an equal education when "*no matter who's in the school,* they can turn these numbers around" *[emphases added,* to show where *race is encoded* into the discourse]. This argument conflates equity with competition – the fact that all schools are held to the same (external) standards is sufficient for equity. This is held to be true even if those standards contradict the best and/or community derived interests of schools and their students, or even if it is impossible for the community to meet those standards without significantly compromising other parts of its program, such as a liberatory agenda. In a Marxist framing, we see this contradiction is resolved dialectically – the tension between social- and racial- justice arguments and the punitive, devitalizing effects of high-stakes accountability is subsumed under the category of a "new" civil rights – the fact that all schools are held to the same standards is equal to justice. The larger contradiction, between this form of 'justice' and the continuing opportunity gap, is not addressed.

High-stakes accountability policies force the school into what is essentially a reactive position, where they must constantly respond to the threat of force. Although members of the school community attempt to meet accountability policies to the best of their ability, there is a point at which meeting these requirements demands a fundamental restructuring of the school and its vision. In Exchange #2(b), a parent responds to the representative with a counter-analysis, challenging the premises of her social justice argument in terms of what is *not* being taught and assessed. Parents challenge the assumption that the system is set up for their children's success.

The parents' view of testing reflects that of Critical Race Theorists, who point out that:

> The assessment game is merely a validation of the dominant culture's superiority…. From a CRT perspective, current assessment schemes continue to instantiate inequity and validate the privilege of those who have access to cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1977). Indeed, the entire history of standardized testing has been one of exclusion rather than diagnosis and school improvement (Ladson-Billings, 2004, p. 60).

Although they are not using explicit racial language, race is encoded in the parents' focus on a stimulating, intrinsically rewarding education that involves life/survival skills and centers on the specific needs of urban students of color. It is notable that the

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charter school posed as a counterexample by the parent in Exchange #2(b) has an ethnocentric (Native American) name and claims to create social justice through a strict basic-skills, test-focused pedagogy. The school has won accolades for its testing success, but is highly controversial because of its founders' strict disciplinary practices, conservative views, and explicit and targeted promotion of free-market capitalism. The founder implemented a strict, punitive, back-to-basics pedagogy that denounced culturally responsive practices as well as ideas such as self-esteem, bilingual education, minority holidays, affirmative action, or extracurricular enrichment (Hemingway, 2012). Since its founding, which included several Native families, the school has lost its Native population and now serves mainly first-generation Asian students.

Lipman (2004) notes that people make these linkages because they are there. Despite attempts to obscure, ignore, and marginalize their dissent and participation, the threat of their school closing down has parents' attention. They notice patterns, understand power relationships, and make connections to broader politics and ideologies. This was a set of highly active, politicized families, some of who are alumni of the school. They articulated a powerful set of concerns that deserved to be heard, debated, and attended to. Were they given the time and the luxury to advocate for themselves and their students, a shift in the discourse might have been possible.

*Marketizing solutions and deleting race*

Market-driven discourses and strategies were dominant in this meeting, articulating with practices of participation and collective action while "deleting" racial critique. The end of the meeting included a presentation by Chris, a parent leader who had volunteered to lead research on the best way to raise test scores. Chris deployed market-driven discourse in a remarkably overt and consistent way, stating that he approached the endeavor as "market research." He formed focus groups to learn about students' experiences at PVUA, thereby enacting the participatory practices that are part of the school's tradition. Chris found that students had "extremely positive" school experiences, but had negative perceptions of the testing process that involved a racial and power critique:

> There was overwhelming positive feedback from the students about the school. They are obviously engaged in the school, they are engaged with the teachers, they like what's going on in the classroom… They like how the teachers engage the students to help one another – to do project type of work… they really believe that this is a community. So I thought that was kind of touching, actually."

> So what's going on with the tests? The students got really vocal. One thing that really stuck out for me is the students really have an impression that the standardized test has a race-based part of it. And even though they might take it to the extreme – *it is true* [that there is a racial component]

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*(emphasis added).* That's a fact. And it's good to have facts, but we can stay in a conceptual conversation all day long. We need to come back and sit in front of the dotted paper... And the way to do this is to start by changing a paradigm" (fieldnotes, January 31, 2008).

In essence, Chris agreed with the students' analysis. It is true, he says, that race and racism are factors in the students' success. However, the racial problem is one that can be overcome through a "paradigm shift," or a change in students' consciousness around race. The true fact of racism is to be overcome individually, through the personal responsibility that leads to sitting in front of the dotted paper.

Chris then explained the plan for success, as developed by a small group of parents who came together with the explicit purpose of raising test scores. The plan consisted of four major changes:

1) Utilize homeroom classes to reeducate students about why the standardized test is important to them (create 'buy-in')
2) Delete conversation directed at the historical racism and bias inherent in the test
3) Develop a leadership training directed at student ownership and personal responsibility
4) Aggressively sign up all students into pre-test preparation.

This plan was created with the best of intentions, out of a genuine loyalty to and concern for the school. It was a response to the very real threat of school closure, and it reflects a strong belief in the ability of individual students and teachers to overcome racism and succeed in school. The contradiction, however, is that 'buying in' to this system, and to the discourses that promote it, violate the school's founding vision and the current politics that were borne from that vision. The neoliberal reconstruction of common sense relocates the problem to within the school – and not in the broader structures of systemic and institutional oppression. The paradigm shift, then, was an essential reconstruction of the meaning of racial justice.

The type of student "buy-in" called for reflects Valenzuela's (1999) distinction between *authentic* and *aesthetic* forms of "caring" about student success:

Teachers expect students to demonstrate caring about schooling with abstract, or *aesthetic* commitment to ideas or practices that purportedly lead to achievement. Immigrant and U.S. – born youth, on the other hand, are committed to an *authentic* form of caring that emphasizes relations of reciprocity between teachers and students (p. 61).

Although there are clear reasons that students resist the testing system, those reasons are taken as obstacles to their success rather than as a form of caring about the

true nature of the system.  Following Chris' plan precludes using the testing phenomenon as a 'teachable moment,' or a more authentic form of caring where students could possibly delve deeper into their analysis of the possible racial and social contexts of high-stakes testing.

A final quote from Chris encapsulates the hegemony of market discourse in responses to high-stakes accountability:

> ultimately what we would like to do is try to put together a marketing campaign for the school, to energize the parents.  Just like we sell products, we are going to sell the test to the students and internally to the school. But the students are going to help participate in that … what I know is going to happen – with all of our efforts and all of our energies directed toward a common goal – is the test grades are gonna go up.  Cause it's – I mean, many of us are business people, and that's all it takes, right? (fieldnotes, January 31, 2008).

**Conclusion**

As a whole, the school/district meeting epitomizes an important moment in the discursive deployment of equity and social justice.  Two "multiculturalist" ideologies are represented here, both of which have significant implications for the role of race in the struggle for those goals.  The first is an ideological tradition with its roots in the founding vision, which might today be called critical multiculturalism.  This vision entails a recognition of the institutional and political nature of oppression and is reflected by some members of the school community.  In this conception, the school community is able to move beyond the meritocratic solution and instead pose a critical analysis of power.  On the other hand, a language of "neoliberal multiculturalism" (reflected by the district representatives) portrays high-stakes accountability as a project of racial justice.  In this framing (as described earlier), aligning with these processes is the key to a postracist world of freedom and opportunity, and the forceful, punitive policies of NCLB are a necessary part of making that transition.  In this framing, NCLB is a humanitarian project, where a "benevolent multicultural invader" (Melamed, 2006, p.1) intervenes because the local (democratic) system has failed.

This racial-historical process is dialectical.  By appearing to foreground race (through measures such as disaggregating data and punishing those schools that appear to fail urban students of color), neoliberal discourse *appears* to reconcile some of the contradictions between 'colorblind' racial liberalism (the "melting pot" of cultural traditions) and critical multiculturalism (political struggle).  Neoliberal multiculturalism differs from the previous iteration of liberal multiculturalism in that it "binds official anti-racism to state policy in a way that precludes challenging global capitalism – in other words, it converts the struggle for equality into a battle for visibility" (p. 17).  In this case, a highly visible race for test scores competes with addressing more fundamental causes of the achievement gap, such as poverty and cultural/linguistic hegemony.  However, the

pushback from the school community demonstrated that the uncritical co-optation of "multiculturalism" has "forced scholars and activists to begin pushing the boundaries of multicultural education and argue against the ways dominant ideologies are able to appropriate the multicultural discourse" (Ladson-Billings, 2004, p. 52).

Bonilla-Silva (2006) explains that

> an ideology is dominant if most members (dominate and subordinate) of a social system have to accommodate their views vis-à-vis that ideology. If an ideology dominates the space of what people think is feasible and thinkable, and even provides the parameters to oppose the status quo, then that ideology is dominant (p. 152).

The efforts of both the parent group and the district representatives can be seen as an attempt to bring about an overt change in ideology for the sake of the school's survival. However, that change would compromise not just the integrity, but the very identity of Pancho Villa Urban Academy. PVUA's struggle can be seen as a microcosm of the struggle between neoliberalism and a historically specific movement for racial and social justice. The battleground is on the terrain of "civil rights," and the neoliberal project has a cohesive strategy in its attemp'ts to claim that terrain.

McDermott and Hall (2007) explain that "the entrepreneurial shift" embodied by Chris' statement entails "newly oppressive configurations of power, expertise, and regimes of regulation and control. The discourse… defines the terms of debate and keep claims to full citizenship from those without testable knowledge" (p. 13). This study agrees with that analysis but reminds us that power is a changeable set of relationships, constantly reproduced by the limits of what we believe is possible. Although PVUA's commitment to its founding vision is strong and it has substantial community and activist support, it is clear that structural change (while crucial) is not the only front for racial struggle. If capitalism's ability to shape-shift depends on its ability to deploy the concept of race, then a successful struggle for justice must involve explicit and targeted discursive uses of race. Those who practice critical education politics should pay special attention to the way that the relationship between race and social justice is conceived and deployed.

## Conclusion

This research sought to understand both the coercive and consensual mechanisms through which neoliberal school reform became hegemonic. This work required reaching across a broad set of terrains that operate at different 'scales' of neoliberal governmentality. In Chapter Two, I examined how the Broad and Gates foundations attempted to shape public consciousness through a national marketing campaign. In Chapter Three, I traced the neoliberal processes of disaster-making and reconstruction at the district level; and in Chapter Four, I examined how neoliberal accountability operated on individual and community-based subjectivities within a school site.

Taken together, these terrains represent the multiple scales at which one person might encounter neoliberal reform. We can imagine one actor moving through all of these contexts, experiencing crisis at every level, with a prescribed set of solutions and predetermined venues for engagement and participation. Each scale reinforces Margaret Thatcher's (in)famous notion that "There Is No Alternative" to neoliberal capitalism (McLean, 2001). As a whole, they provide a picture of how the citizen-subject of a neoliberal order is created:

> [n]eoliberalism carries a social analysis that, when deployed as a form of governmentality, reaches from the soul of the citizen-subject to education policy to practices of empire. Neoliberal rationality, while foregrounding the market, is not only or even primarily focused on the economy; it involves extending and disseminating market values to all institutions and social action, even as the market itself remains a distinctive player (Brown, 2005, p. 39).

The projects shared broad structural characteristics that make them ideal cases for a study of neoliberal reform. First, each case involved significant and expensive material restructuring and the redistribution of resources. Second, each was "market-driven": it adhered to market mechanisms such as competition, deregulation, efficiency, austerity, and technical rationality and hinges on notions of scarcity, meritocracy, and individual responsibility. Finally, each case embodied a racial project (Omi & Winant, 1994) in the form of an appeal to racial justice.

Chapter Two used Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to analyze the *ED in 08: Strong American Schools* campaign, a $60+ million public relations campaign funded by the Broad and Gates foundations. Purporting to have no goals but 'raising the issue of education,' the campaign equated support for public education with a vaguely-articulated set of positions, obscuring its own privatization agenda and the deep implications of its policy platform. The CDA revealed a strong continuity of the themes and language of *A Nation at Risk* (1983), which can be seen as marking the beginning of the crisis narrative in education. This narrative relies on themes of *certainty* and *threat,* which operate as meta-narratives for school reformers throughout this dissertation. There is certainty of

the problem and its causes, of the solution, and certainty that the solution is working. The problem is isolated within schools, and the restructuring mechanisms offered by Broad and Gates are the best and only possible cure. Poverty and other 'failures' in life are posed as external and unsolvable – which is ironic considering that these multi-billionaires shelter essential taxes within these projects and continue to oppose authentically redistributive or resource-providing economic policy. The role of race, or racial justice, is represented by its invisibility in this project. Consistent with their broad, national target audience of liberal and centrist voters, NAR and ED in 08 employed a colorblind liberal discourse around an ongoing national crisis and the need for "change."

Chapter Three examined how the reform network utilized "disaster capitalism" (Klein, 2007) to take over and materially restructure the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD). This work demonstrated how three key nodes of power – the Broad Foundation, Teach for America, and a local advocacy organization – converged to destroy and 'rebuild' a gentrifying urban school district into one more appropriate for a neoliberal "global city" (Lipman, 2011). Following the national model of the reform network, these organizations worked to remake the school system into a (corporate) portfolio model managed by network actors. This chapter described the reform network's role in a number of concrete projects, including appointing administrators; affecting the composition and processes of the school board; the privatization of district land for the purposes of gentrification; and the creation of a "shadow state" within which non-state actors gain disproportionate access to democratic institutions and processes.

Within the state takeover and forced rebuilding, we see overlapping uses of both liberal colorblindness and neoliberal multiculturalism. While reform discourse is loaded with talk of empowerment, revolution, and the new civil rights, it narrows, disempowers, and neutralizes these terms into a virtually meaningless rhetorical device. At the same time, reformers imagine a community as "wiped-out," a symbolism that points to the construction of the public as a (racialized, inefficient, unsophisticated) obstacle to "good education." Given this framing, the conversion of democratic participation by a majority-white reform organization into one of community 'engagement' toward predetermined outcomes is no surprise.

Chapter Four traced the experience of a politically-rooted school community in navigating high-stakes neoliberal accountability systems. This experience was framed by the ongoing threat of punitive privatization, where a failure to meet almost impossible test scores would result in the closure or reconstitution of the school. In particular, this chapter illuminated how race-conscious, progressive, and participatory discourses and practices were appropriated in specific, historically situated ways that indexed (Ochs, 1992) the site's politics, while simultaneously promoting an agenda that opposed its founding vision. These processes led to a dilution and redirection – or "devitalization" (McDermott & Hall, 2007) – of the school's political pedagogy and demonstrated the work of neoliberal multiculturalism in framing a punitive, privatizing accountability regime as benevolent. The chapter offered the example of Marcus Foster's notion of 'shared accountability' as an alternative.

Several key processes appeared across these scales, emerging as general findings in the study. First, school reform is steeped in processes of disaster-making and reconstruction that reframe and normalize market-driven reform as necessary and inevitable. Second, school reformers use well-funded, carefully constructed campaigns to deploy these reform discourse in ways that are appropriate to its target audience. This points to a marketing savvy drawn directly from the corporate world, and more importantly, to the reconstruction of families as consumers rather than as participants in a democratic institution. Third, these discourses re-articulate the meaning of 'racial justice' in relation to the "subject-positions" (Hall, 1988) of its target market, maneuvering between liberal colorblindness and neoliberal multiculturalism in relation to the racial positioning of that market.

Finally, while there is a broad and diffuse network of education reformers creating and implementing these policies at all levels, the role of venture philanthropy is formative to neoliberal reform. Each project involves significant and expensive material restructuring, massive personnel costs, and funding for marketing and promotion. The wealthiest few Americans pour billions of (tax-sheltered) dollars into these efforts (Barkan, 2011), gaining legitimacy for themselves as altruistic, benevolent, and neutral promoters of "good" education. However, as evidenced by the site-based budget cuts in Oakland, this funding is not redistributed in service of public school students; it is merely reinvested in the network. It is important to remember that "venture philanthropy" is a contradiction in terms: the worth of the 'venture' is defined by a 'return on investment' as defined by its investors, not its recipients. That return in defined by its ability to open up the education market and to redirect public money into the broader corporate community.

This research demonstrates how capitalism continuously reshapes itself in the face of its own ongoing failure. As in liberal capitalism, neoliberal capitalism absorbs and reframes challenges to its legitimacy: in the current moment, we see the pushback on charters and privatization more generally, not just from white liberals but from people of color who put renewed emphasis on the relationship between racism and capitalism. In 2016, both the NAACP (Press Release, 2016) and the Movement for Black Lives (MBL) (Stith & Rivera, 2016) called for a moratorium on charter schools, largely on the basis of opposing privatization. One of MBL's major policy demands was "An End to the Privatization of Education and Real Community Control by Parents, Students and Community Members of Schools Including Democratic School Boards and Community Control of Curriculum, Hiring, Firing, and Disciplinary Policies" (Stith & Rivera, 2016). The platform names the major venture philanthropies, making clear the inauthenticity of charter "choice" and connecting privatization to the school to prison pipeline:

> …privatization strips black people of the right to self-determine the kind of education their children receive. This systematic attack is coordinated by an international education privatization agenda. Bankrolled by billionaire philanthropists such as Bill and Melinda Gates, the Walton family and

Edyth and Eli Broad, and aided by the departments of Education at the federal, state, and local level.

Using mayoral control and state takeover, they impose their experimental, market-based approach to school reform. Key stakeholders [are ignored]… This leaves room for corporations, lobbyists, and big philanthropy to play influential roles on education policy at the local, state, and federal level where their money can buy access into a cash-strapped system. Their aims are to undermine Black democracy and self-determination, destroy organized labor, and decolor education curriculum, while they simultaneously overemphasize Standardized testing, and use school closures to disproportionately disrupt access to education in Black communities (Stith & Rivera, p. 1).

The MBL platform also connects school reform to the criminalization, hyper-policing, and disproportionate suspension and expulsion of Black students. In making these clear and explicit connections, including calling out venture-philanthropists and Teach for America by name, the platform makes the school to prison pipeline visible. By insisting on a policy platform that accounts for the intersectional nature of oppression, MBL effectively challenges both colorblind liberal and neoliberal multicultural versions of racial justice. This is an important intervention in that it critiques not only the reformers, but also the white liberal powerholders who continue to sanction (or at best, do not take seriously) racism in public schools. In describing opposition to the platform, co-author Stith notes that "We're not the first to call for a moratorium [on charter schools and school closures]. It's been interesting to see who cheers for what. The teachers' unions applaud the privatization piece, but are silent on our call to get police out of schools" (quoted in Kamenetz, 2016).

In posing racial challenges and pressing on other contradictions, progressive and radical activism often defines the shape that capitalism takes on. However, while these critiques are often economic or racial (and increasingly, gendered), they are rarely intersectional. Both the MBL platform and the *Black Lives Matter* (http://blacklivesmatter.com/herstory/) moment within which it was born, are grounded in intersectional analyses of racial justice, economic structure, and hetero-patriarchy. These are important interventions that can serve as a model for a new type of progressive articulation – one that recognizes that power is a changeable set of relationships, constantly reproduced by the limits of what we believe is possible.

This study reminds us that capitalism is an unstable system that is itself in a constant, tenuous state of crisis. Social movements play a much larger role in that crisis than this dissertation has described – the anti-racist, pro-public schools activism of families, teachers, and community members in places like Oakland has been constant and powerful on many fronts. It is a sign of the power of this activism that reformers continue to pour billions of dollars into reframing their critiques and redirecting their

time and labor.  However, educational activism is fractured by race and class and reformers seize on those fractures to rearticulate their agendas.  In addition to the defensive struggle for resources and against privatization, a strong public movement requires the building of an explicit, intentional counterhegemonic discourse.  I hope that this research can contribute to that work.

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