INTRODUCTION: COMPETING DISCOURSES AND CONTRASTING VISIONS OF EDUCATION

Two recent news stories, one inviting sympathy for public school teachers and the other describing cynicism toward public education, offer important lessons about some of the current challenges facing K–12 public education in the United States. The first item, a 2018 cover story in *Time* magazine, detailed the insufficient pay, uncertain support, and difficult circumstances for many of the nation's public school teachers. The story noted that the pay gap between teachers and comparable professionals had reached record levels, with teachers experiencing "some of the worst wage stagnation of any profession." Beyond salaries, twenty-nine states spent less per student in inflation-adjusted dollars than before the late-2000s Great Recession. Dramatizing these trends, the circulation of this *Time* issue included three different magazine covers, each featuring an image of a female public school teacher (Latina, white, and African American) in a classroom or school building, and each superimposed with a troubling statement cast in the voice of the person pictured: "My child and I share a bed in a small apartment, I spend $1,000 on supplies and I've been laid off three times due to budget cuts. I'm a teacher in America"; "I have a master's degree, 16 years of experience, work two extra jobs and donate blood plasma to pay the bills. I'm a teacher in America"; "I have 20 years of experience, but I can't afford to fix my car, see a doctor for headaches or save for my child's future. I'm a teacher in America."[1]

The second item appeared in a local newspaper in Madison, Wisconsin. The 2019 article recounted the advice offered by an administrator at a religious school outside of Madison for families at the school to take advantage of a loophole in state law to qualify for private school vouchers. Under the law, families with children currently attending private schools could apply for vouchers only when their children enter specified grade levels. To work around this constraint, Community Christian School administrator Dale Lempa advised families that they could become eligible by enrolling their

children in a public school for as little as one day, since public school students could apply for vouchers across all K–12 grade levels.[2] Lempa remarked, "Our mission is to support parents in their responsibility to raise godly children. We therefore carry an obligation to provide parents with all the information they need to make the best decision for their own families. We will not make those decisions for them."[3] Presumably, staff at the Community Christian School have sought to fulfill their mission by identifying a legal loophole without rendering a judgment on the ethics of employing this loophole.

Considered together, these two news stories paint a picture of public school systems struggling to obtain sufficient resources for meeting basic needs and achieving critical goals while confronting the growth of an education marketplace funded, in important respects, by public tax dollars. Images of teachers living austerely and sacrificing personal needs for their students' learning comport with wider trends of cutting public education funding by reducing teacher pay and benefits. In 2011, Wisconsin governor Scott Walker argued that facilitating these outcomes by eliminating collective bargaining rights for public employees would give local school districts the flexibility they needed to adjust to funding cuts in the state's biennial budget.[4] Reduced state support in Wisconsin has shifted more of the burden of funding public schools to local districts, exacerbating the influence of local wealth disparities on children's education. Meanwhile, Walker and others, including former US secretary of education Betsy DeVos, have employed the language of freedom and choice to advocate for expanding education markets. The remark from the Community Christian School administrator aptly encapsulates this argument: because families know their children best, families should decide how to direct educational resources, through vouchers and other tools, to private and public options. Advocates also claim that this exercise of choice would reward successful schools, goad other schools to improve, and shutter failing schools. Further, they maintain that markets would appropriately position families as consumers choosing among education providers. In this light, the potential contradiction of engaging in disingenuous behavior to finance religious instruction resolves as consistent action attuned to the market principle of the pursuit of self-interest.

These news stories and their wider implications raise important questions about the state of US public education in an era of market hegemony that asserts its superiority as a model for public policy and public life. Intimating wider discourses, these stories express divergent values and commitments to public education. Engaging in public argument and campaigns that advance different visions, advocates from different backgrounds representing diverse

interests have broached questions about the very structure and purpose of public education. What is public education for? How should we imagine the proper relationship of schools and society? Who is responsible for public education? How should we value public education? What values should guide public education? These questions do not necessitate mutually exclusive answers that foreswear context-specific applications of particular tools, such as the use of residential and curricular enrollment strategies in some local districts.[5] However, as John Dewey wrote, we need to align our means and ends in light of the educational goals we wish to achieve. Without purposeful engagement, education reduces to rote training, offering little benefit to students, teachers, and communities.[6] We cannot avoid the question of what we want to accomplish, and this requires articulating a vision for education and human relationships.

Advocates from academia, government, business, and elsewhere have confidently asserted a vision of a bustling education marketplace that includes traditional public schools, private (religious and nonreligious) schools, charter schools, and more. As early proponents of a market vision, economists Milton Friedman and Rose Friedman co-authored a series of books challenging what they regarded as a restrictive government education monopoly.[7] In their early writings on this topic, the Friedmans supported government financing but not government provision of education. They drew a harder line in later writings, rejecting the very existence of compulsory education laws. In contemporary politics, figures like Scott Walker and Betsy DeVos have represented themselves as allied with parents against bureaucrats, urging education reforms that draw on the competitive spirit of the market and its embrace of individual freedom and choice. Corporations like the office-sharing company WeWork have financed and organized market-based schooling. In 2017, the company announced the creation of a private New York City elementary school for "conscious entrepreneurship." WeWork cofounder Rebekah Neumann asserted that "there's no reason why children in elementary schools can't be launching their own businesses." Along these lines, Neumann described herself as "rethinking the whole idea of what an education means."[8] As these examples suggest, a variety of people and organizations have articulated market visions for education in their advocacy at national, state, and local levels. As this discourse reveals, education markets value communication and public activity, but, as I argue in this book, these modes of communication and publicity diverge from practices of democratic deliberation and decision-making.[9]

Affirming different goals, alternative visions imagine public-spirited and democratically engaged schooling. Invoking historical perspectives and

contemporary advocacy, these visions acknowledge problems with educational institutions and practices but retort that only public action for public schools can foster vibrant relationships inside and outside of school buildings that position public schools as keystones of local communities. These advocates insist that a nondemocratic education will not advance democratic values of equality, freedom, and justice. From John Dewey to contemporary local people and organizations, these visions assert an essential, multilayered relationship of education and democracy. For his part, Dewey defined education and democracy as resonant, mutually informative and beneficial processes. Local advocates in Wisconsin and elsewhere have expressed a capacious vision of education as the coproduction of schools and communities, associating successful education with inclusive processes and participatory decision-making, community deliberation and accountability, and responsive and dynamic relationship networks. Indeed, a 2018 *Washington Post* story identified "a new public education movement" in Wisconsin involving "parents and teachers and local grassroots activists coming together to fight for the public schools in their communities."[10] For Dewey and contemporary local advocates, communication serves critical roles inside and outside the classroom. Dewey regarded communication itself as educative and thus central to the school experience.[11] Through a variety of communication modes—letters to the editor, marches, postcards, legislative testimony, public forums, group deliberation, campaigns, and more—local advocates have created and strengthened relationships among students, teachers, parents, and other community members. They have connected communities across Wisconsin in support of public education.

School Choice and the Betrayal of Democracy addresses the prospects for vibrant public discourses for a democratic education in an era of expanding markets and local modes of resistance. I bring together academic texts, federal and state legislative speeches and hearings, and ethnographic interviews with local advocates. As highly influential public intellectuals who wrote about education in the broader context of society, John Dewey and Milton Friedman and Rose Friedman serve as conceptual case studies, respectively, of democratically oriented and market-oriented visions of education. Although their visions differ, Dewey and the Friedmans recognized the power of education to facilitate, sustain, and promote particular forms and networks of human relationships. At a national level, Betsy DeVos has emerged as a high-profile critic of public education and an enthusiastic supporter of technological innovation directed toward expanding education markets. Although DeVos was not the first secretary of education to push for market-based reforms,

she was represented in media and policy circles as the least "public"—first among education secretaries never to have attended a public school nor to have sent a child to a public school.[12] At the state level, Wisconsin has pursued legislative innovations in implementing vouchers to support education markets, initially through bipartisan legislation in the early 1990s directed at Milwaukee, and more recently through partisan efforts to expand vouchers statewide. Serving in a representative democracy, state legislators nevertheless have employed nondemocratic means to achieve market expansion. At the local level, I worked with Kelly Jensen in summer 2019 to conduct interviews with thirty-seven local public school advocates across Wisconsin.[13] In these interviews, advocates explained the importance of relating and critically engaging education, democracy, and community. Together, these cases reveal textured, multivocal discourses of democracy, markets, and education.

Democratic Relationships, Publics, and Education

In my recent work, I have characterized publics as networks of relationships that include local, direct interactions as well as indirect connections that sustain wide-ranging, large-scale discourses and discussions.[14] A polysemous term connoting a range of related but distinct ideas, "public" does not abide by singular definitions. In advancing a perspective of public as a network of relationships, I seek not to circumscribe its meaning but to illuminate the advantages of focusing on relationships—which give publics their energy, dynamism, and productive force—for understanding practice and bolstering theory and analysis. A focus on relationships directs scholarly inquiry from approaching publics as abstractions—spheres that mark social space—to publics as practices sustained by human action.[15] In this way, scholars may complicate frameworks that draw clear demarcations among multiple publics and firm distinctions between public and private, political and economic, collective and individual.

Scholars have recognized the constitutive power of relationships for publics. Hannah Arendt observes in *The Human Condition* that people enact their agency as they appear publicly in a "web of human relationships." Relationships reveal an "in-between" quality of public lives, which "consists of deeds and words," and "is no less real than the world of things we visibly have in common."[16] In this way, relationships among individuals, and not individuals as self-contained beings, constitute one's public self. Public selves do not rest at network nodes; they emerge and move across relationships.

And these public selves vary depending on different interactions within and across networks. Gerard Hauser articulates a "*reticulate* structure" to the contemporary public sphere that takes shape as "a web of discursive arenas, spread across society."[17] This networked constitution explains how particular encounters may participate in larger social structures and processes. Moreover, both specific interactions and wider networks engage other social institutions and practices, like education, that shape publics and, in turn, may be shaped by publics.

Networks of relationships illuminate the fluidity of publics as individuals may engage different sets of relationships. These relationships carry transformative power, as people may learn and think differently when interacting with others. Further, developing one's perspective constitutes an ongoing process of human interaction and learning. Iris Marion Young invokes relationality to conceptualize the variety of individual and group perspectives that circulate in diverse societies: "Since individuals are multiply positioned in complexly structured societies, individuals interpret the society from a multiplicity of social group perspectives."[18] In varying degrees, these relationships shape people's values and beliefs, interests and desires. Moreover, relationships fundamentally shape people's sense of individual and collective agency, mediating the I and the we of public life. As mediating forces, relationships resist the collapse of the individual into the collective and the dispersion of the collective into aggregable individuals. Even as relationships exert considerable constitutive force, people may take relationships for granted, engaging in public life without reflection on their connections with others, and they may act purposefully to build new relationships and revise existing relationships. As I explain in this book, both democratic and market-oriented visions of education may exhibit taken-for-granted and purposefully engaged relationship networks.

As my reference to alternative visions suggests, people may organize relationships on different bases to enable different practices and serve different ends. Relationship networks, in and of themselves, do not necessarily serve empowering or emancipatory functions for the individuals and groups who participate in these networks. Humans must construct relationships with others actively to affirm particular values, processes, and principles and to achieve specific goals. Believing that the importance of a particular end justifies any and all means may lead people to pursue methods that undermine or gainsay the goal they seek. On the other hand, asserting the applicability of a particular means for achieving innumerable ends risks obscuring and erasing distinctive goals pursued by diverse actors and institutions.

Relationship-building invites participants to consider means and ends in regard to each other, reflecting on the legitimacy of processes and outcomes. With regard to democratically oriented action, Dewey insisted that "democratic ends demand democratic methods for their realization."[19] He warned of public figures who assert their superiority and infallibility in relation to various publics when advocating for political outcomes.

Dewey sometimes invoked the example of the robber band to demonstrate how relationships can be beneficial and harmful both for active participants in a set of relationships as well as others who suffer the consequences of their actions.[20] A robber band presumably facilitates the individual enrichment of its members. The cost to others from the band's activity seems clear—loss of property and the experience of personal trauma from having suffered a crime. Indirectly, these costs circulate outward from perpetrators and victims as the material and social costs of crime may elicit wider attention and resources. Yet the robbers suffer costs, too, insofar as the maintenance of their criminal enterprise requires them to disavow potentially diverse, multiple connections with others that could engender fuller perspectives and empathy. To justify their actions, the robbers must deny themselves varied, rich modes of human solidarity. As this example suggests, relationships may promote equality and inequality, justice and injustice, inclusion and exclusion, belonging and alienation, diversity and homogeneity. People may tend to relationships in different degrees, make them more or less open to revision and reconceptualization, envision them more or less capaciously.

In this context, as I argue in this book, I value democratic relationships. I regard democratic relationships both as a normative framework for analyzing practice and as a description of human interactions that engage diverse perspectives and build inclusive and reflective communities. Signaling active processes, democratic relationships require regular tending, which entails conscious effort, care, continuity, consideration of future growth and development. Tending need not constitute a full-time endeavor, since explicit attention to the quality of relationships may recede as people coordinate their activities to pursue particular tasks and achieve mutually valued goals, yet democratic relationships should encourage explicit reflection, discussion, and judgment in terms of mutually shared values and goals. In specific relationships, participants determine values and goals in terms of their needs and interests. More generally, democratic relationships should orient themselves toward values of equality, freedom, and justice. Along these lines, Wendy Brown argues that democratic concerns with justice, freedom, and equality demand vibrant and varied engagement. Efforts to fix and narrow

these values, exemplified in efforts to remake public institutions and practices in market terms, weaken their normative force.[21] For Dewey, democratic values circulate as "hopeless abstractions" when dissociated from human relationships.[22] While scholarship cannot specify the content of these values as applied to all potential public engagements, scholars may underscore their mutual determination—each should be understood in relation to the others—and the need for inclusive judgments about the comportment of these values with existing relationships.

While all human relationships mediate the individual and the collective, democratic relationships regard this mediation as critically generative to public engagement and productive of vibrant practices and modes of publicity. As I argue, market relationships seek to obscure individuals' dependence on others, tripping over the nurturing and developmental roles of families, in particular. In contrast, democratic relationships embrace engagements of I and we, appreciating human agency as multiform and affirming the value of collective agency to secure ameliorative social change. Rhetorical scholars have understood the importance of discourse as a mediating mode. Celeste Condit explains that "it is precisely the practice of public rhetoric that converts individual desires into something more—something carrying *moral* import, which can anchor the will of the community."[23] A multiple public sphere extends discursive mediation from what Condit characterizes as the "duality of communication" to networks of publics and counterpublics. From different nodes and linkages in these networks, individuals may affiliate with multiple communities. Further, engagements among publics and counterpublics may illuminate relations of power. More specifically, I argue that analyzing and engaging democratic relationships with the insights of contemporary public sphere theory and advocacy may raise awareness of and mitigate exclusions and inequities.

When cultivated to raise awareness of mutual implication and standing, foster consideration of shared interests and goals, and facilitate coordinated action that empowers individuals and groups while respecting diverse affiliations, democratic relationships constitute a public good. In this way, a public good appears not in a desired object, value, or goal as such, but in people's relationships to each other as they seek to live purposeful, empowering, and ameliorative public lives. From this perspective, a public good circulates as a relational good. A relational public good does not refer to specific, bounded content, nor does it demand shared experiences or aim for consensus. Rather, by drawing on mutually sustained and valued relationships, this public good

invites people to specify its content across multiple articulations. Specifications require inclusive, participatory engagement as individuals and communities invoke contextualized notions of a public good to achieve varied ends. Public education may support the realization of articulations of a public good by developing students' capacities and modeling reflective, diverse, and inclusive communities.

Generative of publics, relationships also play crucial roles in processes of democratic education. Dewey regarded the quality of school relationships as a crucial factor for distinguishing unidirectional, passive, formal instruction from multidirectional, participatory learning that engages teacher and student. Formal education, like all education, establishes relationships, but Dewey argued that formal education does not craft relationships that engender student agency. Conversely, he held that relationships developed through education can enable students to direct the course of their education in classrooms and elsewhere.[24] As current and former students and (in many cases) teachers, readers of this book may reflect on their own educational experiences to recognize the centrality of relationships and learning—teachers and peers who inspired inquiry, supported growth, and bolstered one's agency, or, conversely, alienating settings that deadened ostensibly lively material. As I argue, through their communicative engagement, contemporary local advocates exemplify how relationships outside of school may influence classroom relationships.

Enacted through communication, democratic relationships may strengthen and extend practices of communication. As means of communication, democratic relationships do not serve as neutral conductors of information. The values that orient these relationships also invite democratically aligned communication. Of course, actually existing communication practices undertaken in the name of democracy, even when engaged through forthright and sustained efforts, may exhibit inequalities and exclusions. At the level of scholarship, Ralph Cintron urges scholars to resist the idea that "democracy is on a teleological trajectory"—regularly making improvements over prior iterations, arising as the resolution of prior troubles.[25] Against the idealization of democracy as a final stage of history, democratic relationships offer a locally accessible alternative to market publics and their anti-deliberative and restricted views of communication. Democratic relationships offer an orientation for working toward a vibrant, egalitarian, and just networked public sphere. The local advocates we interviewed shared inspiring yet honest perspectives on strengths and limits of their communicative engagements. Even when they

experienced the exclusionary efforts of others, they recommitted to critically engaging key terms like community, fairness, and justice. The communicative dimensions of democratic relationships thus support practices of advocacy and frameworks for analysis.

Market Relationships, Publics, and Education

Contemporary market relationships operate in a wider market regime of governance that rhetorical scholars and others have referred to as neoliberalism. This term originally described the efforts of a group of North American and European intellectuals, including Milton Friedman, who came together in the years after World War II to defend what they regarded as individualism and freedom under threat by expanding social welfare states.[26] In *Capitalism and Freedom*, the Friedmans identified the preferred term for their project as "liberalism," gesturing back to what they regarded as the absolute sovereignty of individual freedom in classical liberalism.[27] However, the Friedmans held that twentieth-century social policy had usurped and corrupted the meaning of this term. A neoliberalism, then, would do more than dismantle the welfare state and elevate the individual: it would articulate a bold normative project of reimagining human relationships. In this spirit, Rebecca Dingo, Rachel Riedner, and Jennifer Wingard observe that "neoliberal discourses are often rhetorically framed in absolutist terms, as beyond debate and common sense."[28] These discourses articulate a convergence of economic, political, and social developments that have propagated interrelated formations of ideology, policy, and subjectivity.[29] Drawing on market-oriented values and beliefs, neoliberal policies like education vouchers seek to enlist the state in the creation and maintenance of markets. These policies, in turn, affirm particular values and beliefs, like the superiority of individual choice over other means of organizing school systems. Both ideology and policy work to shape individual behavior through a market lens, as, for example, by encouraging parents to see themselves as education consumers and not members of neighborhood school communities. Parental behavior, in turn, serves as evidence for the appropriateness of market ideologies and policies.[30]

In their normative vision, market relationships form the basis of market publics as voluntary, informed, and mutually advantageous exchanges among free, choosing individuals. Emphasizing freedom and autonomy, market relationships suggest that the relationships that people maintain are the relationships they choose. Individuals determine when and with whom to begin

and end relationships. Individuals determine the character of the relationships in which they participate. In the absence of coercion—which, in normative visions, arises from outside of markets themselves—individuals have no connections, entailments, or obligations that they do not want. This is the ethical lesson conveyed in the advice offered by the administrator at the Community Christian School: individuals need not consider the implications of their actions for their neighbors and potentially affected others; they need only worry about themselves and other individuals whom they choose. Expressing distrust, skepticism, and fear of collective agency, market relationships support market publics as aggregations of individuals, networks of exchange. Exhibiting the confidence identified by Dingo, Riedner, and Wingard, market relationships assert their universality. As part of a regime of market governance, as Wendy Brown notes, they facilitate the dissemination of "the *model of the market* to all domains and activities—even where money is not at issue."[31] As part of a normative vision, market relationships insist that there is no alternative.

Yet the vision of market relationships and publics stands in contradiction to many of the practices of neoliberal advocates who seek changes in education policy and other areas. As I argue, market relationships express a paucity of imagination—including limited views of human connection, knowledge, motivation, and aspiration—that generates limited resources for advocating for the social change necessary to fulfill a market vision. Human relationships offer people more than opportunities for exchange. People value relationships with others in noninstrumental ways. Desiring community, people want to work together to achieve shared goals. Indeed, neoliberal advocates have done just this. Historical collaborations among intellectuals, funders, and politicians enabled the development and circulation of market models.[32] Contemporary collaborations have expanded the reach of these models. In Wisconsin, groups like the American Federation for Children, which Betsy DeVos chaired, have spent millions of dollars to elect pro-voucher state legislators. These legislators have worked with lobbyists from organizations like School Choice Wisconsin to advance voucher legislation. Influential policy-oriented law firms like the Wisconsin Institute for Law and Liberty have made vouchers and other market reforms a policy priority.[33] All of these coordinated activities contrast with the legitimating discourses of markets that highlight individual action as the mode of public engagement. Market advocates work collectively to achieve their goals while demanding individual responsibility from others and devaluing community connections.

This contradiction between a normative vision and common practices of advocacy intimates how market publics form through people's use of varied

activities and assets—plans and goals for public engagement, symbolic and material resources to support public engagement, and potential collaborators and antagonists to engage publicly. While the Friedmans regarded markets as noncoercive networks for coordinating individual action, their perspective presents a partial and misleading account of the dynamics of coordination. Historian Philip Mirowski discerns a "multilevel, multiphase, multisector" network among the different actors who have promoted markets as a mode of governance, including international societies, select academic departments at universities, foundations, think tanks, news organizations, venture capitalists, and more. This structure has served "to amplify and distribute the voice of any one member throughout a series of seemingly different organizations, personas, and broadcast settings."[34] In these ways, the prominent and influential advocacy of particular individuals often has reached larger, multiple audiences through the collective efforts of others.

Advocates have sought to leverage moral exhortation, economic insecurity, and coercion to enact market-oriented change. Representing individuals as rational actors, explains Crystal Colombini, market discourses nevertheless "balance the rational-actor subjectivity against the ongoing moralization, discipline, and regulation of needful behavior."[35] From this vantage point, freeing individual agency appears as insufficient for individual choice to produce proper market activity. Individuals need regular lessons, encouragement, and admonishment on how they should behave. Colombini analyzes how, during the US housing crisis of the late 2000s, media commentators and policymakers lectured home mortgagors to stay current on their loans regardless of their financial situation or the current market value of their property. Beyond self-interest, a principle of "obligation" applied: borrowers carried obligations "to financial institutions and agreements, but also more deeply to the correction and restoration of a foundering market."[36] Market survival depended on individuals' connections to people and larger forces they did not choose directly. Moving from moral suasion to demand, Jodi Dean characterizes the current era as driven by "commanded individuality": "The 'do-it-yourself' injunction is so unceasing that 'taking care of oneself' appears as politically significant instead of as a symptom of collective failure—we let the social safety net unravel."[37] Insistence on individual responsibility functions as a veiled threat, since an unraveled net will not catch anyone who falls. By weakening or eliminating some options and directing people toward others, policy change also may compel individuals to abide by market directives. Neglect of and disinvestment from public schools have compelled some parents to locate whatever options they can find—both

inside and outside of public school systems—in desperate attempts to provide their children with a quality education. To be clear, policy change does not affect all public schools equally, as wealthier communities may have the resources to withstand state-level cuts.[38] But market-based education policy induces all parents to act as market actors, whether or not they would choose this mode of engagement.

Promoting individualism while obfuscating differences in background, experience, and identity among individuals, market relationships assert a universal human motivation in self-interest while assuming equitable treatment of different individuals in markets. Since individuals only seek exchanges that serve their self-interest, differences among individuals with regard to race, gender, ethnicity, religion, class, sexuality, and more do not matter. As the Friedmans insisted, market relationships dissipate the influence of identity on human interaction: "There is an economic incentive in a free market to separate economic efficiency from other characteristics of the individual."[39] Moreover, they held that discriminators only harm themselves by limiting their options for exchange. On this basis, market publics threaten to render inequality invisible, censuring those who seek to call attention to racism, sexism, and other forms of discrimination. On racism, for instance, Darrel Wanzer-Serrano characterizes a market public as operating through "an active suppression of 'race' as a legitimate topic or term of public discourse and public policy."[40] Bradley Jones and Roopali Mukherjee hold that a market public presents a "socially progressive politics by articulating a colorblind, cosmopolitan, post-race subject, while characterizing as 'backwards' or 'racist' those who invoke racial claims."[41] In this spirit, as I argue, market advocates see racism as an individual practice—"taste," according to the Friedmans—neglecting the role of larger social forces and institutions in sustaining racism. Circumscribing the force of racism, market advocates equate its practice with efforts to call attention to its practice. Jones and Mukherjee explain that market advocates often cast charges of racism as excuse-making that serves to justify personal failures. By depoliticizing and privatizing difference, "culture becomes a matter of individual choice."[42] Market relations offer no structural basis to consider such challenges as racism, sexism, and more.[43]

Consistent with their antipathy toward collective agency, market relationships privilege one-to-one modes of communication over group communication, like deliberation, and flatten communication as information exchange. For pro-market intellectuals like the Friedmans, human communication finds a model in the price system. According to this view, prices circulate information about market activity and exchanges far beyond an individual's

direct experiences. An individual, in turn, may use this information to make decisions about their exchanges with others. As the Friedmans maintained, the price system scales up individual action to create larger publics "without central direction."[44] Yet this model betrays a highly circumscribed view of the dynamics and function of communication. Focusing on Milton Friedman, Catherine Chaput explains that he dismissed efforts to learn about actual human motivation and aspiration since, in his view, an ascription of self-interest sufficiently explains market activity. Whether through conscious reflection or habituation, market actors respond to information uniformly.[45]

This imagined dynamic assumes that information constitutes the core of communication and that different people will have the same understanding of information. Christopher Duerringer addresses these points in relation to what he terms "rhetorical arbitrage." In economic theory, arbitrage refers to the practice of simultaneously buying and selling the same items in different markets to profit from price differences. Rhetorical arbitrage suggests that market action does not depend on information as such, but the meanings that different actors associate with information: "If economic actors are possessed of vastly different interpretations of a given piece of information, it is possible for one to buy that asset cheaply and sell it quite dearly."[46] Duerringer cites the case of Uber, which sells itself to customers as a highly convenient taxi service, but, when faced with calls from public officials to recognize its drivers as employees and abide by regulations governing taxis, presents itself as a private ride-sharing service. These differences in meaning, and the ability of market actors to exploit them, reveal the limits of market communication generally. People do not only receive information and act on it. Rather, communication engages human understanding, imagination, judgment. Individuals may share understandings and they may misunderstand; they may ascribe similar and different meanings to actions; they may judge shared experiences differently. As rhetorical scholars know, human communication is anything but a uniform and predictable process. These varying possibilities demonstrate the need for the very modes of communication—participatory, deliberative, collective—that market relationships dismiss.

A market education supports the goals of promoting societal stability, such that markets can operate without the threats of upheaval or interference, and teaching market competency, such that students know and value their roles as market actors. In *Capitalism and Freedom*, the Friedmans cast this project as inculcating "some common set of values."[47] They did not specify these values when discussing the role of education, but their arguments in this book and elsewhere suggest such values as freedom, autonomy, respect, and more.

Contemporary advocates have stressed a need to prepare students to compete in a global marketplace. Yet, as I argue, even on these terms, the limits of market relationships raise questions for a vision of market education, since the societal stability that secures competition intimates shared belief and coordinated action. Nevertheless, making comparisons to the technology sector, Betsy DeVos called on entrepreneurs and reformers to develop educational innovations. Similarly, Wisconsin legislators foresaw more efficient delivery of education and improved student outcomes in expanded markets.

Countering Education Markets with Local Democratic Community

Expanding education markets represent both a triumph of public policy as well as a change in political culture. When the Friedmans' *Capitalism and Freedom* appeared in 1962, their arguments occupied a marginal position in relation to increasing public investments in education in the 1960s, as evidenced in the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act. In contrast, contemporary market advocates operate in a political culture much more hospitable to their claims. In *School Choice and the Betrayal of Democracy*, I seek to represent these political and policy changes in my case studies. My chapters on Dewey and the Friedmans serve both as case studies as well as critical frameworks for illuminating the policy developments and community engagement I address in subsequent chapters. This book does not constitute a complete account—each presidential administration of the past few decades and every state with school vouchers could tell its own story—but my cases offer important insights and lessons for realizing a more vibrant democratic public education.

I start with John Dewey in chapter 1 to illuminate the historical resonance and contemporary urgency of visions of democratic relationships and education. Defining democracy as a way of life, Dewey argued that democracy cannot serve as an ameliorative force without direct and regular human engagement. Since democratic relations do not arise naturally, education serves an indispensable role in cultivating relevant skills in students. However, I argue that we need to reread Dewey's project rhetorically in light of contemporary scholarship on a multiple public sphere. Against Dewey's invocation of scientific inquiry as a model for democratic practice in his later writings, I maintain that a rhetorical approach sustains his communicative contributions, while the insights of scholarship on a multiple public sphere draw attention to dynamics of power, race, and difference.

In chapter 2, I turn to the Friedmans' vision of market relationships and education, which, over the course of their career, moved from the policy margins to the mainstream. Underscoring the normative force of their work, the Friedmans effectively articulated a vision of markets as a way of life. Recognizing the necessity of relationships in society, the Friedmans imagined these relationships as established by autonomous, free individuals exercising unfettered choice. They held that education, too, needs to reflect these fundamental values, both in the classroom and in organization of schooling. I argue that the Friedmans' vision of relationships obscures the structural advantages and disadvantages faced by different people in unequal societies, perpetuates a false equivalency of choice with regard to consumerism and basic issues of justice, and ignores the influence of economic coercion in people's lives.

Moving from intellectual realms to direct policy advocacy, in chapter 3 I analyze Betsy DeVos's campaign for expanding education markets as US secretary of education. Joining neoliberal arguments with a technology-infused vision of the future, DeVos cast public education as a monopoly and urged disruptive innovation from education entrepreneurs and reformers. In her discourse, DeVos presented herself as an outsider to an "education establishment." Protests against her public appearances, in her view, only confirmed the establishment's fear of meaningful change. DeVos identified fit as the basic problem of education: every child, no matter the excellence of their neighborhood public school, needs a good educational fit. Betraying an individualist orientation, fit serves as the proper diagnosis for a range of educational issues, including challenges of race and racism in education.

In chapter 4, I consider the statewide expansion of vouchers in Wisconsin. In 2013, with the support of Governor Scott Walker, the Joint Finance Committee, the budget-writing committee of the state legislature composed of Assembly and Senate members, voted to establish a statewide voucher program. Two years later, the Joint Finance Committee eased income requirements for the program and approved a gradual elimination of enrollment caps. Drawing on speeches from Walker and Joint Finance Committee hearings, I analyze how policymakers articulated an education marketplace in Wisconsin. I foreground the roles of power, money, and race in shaping the ostensibly neutral creation of this marketplace. Further, I explore how the legislature employed antidemocratic means toward the securing of market ends, most notably passing statewide voucher legislation literally in the middle of the night.

Shifting sites from state to local and positions from pro-voucher to pro-public schooling, in chapter 5 I consider community-based advocacy for public education in Wisconsin. Placing Dewey in dialogue with contemporary advocates, I

develop a conception of community as a process of relationship-building and a means for realizing visions of democracy as a way of life. My analysis focuses on the interviews that Kelly Jensen and I conducted in the summer of 2019. Interviewees expressed a capacious perspective of public education as connecting schools and communities. They actively engaged in community-building even as they recognized the limits of actually existing communities. Recognizing resource disparities across districts and the influence of structural racism within and across districts, these advocates critically engaged local practices of community and democracy toward ameliorative ends.

In the conclusion, I draw together the different advocates discussed in this book to illuminate the implications of market and democratic visions for education. I argue that articulating an empowering and efficacious vision of education for our contemporary era requires aligning means with the ends we wish to achieve. On this score, the limits of market relationships engender stunted visions of education that disavow and obscure the very connections on which human development depends. A democratic vision of education may foster individual and collective growth and fulfillment, but only if we discuss honestly the exclusions and limitations of existing democratic practices and institutions and public schools. While public schools need democratic communities, and democratic communities need public schools, their mutual engagement represents an ongoing process of critical reflection and advocacy.