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## United States' Education and the Creation of the Neoliberal Subject

Sam Stewart

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United States' Education and the Creation of the Neoliberal Subject

by

Sam Stewart

Undergraduate honors thesis under the direction of  
Dr. Wonik Kim  
Department of Political Science

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Louisiana State University  
& Agricultural and Mechanical College  
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## Abstract

This paper examines the changes made to higher and lower education policy and policy implementation during the neoliberal regime. The spending and influence of corporatist and private forces will be examined, as well as the impetuses and effects of this spending and increased influence. These changes include but are not limited to an increased focus on standardized testing, increased corporate curriculum control, increased private spending on university research, and the federalization of education policy. This analysis will go to show the status of the United States' education systems as centers for neoliberal subject creation. This makes education central to the hegemony of neoliberalism as nearly every child in the United States will undergo significant education within the higher and lower education systems.

## Introduction

The United States' higher and lower education systems have been effectively utilized as centers for the dispersal of neoliberal power-knowledge to hegemonize the neoliberal historical bloc. The driving force behind this change in the nature of the United States' education systems is the influx of private, corporate spending both directly into education centers and in education policy. The lower education system in The United States has seen the institutions that set standards and practices for the system gradually expand from localized power centers to the federal government and corporate interests. The passage of the *No Child Left Behind Act* was a benchmark in the neoliberalization of this sector of the education system. The higher education system has been effectively neoliberalized through an increase in private spending as a share of total (private plus public spending) research and development spending. This subjects the vital primary research done at the universities of The United States to the functional terms of business. The result of these changes is a new student and a new subject – the neoliberal subject. By effectively reconfiguring the education centers of The United States to disperse neoliberal power-knowledge, the neoliberal apparatus has indoctrinated students into this world view en masse. If swift action is not taken to re-localize power of education policy and implementation and curb the influence of private interests on education policy and implementation, the students of The United States will only become more and more indoctrinated to the school of thought of neoliberalism – further cementing it as the hegemonic force it is today.

In this paper, the forces behind the policy and implementation changes made at the higher and lower education levels will be examined. Subsequently, the impetuses and effects of

these changes will be examined to elucidate how these changes fit into the larger neoliberal project. The political and philosophical works of Justin Pack, Henry Giroux, Antonio Gramsci, and Michel Foucault will be central to this paper.

## Theory Section

Theories of cultural hegemony explore how the under classes become governed by the ruling classes. One of the leading thinkers in this field is Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci.

Gramsci studies the ways in which the government uses its apparatuses of power to hegemonize a set of cultural concepts and understandings that work to win the consent of the governed. Gramsci describes the state as the nexus of political and civil society. The political powers of a nation use the instruments at their disposal to promote an ethical and cultural understanding that the individuals within a society come to accept as a “common sense”.

Gramsci wrote, “The assertion that the state can be identified with individuals (the individual of a social group), as an element of active culture (i.e. as a movement to create a new civilization, a new type of man and of citizen), must serve to determine the will to construct within the husk of political society a complex and well-articulated civil society, in which the individual can govern himself without the self-government thereby entering into conflict with political society – but rather becoming its normal continuation, its organic complement” (Gramsci 1988, 238).

This common sense serves as a set of rules and conditions that the subjects of a government allow to govern themselves; however, the construction of this set of rules and conditions functions so that this self-governance never conflicts with the political functions of the state apparatus. The set of ideologies that the subjects relate to and govern themselves according to grow from the will of the political society – and therefore the ruling class. The creation of a new man and a new citizen is the construction of a new relationship between the self of the subject and the political structures that are necessitated by the material and political conditions of the period. The political structures use their influence over institutions to mediate this relationship

so that it never poses a threat to the political structures. Gramsci writes, “The school as a positive educative function, and the courts as a repressive and negative educative function, are the most important state activities in this sense: but, in reality, a multitude of other so-called private initiatives and activities tend to the same end – initiatives and activities which form the apparatus of the political and cultural hegemony of the ruling classes” (Gramsci 1988, 234).

Here enters the institution paramount to this paper, education. Gramsci here says that education is one of the two most important activities the state conducts in its goal of hegemony. Gramsci believed in an education that was individualized and taught instead of instructing. The ideas of civics and ideologies could not be taught from an uninterested perspective and had to be tailored to the individual. Gramsci said that there needed to be, “A school of freedom and free initiative, not a school of slavery and mechanical precision. The children of proletarians too should have all possibilities open to them; they should be able to develop their own individuality in the optimal way, and hence in the most productive way for both themselves and society. Technical schools should not be allowed to become incubators of little monsters aridly trained for a job, with no general idea, no general culture, no intellectual stimulation, but only an infallible eye and a firm hand” (Gramsci 1988, 64). Here Gramsci argues for an education system that treats children as individuals and educates for society, not for business.

The set of institutions, ethics, and other functions of both the political and civil societies that operate to cement hegemony and the material conditions present at the same time (the structures and superstructures) constitute a historical bloc. Gramsci writes on the conception of the historical bloc, “in which precisely material forces are the content and ideologies are the



form[.]” (Gramsci 1988, 200). The historical bloc consistently changes and shifts to meet the new needs and interests of the governed in order to continually win their consent. Gramsci’s analysis presents an art and science of governance in which the government wins the consent of the governed via the dissemination of ideas and concepts that cement an ideology in the mind of the individual. The individual then follows this ideology that they see as natural and “common” as a self-governing tool; however, this self-governance is an outgrowth of the position of the dominant class and never challenges its position.

Unfortunately, Antonio Gramsci died due to health complications endured during a prison sentence under the fascist government of Italy in 1937. The very next year the term “neoliberalism” would be coined at the Walter Lippmann Colloquium. Another thinker who pondered and analyzed the art of government lived long enough to see the rise of early neoliberalism, Michelle Foucault. Foucault’s analysis of governance is referred to as governmentality. Foucault’s analysis does not deduce concrete practices from universals or apply universals to concrete practices; rather, as Foucault writes, “I would like to do exactly the opposite and, starting from this practice as it is given, but at the same time as it reflects on itself and is rationalized, show how certain things – state and society, sovereign and subject, etcetera – were actually able to be formed, and the status of which should obviously be questioned” (Foucault 2008, 3). Here, Foucault calls for a new way to study politics; a political study that does not use the universal concepts of sociology and political science as comparison tools, but rather analyses them concretely. Foucault seeks to analyze these practices not only according to their outcomes and materialist consideration but also according to their rationalities. These rationalities are based upon nature. Natural things are necessitated by

external actions. “Political economy has a specific naturalness specific to the practice of government itself. The objects of governmental action have a specific nature. There is a nature specific to the government action itself and that is what political economy will study” (Foucault 2008, 15). Governments and their actions, as well as the responses of their subjects, can be studied naturally. Foucault writes, “Nature is something that runs under, through, and in the same exercise of governmentality.... It is the other face of something whose visible face, visible for the governors, is their own action. Their action has an underside, or rather, it has another face, and this other face of governmentality, its specific necessity, is precisely what political economy studies” Foucault 16). The causes and effects of governance can be gleaned empirically in a system in which the only consideration needed to be made is economic and rationalized.

Foucault analyzes neoliberalism through the grid of governmentality. This analysis begins with the conceptualization of human capital. Foucault explains that labor has been ignored in economic theories. It has always been an object on which economies and governments act. The theory of human capital analyzes labor as a subject. The laborer provides work and is paid a wage or income. Foucault writes, “An income is quite simply the product or return on a capital. Conversely, we will call “capital” everything that in one way or another can be a source of future income. Consequently, if we accept on this basis that the wage is an income, then the wage is therefore the income of a capital. Now what is the capital of which the wage is the income? Well, it is the set of all those physical and psychological factors which make someone able to earn this or that wage[.]” (Foucault 2008, 224). Human capital is the sum of the skills, physical capabilities, and mental capabilities of an individual. The

conceptualization of the subject (the individual) as cultivating human capital is a return to *homo economicus*.

*Homo economicus* was also a prevalent conceptualization of man for the English empiricists and their disciples; however, the neoliberal *homo economicus* operates differently than the older version of classical liberalism. In the classical liberal model, *homo economicus* is a trade partner and makes decisions based upon their needs; however, within the neoliberal model, following from the emergence of human capital, *homo economicus* “is an entrepreneur, an entrepreneur of himself” (Foucault 2008, 226). From these conclusions, that humans exist as capital via their capabilities and that the function of the individual human is to maximize their capital, economic judgments can be brought to bear on issues that previously existed not outside of economic consideration but as the counter to the field of economics. Foucault argues that aspects of civil society, that previously non-economic realm, could be subjected to an analysis as the nature of the economic activity they embody. Parents spending time with and nurturing their children were making investments into their (both the parents psychologically and the child financially) futures. The issues of healthcare and public hygiene were theorized as ways to keep the population healthy and increase their capabilities (and therefore their human capital). All aspects of human behavior are subjected to the rationality of the market. This does not mean that non-economic rationales and modes of being have ceased to exist. Foucault writes, “The subject is considered only as *homo economicus*, which does not mean that the whole subject is considered as *homo economicus*. In other words, considering the subject as *homo economicus* does not imply an anthropological identification of any behavior whatsoever with economic behavior. It simply means that economic behavior is the grid of

intelligibility one will adopt on the behavior of a new individual. It also means that the individual become governmentalizable, that power gets a hold on him to the extent, and only to the extent, that he is a *homo economicus*" (Foucault 2008, 252).

The government's analysis of the subject according to economic logic and the interpretation of this logic on non-economic aspects of life and society results in the relationship between the government and its subjects being based solely on this logic. The application of this nature, of this logic, leads to the decisions and behaviors of the subject being fully rationalizable and, crucially, recordable. It is important to note that this is only true of the individual as a subject of their respective government. The whole individual has myriad reasonings for their behaviors, of which economic and rational explanations can only explain a small subset. This reduction is one of the reasons that neoliberal governments typically fail to accurately depict the wants and needs of the people. The market logic is far too restrictive to account for the diverse array of human modes of being, thinking, and desiring. This application of the conceptualization of *homo economicus* to traditionally non-economic realms means that the definition of economic behavior becomes colossal. Economic behavior can now be interpreted as any behavior that responds rationally to the environment; Foucault writes, "*Homo economicus* is someone who accepts reality" (Foucault 2008, 269). This broad interpretation of economic behavior means that the very nexus of the state and the subject under neoliberalism (*homo economicus*) is simply someone who responds to changes to their environment. This has massive implications for their governability. Foucault writes, "*homo economicus*... appears precisely as someone manageable, someone who responds systematically to systematic modifications artificially introduced into the environment. *Homo*

*economicus* is someone eminently governable” (Foucault 2008, 270). The nature of the behavior of *homo economicus*, the ease (compared to other behavioral models) with which this behavior is recorded, and the simplification of the rationale of human behavior are all important in the analysis of neoliberal governmentality. The neoliberal subject is so easily governable because it operates according to one logic and that logic is fully rational. This means the government can easily not only easily record the behaviors of its subjects, but also easily interpret the rationale underpinning those behaviors. In this vein, the government can craft policy and determine the success or failure of policy more easily than within other forms of governmentality. *Homo economicus* governs itself according to the rules of the market and the state can easily interpret and record behaviors that are underpinned by that singular rationale.

Education is simply one of the avenues in which neoliberal governmentality expresses itself. The neoliberal student has its behaviors and their rationales reduced to purely economic considerations. This exposure to the logic of neoliberalism (along with the other early and late childhood socializing events) crafts the neoliberal subject – *homo economicus*.

The effect of neoliberalism on education is a widely studied field. Henry Giroux is a very influential thinker that studies how neoliberalism affects and shaped education at all levels. Giroux examines how corporate culture and neoliberalization have altered the relationship between students and their schools. He argues that the increased control and influence of corporations in public schooling has changed the educational paradigm in the last three decades. His work focuses on the undemocratic nature of corporate education and this form of education’s tendency towards consumerism rather than education. Harold Berlak was also an important figure in this field. Berlak focused his career on combating the rise of standardized

testing and data-driven education. Berlak examined the lineage of the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) and its effects on education, especially in literary education. Berlak examined the ways in which the standardized testing practices outlined in the NCLB damaged democratic education and worked to nationalize education policy. These thinkers help to provide an evidentiary base to my claim that neoliberalism has dramatically altered how we educate our children in the modern world. Their research also provides evidence of the change in the ways education shaped the behaviors and minds of students. This dovetails with the theories of Foucault and Gramsci to provide evidence that the neoliberalization of education has worked to hegemonize the neoliberal world view and to create the neoliberal subject.

Justin Pack theorizes a neoliberalization of higher education that focuses on the dominance of positivism in the neoliberal world view. Pack writes on how positivism has grown to dominate the university research paradigm, leading to a defunding and decreased focus on research and departments that have less of a positivist nature. The humanities and social sciences have taken the hardest hit and have had to change the most. These disciplines when subjected to the positivist neoliberal world view are forced to abandon their idealist and romantic pasts and embrace the data-driven future. This scientism-dominated research paradigm, when combined with the dominance of industry and corporate culture, can work to effectively legitimate neoliberal interests. As the coming sections will show, research funding increasingly comes from industry and these industry-university linkages can work to increase the influence of research that reflects positively on the neoliberal project. Once non-positivist influences have been effectively delegitimated in certain contexts, there is no outside force for positivist research to answer to. This allows for positivist research to effectively legitimate

neoliberalism without significant challenge. This makes the neoliberal university an important institution in legitimating the hegemonic world view. This is a particularly perverse development as universities have so often served as breeding grounds of resistance to the hegemonic world view. I will slightly alter Pack's verbiage for my purposes. I will use the term scientism in lieu of positivism because I believe it better reflects the trends present under neoliberal knowledge production.

My research will provide a bridge between the research concerning the neoliberalization of higher and lower education and the theories of hegemony and governmentality. My research will also provide an evidentiary basis of the importance of corporations as institutions that work to promote their own worldview as neoliberalism. Finally, my research works to show the ways in which education has become a key institution of corporate hegemonic processes. Lower education has been effectively subjected to the scientific inclinations of the neoliberal project. This has, in turn, created an educated subject that has not been educated democratically to become an effective citizen, but has instead been educated as a consumer of corporate production. Higher education has also been subjected to this scientific trend and has become a powerful tool of legitimation for the neoliberals.

If my theoretical conceptualization of the neoliberalization of higher and lower education is true, the following empirical predictions should be true as well. There should be a marked increase in private investment in both K-12 and university education. This investment will allow for greater corporate control over educational implementation including curriculum, standards, and general practices. There should also be a federal divestment from education in comparison to private spending. This will allow for corporations to limit any other influences –

although the corporate control over federal education policy is also incredibly important to the neoliberal project. In that vein, there should be an increase in corporate investment into federal education policy. This will allow for greater control of education policy. When paired with the increased direct investment in education, these corporate interests can have significant control over both policy and implementation. There should be increased private spending in the domain of the public intellectual. This will allow for the dissemination of pro-business rhetoric and the legitimation of neoliberal logic. There should be rising costs of college education as a result of the increased power of neoliberal logic in the dynamic between the state and the university. The rising costs of college have been precipitated by decreases in state funds for higher education. The neoliberal tendency to cut spending explains this trend; however, there are less obvious factors in play as well. This trend also limits the university's ability to be a redistributive force in the economy as well as making private funding for education more powerful in the vacuum left by state funding. There should be declining rates of high school graduates choosing "majors of passion". The force of neoliberalism and the indoctrination of K-12 students into this mode of thinking should lead to a lack of high school graduates choosing majors that are not the most lucrative but offer something else – a passion. These majors (or maybe career paths in some instances would be a better moniker) could include music, English, philosophy, or a host of other non-lucrative but often well-loved or romanticized careers and majors. This is not to say lucrative majors can not hold the passions of many students; rather, the declining rates of graduate choosing some of the aforementioned majors shows a divergence from the rates at which students would choose these majors if competition and entrepreneurial behavior were not so ingrained in the thought of K-12



students. This also serves the trend of decreasing holistic education for democratic civilians examined in the K-12 Education section of the paper. There should be diverging rates of research funding at the federal and private levels. Private research funding should be rising as corporations seek validating research findings. Federal research funding should decrease as neoliberal politics take firm hold over national budgeting. With this increased control over budgetary policy, neoliberal politicians would seek to lower the investment in research because the wants of corporations are more readily met by private research funding.

## Aspects of Neoliberalism

Concretely defining neoliberalism is impossible. As a historical bloc, it exists as a constantly changing set of concepts and their associations. The term loses its meaning when clearly and neatly defined because it is an experienced reality of those who live within it. There are, however, certain characteristics and concepts within the umbrella of neoliberalism that can be explained. One such characteristic is the relationship between the state and capital within the neoliberal system. The neoliberal state works to facilitate and abet market forces – it does not operate according to the *laissez-faire* approach that so many neoliberal politicians espouse. The neoliberal state takes a hands-on approach to crafting policy and providing fiscal relief to corporate interests in order to grease the gears of the market. The state's subjects, in turn, become grist for the mill. The relationship between the subject and the market is also a prominent feature of the neoliberal system. According to Foucault, people's mode of being changed under the neoliberal system. We are now *homo economicus* – a human being who is entirely dedicated to maximizing their economic utility. Foucault referred to this mode of being as the entrepreneur of the self. These associations work in tandem to limit the power of the state and the people, asserting the market and the corporations that dominate it as sovereign.

Another aspect of neoliberalism is the restriction on modes of knowledge production. The modern form of scientism evolved from the tradition of scientism; however, the two are drastically different. Rather than only restricting knowledge production to the empirical, the modern paradigm of knowledge production restricts production to the scientific. This often means only results from lab studies, mathematical analyses, or strict statistical studies are acceptable. This effectively erases the power held by fields such as history, linguistics,

philosophy, and a host of other fields that do not fit the afore-listed criteria. The reasons for this are many and delve into other aspects of both liberalism and neoliberalism. For one, neoliberalism takes the individualizing nature of liberalism and reforms it.

Here lies one of the many paradoxes of neoliberalism – it seeks to erase individual identities from policy considerations by hyper-individualizing. Neoliberalism insists on the treatment of individuals as economic and rational actors; however, this treatment merged with the insistence upon scientific knowledge production reduces individual experiences to the point that they are unrecognizable. Human beings' behaviors are reduced so that their only rationale can be economic or rational. This means that each individual is taken to have the same decision-making apparatus as all others; their individual experiences are not taken into account in this calculus. Foucault wrote about this in discussing the ways in which neoliberalism treats criminals. Foucault writes, "The criminal is nothing other than absolutely anyone whomsoever" (Foucault 2008, 253). The treatment of every individual according to the same logic and rationale means that every individual can be examined in the same way and have the same standards applied to them. This, for a moment appears as an equalizing force; however, it ultimately fails to realize the differing rationales and struggles of the governed class – resulting in policy that does not function individually.

For most of human history, there have been multiple forms of knowledge production that were acceptable. These differing forms would, in turn, check the dominance of any other form. Just as an insistence that theism is the only accepted form of knowledge production has had historically disastrous effects, so too has the unfettered dominance of scientism. The problem is not that scientism is wrong or has disastrous effects (in fact scientism and the

positivism it grew from has had innumerable positive effects on humanity's thriving); the problem is that scientific knowledge production has no effective counterbalance. This dominance leads to a lack of context and interpretation of scientific findings. Thusly, when a scientific research article finds that the subjects in their trial behaved in "x" manner due to "y", there is not a check to posit different, non-scientific reasonings behind the aforementioned behavior. This process reduces human behavior to a single logical modality and leads to an understanding of social science that often unfairly rationalizes and economizes human behavior. These logics have been further restricted to often exclude any evidence not verified in a lab setting or quantitatively expressed (or often both). This limitation precludes evidence from numerous social sciences and allows for the misrepresentation of data.

Herein lies the ways in which scientism's dominance often benefits the corporate and market powers of neoliberalism. Fields of study that once were rich with differing and counterbalancing forms of knowledge production are now dominated by scientism. These fields include economics, political science, and psychology. These fields help to explain human behaviors and provides the logic by which people understand and interpret the behaviors of others and themselves. When they are dominated by a force that tends towards rationalization, economization, and algorithmizing, these fields trend towards the same tendencies. The field of economics in particular has been revolutionized during the neoliberal era to be dominated by models rather than being checked by non-scientific philosophies and politics.

Privatization and deregulation are aspects of neoliberal policy that often work in tandem. Privatization is the process of privatizing aspects of the government's power. This directly cedes power from the state (and therefore the people) to the market and corporations.

Deregulation works similarly. Deregulation is the process of removing the regulatory policy imposed by the government on the market. In doing so, the government's checks on these market powers are eliminated – once again ceding power to the market and corporate interests. These policy packages both work to limit the options of the neoliberal subject. By ceding power to the market, the government is effectively sapping power from the people. The people lose more and more recourse against the market and its externalities as the state cedes more and more power to the market.

## History of neoliberalism

Neoliberalism's genesis as a term is found in the Walter Lippman Colloquium in 1938. Here, the term was coined in an argument about the future of liberalism following the perceived failures of laissez-faire liberalism that precipitated the Great Depression. The meaning of the term has evolved to drastically differ the meaning of the term in 1938. Among those in attendance was Friedrich Hayek who would further the political power of neoliberalism via the founding (with the help of others) of the Mont Pellerine Society. This society became an intellectual hotbed for neoliberal thought and helped give rise to many of the names most readily associated with the rise of neoliberalism including Hayek, Milton Friedman, and Karl Popper. The differences between the Bretton Woods system, which preceded the neoliberal system, and the neoliberal system can elucidate some of the ills of neoliberalism.

The Bretton Woods system was predicated upon global agreements fostering international regulation of the market. The Gold Standard was intact and the stability and control that came with it allowed for a thirty-year period of more egalitarian (compared to the eras preceding and succeeding it) income and wealth distribution (Piketty 2013, 31). Domestically, the compromise between unions and capitalists allowed for business growth and workers' rights to be addressed. Then, in the 1960's the world began to change. Huge protests movements broke out world-wide, culminating in the May 1968 protest in France and the Vietnam protests in the United States. These protests coincided with the economic crisis of stagflation. In the midst of the fervor and uproar that was mostly aiming at a more leftist political and economic system, came neoliberalism. It harkened to the ideas of individual

responsibility, freedom, and other so-called “American ideals” in order to appeal to what Gramsci called the “common sense” (Harvey 2005, 40).

Even then, it needed to be experimented with before it could be implemented in the West. That testing ground was found in Latin America – most famously, Chile. After the coup of Salvador Allende (controversially aided and abetted by the United States’ government), a sweeping round of neoliberal reforms was instituted by the new leader, Augusto Pinochet (Harvey 2005, 7-9). The ensuing economic growth (despite the increased economic inequality and disastrous outcomes for the working class) was enough for the neoliberal economic package to be adopted by the economic powerhouses of the world. Margaret Thatcher, Ronald Reagan, and Deng Xiaoping were the first of many neoliberal politicians to take the reigns of the world’s economic centers.

Roughly fifty years later, the relatively egalitarian outcomes of the Bretton Woods system are long gone. Income inequality is at its highest rate in nearly a century (Piketty 2013, 31), as is wealth inequality (Piketty 2013, 439). There have been two massive economic collapses in the last thirteen years. The latest generation of United States children is the first that is projected to be less affluent than their parents. Real wages have not meaningfully increased since 1972 (Desilver 2018, table 1). In the meantime, the number of billionaires in the world has increased from 140 in 1987 to 1400 in 2013. The combined wealth of these billionaires increased from \$300 billion to \$5,400 billion in the same period (Piketty 2013, 548). That is a ten-fold increase in the number of billionaires and an eighteen-fold increase in their total wealth.

The story of the hegemonizing of the neoliberal historical bloc is more complicated because historical blocs are not clearly defined. Neoliberalism borrowed terms, concepts, and conceptual linkages from classical liberalism; co-opted terms from more revolutionary leftist coalitions; and generally coalesced any potent political strategy into its repertoire. One of the reasons it has been able to persist despite myriad social, economic, and political shortcomings (and through numerous crises) is its immense flexibility. One way that neoliberalism is so effectively able to indoctrinate its subjects into its logic is its relatively unchallenged access to the paradigm-shifting money held in the coffers of the global economic elites. Neoliberalism generally benefits corporate interests, and, in turn, these corporate interests work to propagate neoliberalism. Advertising, media, education, and every other possible conduit of power-knowledge has seen its market snapped up by corporations, which then use these industries as a deafening mouthpiece. This strategy employed by corporations, while not entirely new, was exacerbated in the dawn of neoliberalism.

There is a signifier of the beginning of this trend, The Powell Memo (Powell, 1971). This memo was sent by Lewis Powell, who was already powerful in the business world and would soon be a Supreme Court Justice, and outlined a renewed corporate interest in agenda-setting. He called upon business leaders to counteract a perceived threat to the “American way of life” (a stand-in for corporatism) from the media, students, and any other section of the country that questioned neoliberalism (Powell 1971). In the years following the memo, business spending in the realm of politics increased exponentially (Harvey, 43-44). Another reason neoliberalism has been able to continually dominate is the momentum that arises from its symbiotic relationship with big business. As neoliberalism continues to exist and takes even firmer root, businesses



make more and more money; as businesses make more and more money, they can spend more and more to further neoliberal politics.

## K-12 Education

The vast, top to bottom neoliberal takeover of K-12 education follows a pattern that describes much of neoliberal history: a faltering sector of the United States' infrastructure transformed into an economic sector that reaps rewards for the corporatists that designed it and helps craft the neoliberal subject (*homo economicus*). In the period preceding the neoliberal expansion, federal education policy was mostly designed to allow for local control while providing funding to underfunded districts. The change from localized to nationalized corporate control was started, perhaps mistakenly, by Terrel Bell, Secretary of Education under Ronald Reagan. Bell commissioned a report on the health of the education system with nominal support from President Reagan. Bell's commission, for the most part, consisted of academics and education professionals. Their findings were reported in the overly emotive *A Nation at Risk* in 1982. This report was scathing and found that the United States' education system had fallen behind and was putting the nation at risk of losing its hegemony. Crucially, this report did not recommend a nationalization of early education policy or a competitive mechanism for school evaluation; however, it made two changes that set in motion the changing policy landscape and a power struggle over K-12 education: the language of excellence and the strong link between education and the economy. This report was followed up by many concurrent reports and the language associated was fully engrained into the policy debates around this issue. This report's rhetoric found its way into the next presidency and George H. Bush proposed the beginning of the end of localized education control.

George H. Bush's Education Secretary, Lamar Alexander, along with the future president and current Governor of Arkansas Bill Clinton convened the first Educational Summit (1989).

Attended by numerous governors, legislators, and, importantly, multiple members of the Business Roundtable, this Summit proposed a centralized education reform platform with national standards and curriculums dominating the policy domain. It is important to note the similarities and differences between this summit and the commission formed by Terrel Bell. Bell's commission consisted of experts and professionals from the education field, while the Educational Summit was devoid of influence from the people working in public K-12 education. Bell's commission was largely void of corporate influence; the summit was not. The two groups were working with the same conclusion – the United States' education system was failing – but came to opposite conclusions. Bell's commission pushed for local control and a national government whose focus in the education sector should be funding rather than control. The Educational Summit pushed for the centralization of education control in the federal government and nationalized standards that would become the bedrock for corporate control of education policy. George H.W. Bush attempted to pass a bill including the national standards policy and failed in 1991 with his *America 2000* bill. Bill Clinton got many sections of his 1994 bill, *Goals 2000: The Educate America Act*. Clinton's bill was more successful than Bush's, with many sections of the bill being passed; however, the national standards for math and literary education were shot down (Berlak 2000, 275). Both bills were fought by a diverse group of interests ranging from the farthest reaches of the left and right at the time. Civil Rights groups, fair testing advocates, the Black Caucus, and John Ashcroft (a Republican) all fought this bill at different times, under different names. It was eventually passed under George H.W. Bush, completing his father's education legacy under the name *The No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) (2001).

The fight over education policy was heated. Those in opposition to the changes felt they were fighting for the very heart of our democracy. The reform package that culminated in the passing of the *No Child Left Behind Act* dramatically changed the very nature of education. Education is widely considered to be a public good, necessary to the functioning of any democracy. This idea is not a new one by any means. The nationalized standards subjected education to the all-encompassing dogma of neoliberalism, competition. The nationalized standards introduced by the Educational Summit and codified by the NCLB pit students, schools, and districts against each other in a race for the highest scores. Education scholar David Labarree said, “In an educational system where the consumer is king . . . education . . . is a private good that only benefits the owner, an investment in my future, not yours, my children, not other people's children. For such an educational system to work effectively, it needs to focus a lot of attention on grading, sorting, and selecting students. It needs to provide a variety of ways for individuals to distinguish themselves from others—such as by placing themselves in a more prestigious college, a higher curriculum track, the top reading group, or the gifted program” (Giroux 2000, 148). In essence, the standardized testing reform package has made the culmination of a student’s learning potential reducible to a number. This makes it easily assessed and acceptable in the scientist model of knowledge production preferred by the neoliberal regime (as it is a statistic). This marginalizes the aspects of education and learning that are not properly accounted for within the test and the corresponding result. These aspects include personal growth, democratization, positive socialization, and many other aspects of education. The power is taken away from districts, administrators, and teachers to shape curriculums and classroom experiences around the particular needs of their region, their city,

and their individual students. Instead, education has become a top-down functionary of the federal government and corporate lobbyists which impose their will on these localized power centers. The standardized testing initiatives leave little room for individual passions and fail to address the individual pressures put on students from different backgrounds. By individualizing (in the competitive sense) while concurrently turning students into numbers (in the testing sphere) these policies create consumers and laborers, not free-thinking citizens. This results in an education system that exacerbates existing inequalities, lacks holistic learning environments, and educates for the market - not for democracy.

A microcosm of this larger trend can be seen in the literacy education section of the NCLB. The literacy section of the NCLB was crafted by a group of education experts. This approach, and its shortcomings, are reminiscent of one of the most ubiquitous aspects of neoliberalization – the scientism-dominated paradigm of knowledge production and truth finding (especially important in the social sciences). The Bush administration’s policy recommendations were to be grounded in “scientifically based research”. The NCLB would provide funding and support for teaching curriculums that were grounded firmly in this “scientifically based research”. This research was to provide a definitive answer to a long-running debate within the education community: which is the proper way to teach literacy? According to Harold Berlak, there were, essentially, three schools of thought on the subject. The three approaches were direct phonics instruction, whole language instruction, and critical literacy instruction. Direct phonics instruction focused on the acquisition of direct phonic skills and their application to reading. This practice lacks care for racial, cultural, and home language differences. Whole language learning consists of some phonetics training but focuses primarily

on literature. Students are trained to use context clues and read literature instead of focusing on phonetic instruction. Critical literacy only differs slightly from the whole language approach; both consider racial, cultural, religious, and regional variance important to literacy education, and both focus on literature and its implications. The critical literacy approach differs in its approach to the world outside of literacy. Critical literacy attempts to prepare pupils for a democratic life as a citizen, promoting democracy and social justice (Berlak 2000, 276). These three approaches had many supporters and detractors, and this was by no means a settled debate entering the 2000's. The Bush administration sought a scientific answer to this debate in order to dictate the type of literary education to include in the NCLB.

This scientific approach would lend legitimacy to the answer found that only a rational, scientific process can provide; however, the scientific approach proved to be very narrow and excluded any research not deemed "scientific". This process excluded a great deal of sociological, linguistic, and general social science research that did not include a control group and a lab setting. This allowed for the systematic exclusion of any evidence that contradicted Dr. Lyon's preconceived conclusion that direct phonics instruction was the most effective literary instruction. Those words were used by one member of the panel selected by Dr. Lyon, the only principal, and the only member of the panel to disagree with Dr. Lyon's conclusions, Dr. Joanne Yatvin. Dr. Yatvin eventually refused to sign the National Reading Panel's report on the ground that they had deliberately excluded any evidence that contradicted the pre-ordained findings of this panel. Even with the weighted bias towards direct phonics instruction, the panel's report avoids any heavy-handed inclination towards "phonics programs [that] present a fixed set of lessons scheduled from the beginning to end of the school year," and "the

lack of flexibility and developmental and cultural appropriateness offered by *commercial* programs." (Italics added); however, the administration used the report's findings as evidence to further their phonetics-based approach and to apply the bill's primary objective (national standards enforced by standardized testing and progress reports) to literary education (Berlak 2000, 177-179).

The institution of a critical literacy approach does not make sense within the neoliberal conceptualization of education. Critical literacy educates to socialize and democratize – it does not increase human capital in a meaningful way. The recording of a student's success within a critical literacy approach would not have a strong correlation with their increase in human capital. The ability to read results in a massive increase in the potential income of a student; however, the ability to critically analyze literature and apply it to the society and culture in which a student lives does not have an easily rationalized correlation with economic success. In this sense, a direct phonics approach makes the most sense for a neoliberal education paradigm. It prevents students, particularly minority students and impoverished students, from gaining the tools necessary to effectively understand and criticize the political and economic structures surrounding them, and it provides the most *efficient* increase in a student's human capital via literary education.

This panel was hand-picked to serve the corporate interests that had permeated the education debate since the writing of *A Nation at Risk*. The policy recommendations found in the panel's report and the corresponding section of the NCLB – the *Reading First* section – follow the education policy guidelines that had been paved by conservative think tanks and policy organizations decades in advance. Many of the policies introduced under the NCLB

(school choice, privatization, national standards, standardized testing, among others) were unthinkable before conservative organizations actively worked to change the terms of the debate in the decades preceding the bill's passing. According to the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy's (NCRP) 2004 report, school choice, one of the policies focused on in the NCLB, was brought to the forefront of the national discourse on education policy beginning in 1990 – when Milwaukee began an experiment in a school voucher program. This program was bankrolled by conservative think tanks and political organizations since its inception and continued to be through 2001 when PAVE, a conservative organization that helps fund charter and private school options – especially in Milwaukee – announced a \$40 million grant over five years to provide low-interest loans to voucher and charter schools. The Bradley Foundation, one of the most influential and wealthy conservative foundations, pledged \$20 million for this grant (Krehely, House, & Kernan 2004, 24). The policy these groups are pushing for, school choice, was not part of the political mainstream before 1990. Any policy seeking to privatize public schooling and the language of school choice were politically taboo before the conservative think tanks spent massively to introduce this policy into the national consciousness. School vouchers are a key tenant of the overall logic of privatization in relation to K-12 education. Gisele Huff, once president of the Jaqueline Hume Foundation, stated that school choice was the most important aspect of conservative philanthropy and that they dedicated a fifth of their expenditures on the subject (Krehely et al. 2004, 24).

School choice is a textbook example of the neoliberal mission. The words, ideas, and studies used to push this policy position are posed as apolitical, scientific, and uncontroversial; however, the results and underlying logics are anything but. School choice proponents argue



that increasing school choice options allows for equality and an end to the de facto segregation caused by school district zoning. The way school choice operates in practice tells a very different story. The policy of school choice subjects public schools to market logic, which, in turn, forces public schools to operate as market centers rather than community centers. Instead of schools prioritizing learning environments and strategies that work for the students whom they have served since their inception, schools are forced to market themselves to prospective parents and students. This leads to a sort of arms race for the most glittering array of programs and options rather than learning environments that are particularly cultivated for the needs of an actual student. Other strategies like public-alternative schools (charter schools, magnet schools, and gifted school partnerships) have a long history of exacerbating socio-economic inequalities via selection programs that fail to honor the values that they purport to prioritize. This value, the meritocratic value, is central to the ideas of capitalism and neoliberalism; however, the selection programs for charter and magnet programs ignore environmental factors that limit the ability of some students to live up to the selection criteria. This widens the achievement gap by subjecting public education to the neoliberal logic of “excellence”. This policy set meshes perfectly with the standardized testing section of neoliberal education policy.

The standardized testing section of the neoliberal education package helps to set this false-meritocratic legitimation. The push for standardized testing sets an apparently apolitical, fair, and equitable standard that, if met, helps put students ahead regardless of their background. In this argument, achievement is posed as purely meritocratic. This logic is, however, deeply flawed when contextualized against the background of a society without

equality of opportunity to meet these standards. Students of lower socioeconomic standing are at a disadvantage in the paradigm of standardized testing; therefore, schools that serve students of lower socioeconomic standing are disadvantaged as well. The NCLB, and neoliberal school reform more generally, uses standardized testing to determine which schools are effective and which are not. Schools that are not effective (in a narrow, neoliberal sense) gain a bad reputation and lose out to more effective schools in the school choice arena. Then, as student numbers dwindle due to poor performance and parents choosing other schools, schools lose some of their funding, making them less equipped to educate their students whose disadvantages led to the school's situation in the first place. This cyclical, self-fulfilling policy package fails to honor a meritocratic value and fails the students in the United States' school system who need help more than any others – poor students.

The standardized testing initiative also serves another purpose, one central to the governing logic of neoliberalism. The standardized test is a recording of the human capital accrued by the student during their education. It is a reduction of the social, political, and psychological aspects of education to a solely economic consideration. The policies of our education system are crafted to increase the standardized testing scores of students and schools because it is meant to be an indication of the quality of education present in said school; however, it is only an indication of the economic performance of the school for the student. The ACT is the paradigmatic example of this phenomenon. Students who do well on the ACT are given access to better colleges, less-expensive colleges (through scholarships), and (due to the two aforementioned benefits) better access to high-paying jobs. The investments parents make into private education and the overall investments made into public education

are investments into the human capital of the students the schools produce; the investments are not investments into the socializing role the school performs. Because of this, the United States' education system functions as a maximizer of human capital.

Conservative corporate groups also had much more focused efforts to influence K-12 education. Many small-scale efforts have been made to directly influence the curriculum that reaches primary education students. Some took the form of instructional programs furthered by corporations themselves or by foundations funded by corporations. The Foundation for Teaching Economics (FTE) – which received close to \$2 million from conservative foundations between 1999-2001 – released a new program titled, “Is Capitalism Good for the Poor?” (2003). This program was given to teachers to inform them of the “innate fairness of capitalism”. It was made possible with a \$550,000 grant from the John Templeton Foundation. Later this program was funded by the Gillette Company directly. The National Chamber of Commerce released a video to be shown to students titled *Freedom 2000* in which aliens observe Earth and learn about the relative benefits of the free enterprise system. The Hudson Institute created the Modern Red Schoolhouse program that trained teachers and administrators.

Possibly the most direct way to change what a child learns is to change the literal text they read. The Texas Public Policy Foundation (TPPF), an organization bankrolled by conservative think tanks and corporations alike, holds large sway over many of the textbooks that are distributed across the country. This is because Texas has a disproportionate number of students, so they control a large portion of the textbook market; so, if a company's book is denied by Texas, they miss out on a large swath of the market. Texas holds reviews for its textbooks and the TPPF's textbook review is particularly influential. The TPPF website houses

some of these reviews for public viewing. In 2001, the TPPF published a review of environmental science textbooks for middle school students. One section of this review focuses on the section of the textbooks committed to climate change. One of the recommended corrections reads as follows, "To enable students to have a proper perspective on the short-term climate changes that are the focus of current controversy, textbook coverage - which would appropriately be found mainly in the grade 8 texts - should describe the variations in Earth's climate over centuries or even aeons, as well as provide alternative hypotheses as to what may be causing climate changes on Earth today" (Flanakin 2001, 7). This is a rehashing of conservative climate-denial talking points that were even more popular in the early 2000s than they are today. Later, the review focuses on the use of non-renewable resources. The recommended corrections follow some of the same conservative non-environmentalist rhetoric as the climate change denial in the aforementioned section, asking the textbook's authors to include both positive and negative effects of human resource use. The review goes on to focus on waste management, acid rain, endangered species, and a host of other issues related to human overconsumption. The recommendations follow along similar lines – the textbooks must teach both positives and negatives of the issues and hypotheses that humans contributed to the problems as well as hypotheses that they did not. This seems reasonable, except that in many areas of study focused on in these books, the answers are well understood. Humans have contributed to climate change and the climate is changing at an unprecedented rate. In every aspect, this review seeks a watered-down version of the truth that puts capitalistic expansion, human resource consumption, and fossil fuel usage in as positive a light as possible. Later in the review, the reviewers focus on individual statements or claims made by the authors. The

reviewers claim a problem that asks students to challenge the use of fossil fuels and envision a “good” fossil fuel is too negative towards fossil fuels. In the same section, an example alleging there are “better” fuels than coal is said to be too negative towards coal (Flanakin 2001, 18). The review follows along these lines for its entirety. The influences here are painfully clear. This review is an oil and gas business-funded curriculum limiting the negative representation of fossil fuels and their role in climate change in the textbooks read by millions of children in the United States.

In 2001, the TPPF reviewed social studies textbooks. In this review the reviews have a similar theme, some issues are consistently defended from attack and showered in praise from the reviewers. Among the consistently defended topics are “American exceptionalism”, free-market ideologies, and pro-Western historical interpretations. The reviewers go so far as to say that the textbook misrepresents European colonization of Northern Africa because it fails to mention the vast job creation brought to the region by the European powers (“TPPF Social Studies Textbook Review” 2001, 5). The reviewers repeatedly reject any positive interpretation of leftist economic ideologies while only accepting positive interpretations of free-market ideologies. Finally, the reviewers refuse to accept any comparison between the United States’ genocidal campaigns (against both Native Americans and Africans in the slave trade) and other genocidal campaigns (such as the Armenian Genocide) – stating that comparing the two is like comparing apples and oranges (“TPPF Social Studies Textbook Review” 2001, 3). They report that the other genocides were so much worse than the injustices in the United States that any comparison is absurd. These reviews make sense when read in the context of the mission statement of the TPPF – it is as follows, “The Foundation’s mission is to promote and defend

liberty, personal responsibility, and free enterprise in Texas and the nation by educating and affecting policymakers and the Texas public policy debate with academically sound research and outreach” (“TPPF Mission Statement”, par. 1). They have published multiple reports that teach how to “teach American Exceptionalism”.

If this was a localized issue only affecting Texan students, it would affect close to five million students; however, due to Texas’ size and the huge textbook market (helped along by the nationalization and corporate influence on education policy discussed before) Texas holds outsized influence on the textbook adoption of other states. If a textbook is not accepted in Texas, it is often not pursued at all as a huge section of the textbook market is missing. The textbook adoption process in Texas affects students all over the country, the TPPF textbook review holds significant sway over the Texas textbook adoption process, and the TPPF is beholden to numerous corporate interests due to their fundraising strategies including Charles Koch (Wilder 2012, figure 1). These review processes act as a walky-talky with two connections – from the mouth of the corporations to the ears of students throughout the country. The TPPF is a conduit for corporate influence to make it onto the very pages students read and learn from.

This control of knowledge, in a very concrete sense, has two-fold reasoning. The most obvious rationale is that by controlling the narrative around issues central to neoliberal expansion (climate change, environmental destruction, and free-market economies) the corporate interests can more easily pass policy that suits their needs – due to increasing public conceptualization of the issue area in their favor. The other rationale, mostly underpinning the social studies textbook review, is the creation of the neoliberal subject. The example of the

colonization of Northern Africa can be taken as an example. The textbook reviewers state that the textbook, “ignores the new jobs, education, investment and modern medicine and the like that European rule brought” (TPPF 2001, 5). These “improvements” made by the colonial powers are all aspects of an increase in human capital. The influx of new jobs allows subjects to make more money. The education introduced increases the skill level of the people in the nation. The introduction of “modern medicine” increases the physical health and stability of the population. These are economic considerations being touted as beneficial when they came at the cost of decades of brutality and domination at the hands of the colonial power. The rhetoric espoused in this report is the reduction of human interest to the purely economic.

The corporate-driven neoliberalization of the K-12 education system helps to hegemonize the neoliberal historical bloc and create the neoliberal subject en masse. Evidencing the increase in the neoliberal subject is difficult because, as previously mentioned, defining and clearly elucidating a super-structure like neoliberalism is troublesome. The best way to evidence the creation of the neoliberal subject is to reveal an increase in self-entrepreneurial behaviors – in line with Foucault’s conceptualization of the “entrepreneur of the self”. There has been a clear shift in the rates at which students choose different majors in the years since the neoliberal project first asserted itself. Some of these changes can certainly be chalked up to technological advancement. The rise in Computer Science and Visual Art majors makes sense in light of the rise of the internet. There are, however, trends that show a decrease in the power of personal interest and an increase in the power of financial considerations as a deciding factor in choosing what to major in. Since 1970, the rates at which students major in Education (22% to 6.17%), Sociology (4.2% to 1.76%), English (8% to 3.13%),

and History (5.6% to 2.05%) have all decreased significantly (at least a 50% decrease). In the same time period, the rates at which students major in Health Professions (3.1% to 9.53%) and Business (14.4% to 21.38%) have increased significantly (Morgan 2014, figure 1). The three majors that have fallen the most dramatically are all majors that are less lucrative than the majors that have dramatically increased. Of the fifteen most lucrative college majors, three fall under the umbrella of Health Professions, two fall under the umbrella of business, and zero fall under education, sociology, English, or History (Hoff, 2020). Two conclusions could come from this data, either the public's non-economic interest in Education, English, History, and Sociology have decreased by 50% each in the last fifty years and the interest in Business and Health Professions have increased at a comparable rate, or the decision-making factors have changed. The first option seems unlikely, as "teacher" consistently ranks in the top three in children's dream job surveys (Chambers, Kasefpakdel, Rehill, & Percy 2018, 6).



## Neoliberalization of Higher Education and Research

The story of the neoliberalization of higher education can be traced back to Germany in the late 1800s. The medieval university, based upon religion and not entirely dedicated to specialization, was losing ground to a new model, the German research university. In the United States, prior to the importation of the German university model, universities operated as *bildungsroman* for the rich to send their children (mostly men). In Germany, the new university model was a research institute built around faculty and students working together to learn, create, and grow. This research institute was, however, heavily influenced by the positivist concept of knowledge production. This university model was adopted by the United States and has come to be the dominant university model in the world. The positivism that came with it has been replaced by the scientism that dominated the research paradigm under neoliberalism. This new scientism allowed for the beginnings of the neoliberal relationship between business, the state, and the university. With the new rise in scientific research being done in universities, they acted as centralized locals where businesses and governments could go for new research. This scientific research method spread to the furthest corners of academia and changed the relationship between research and knowledge. Before the advent of the German research university and the entrenchment of a scientific tradition, researchers answered to numerous non-scientific fields; however, with the rise of scientism came a new dominating force in research. Science, rationalization, and statistics now reigned supreme. This new mode of knowledge acceptance and production allows for a greater degree of confirmation or legitimation. When science must only answer to itself rather than to philosophy or thought they can act as powerful tools of legitimation and power-knowledge for business if effectively

subjected to the profit-making mission of business. The scientific logic seems to combat any undue influence on the “truth” of research from business via its insistence on objectivity; however, the introduction of business’ influence on this scientific logic strains this claim (Pack 2018). When a business decides to invest in a piece of research there is an understanding of a functional element to their decision. The key to whether research can limit this influence of use and pragmatism is the way in which they receive grants. If grants were assigned via importance to the research in a field or according to a faculty member’s import to the faculty then maybe this influence could be mitigated; however, the historical and (to an even greater degree) contemporary ways in which grants have been awarded to researchers by business, government, and even universities themselves expose research and the scientific tradition to the logics of these institutions and the structures that dominate them via the influence of “use” or function. This new relationship leads to a university structure that produces instead of creating, a subtle difference with massive implications.

The NCRP conducted three reports on corporate philanthropy in 1997, 1999, and 2004. In each of the three reports the conservative foundations studied within the reports (all of whom receive funding from corporations, albeit to differing degrees), there are large swaths of money given to university research programs. According to the 1997 report, from 1992-1994 conservative foundations gave \$89 million to influence public policy, curriculums, and individual scholars. This spending was largely split into two categories: a positive category in which conservative organizations and scholars are given money to increase their standing and prominence and a negative category in which a perceived (and often created or mythological) progressive dominance of the research university was both created and then pushed back upon

by this progressive tradition. The positive grant-making was specifically targeted at existing hotbeds of conservative and, specifically, neoliberal thought. The University of Chicago, arguably the single greatest progenitor of neoliberal thought in United States and its greatest power center, received \$10.35 million from 1992-1994 from conservative foundations (Covington 1997, 7). The University of Chicago served as home to numerous conservative voices including Allan Bloom, Richard Epstein, and Richard Posner who help to encapsulate the strategies in conservative foundations' grant-giving to universities. Allan Bloom helped to crystalize and popularize the attack on the perceived overly progressive university. Richard Epstein and Richard Posner furthered legal theories that supported conservative interpretations on environmental protections, discrimination statutes, and other broad-based legal issues. Other universities receiving large sums of grant money were Harvard University, George Mason University, and Yale University (Covington 1997, 7-8).

The 2004 NCRP report details the pushback against perceived hyper-progressivism in universities by conservative foundations and organizations. The Intercollegiate Studies Institute (ISI) received \$14 million from 1999-2001 allowing it to operate with 900 representatives, 50,000 student and faculty members, and more than 300 conferences annually. The ISI's mission is to "educate for liberty" which, in practice, entails teaching the benefits of a free market system and pro-business strategies. Some former members of the ISI are "Richard V. Allen, President Reagan's first national security adviser, and Edwin J. Feulner Jr., president of the Heritage Foundation" (Krehely et al. 2004, 22). Overall, extrapolating the averages from the 1992-1994 report, conservative foundations are spending close to a billion dollars each decade to affect higher education at a policy level.

More specifically, business grants for individual researchers have increased in the neoliberal era as well. As discussed before, the influence of money on university research can subject supposedly objective research to the qualification of function or use for a business. This subjection to functionality can cause research to lose its claim to objectivity and, in the case of business, can lead it to be warped by business ideologies. In social science research, the usefulness of research in terms of business functions can be particularly disastrous. Humanities and social sciences such as political science, philosophy, and economics are integral to the people's understanding of their own political, social, and economic reality. The social sciences act as ideology-setting enterprises that can have profound effects on the way people behave in their daily lives. When subjected to the functional apparatuses of business social science research can be effectively weaponized to great effect in defining the socio-economic and political realities of people within a nation. In order to make these private dollars more effective in legitimizing the neoliberal mission, there must be not only an increase in private spending on research (both university and private research) but there must also be a decrease in the share of total spending via public spending on research. This is necessary because if the public spending maintains its share of the total spending on research (public plus private spending), the private spending increase will not be as effective in increasing its legitimating power. In the period from 2011-2017, federal funding for university research and development (R&D) fell by nearly a quarter. In the same period, private funding for university R&D has slightly risen (Atkinson and Foote, 2019). This shows a marked decrease in the share of R&D dollars coming from the government, resulting in a university research paradigm in which private funding plays an outsized role. This means that more and more research is subjected to

the use factor of business (profit). It is certainly true that government-funded research may have the influence of a use factor as well; however, this use factor functions much differently than the use factor of business. The government is, in theory, beholden to the interests of the public. In a university paradigm in which students, professors, and administrators were not forced to behave strategically due to the imposition of the neoliberal, corporatist regime, the influence of the use function imposed by government funding would be usefulness to the people and the researchers – rather than usefulness to capital.

Following in the trend of the decrease of federal funding and an increase in private funding and control of higher education, *The Bayh-Dole Act* was passed in 1980. This act changed the rights of university research in regard to the ownership of their inventions. Before the passage of this act, the government owned the rights to any invention made with public funding; however, this act made it so that researchers controlled their inventions and their commercialization. This act allows university researchers to profit from their research in a very direct way. This means that rather than doing research in pursuit of truth or general usefulness for the field of study or humanity; research is widely subjected to the use function of business – profit.

Studies have found numerous examples of biased research practices related to financial relationships between universities, researchers, and businesses (Resnick and Elliot, 2013). The following table shows an example of different steps in the research process and how they can be affected by financial relationships.

Type of Influence	Example
Problem selection	Funding research projects that are likely to reflect positively on a company's products
Study design	Under-powering a study to show no statistically significant evidence of an adverse effect
Data collection	Fabricating or falsifying data
Data analysis	Choosing a method of data analysis most likely to support one's hypothesis
Data interpretation	Overstating the significance of data

(Resnick and Elliot 2013, 188)

This is not to say that any financial relationship renders a piece of research unusable and biased; however, financial relationships should be taken into account when assessing the relative value of research and its implications. These financial relationships must be well understood by the general public in order for the proper weight to be given to research and its implications; however, research is often not reported on in any great depth in mass media. Here, the dual nature of research in the modern era can work to effectively legitimate and further corporate interests. The scientific trend in knowledge production lends heightened truth and legitimacy to research. The implications of research are no longer subject to romanticism and idealism, rather they answer to the scientific method – a method that is often hard to understand for laypersons. This legitimation mixed with the relative ignorance in terms

of scientific literacy of the average reader leads to widescale acceptance of published scientific research. The financial relationships that have taken significant control over this research lead to the outcomes and implications of research being less objective and sound than it is commonly understood to be. This leads to widely accepted, legitimated research that in turn legitimates corporatist bias via its financial relationships with the business sector.

The NCRP report from 2004 details multiple individual researchers and their financial relationships. Interestingly, these researchers are social scientists with a scientific nature for the most part. Maybe the most famous of these researchers is Charles Murray, author of *The Bell Curve* and *Losing Ground*. Murray received a million-dollar grant from the Bradley Institute that largely funded his publication of *The Bell Curve* and was a Bradley Fellow at the American Enterprise Institute and at the Manhattan Institute (Krehely et al. 2004, 61). *The Bell Curve* is most famous for its reporting on racial differences in IQ scores and its implications regarding this data. Murray used this data to argue against programs like Welfare that sought to restore social and economic parity by lifting people out of poverty. The objective approach the book purported to take is cloaked in the style of scientism discussed earlier in the section. This leads to the legitimation of its findings; however, due to the financial relationships that led to the book's publishing, the objectivity and scientific nature of the book should be questioned. It doesn't matter that this book gets the science wrong or that the implications drawn from their incorrect quantitative study are shakily constructed (Darlington 1996, 627-629); the *appearance* of objectivity has become paramount via the institution of the German research model and its scientific trend. The positivist tendency originally found in the university is not to blame. Positivism is a useful and important form of knowledge production. Scientism is

useful and important under certain conditions; however, no form of knowledge production should dominate the knowledge production paradigm. Scientism, when subjected to neoliberal ideologies and marred by bias-inducing financial relationships, can be problematic and de-democratizing for knowledge production.

These financial relationships and new subjection to neoliberal logic change the internal functions of universities as well. Ideally, programs and university projects would be chosen for how well they match the wants and needs of the students and faculty at their specific university. Funding for research would be selected for the prominence and university-specific import of the faculty and the research topic. Instead, the neoliberal university creates a paradigm in which faculty and students are forced to act as strategic actors to maximize their value (Pack 2018). The determination of that value is determined by the market, and, as market valuations tend to be, that value is predicated upon their function as profit-making ventures. This new valuation of research changes the roles professors play. Rather than being able to focus solely on their passions and expertise, professors are made to compete for prestigious journal entries and vie for funding from the private sector and the government. Students must market themselves and choose majors for their speculative future values; often settling for monetarily promising majors, but they lack passion for. Arendt would say that students are not able to wander – to search for what they enjoy and thrive in. To borrow from Foucault, the faculty and students are “entrepreneurs of the self”. They themselves, their creative capacities, and their passions are subjected to market logic in the new university paradigm. Leading to a university paradigm that does not allow for wandering in thought and instead works in service of business forces.



In conjunction with these business forces, the university's propensity as a redistributive enterprise has been limited under the neoliberal regime. The cost of university education has skyrocketed in the neoliberal era; precipitated by a decrease in government funding of higher education. This decrease in government funding serves two purposes: limiting the redistributive element of the university and increasing the power of private interests in the university. The increased cost of a university education means that students from working-class socioeconomic backgrounds either outright can not afford to and do not go to college or take out huge loans in order to attend (Mitchell and Fuller 2016, par. 3-4). Either way, their future earnings are significantly hampered by the increase in the cost of university education. The decrease in government funding predominantly came from decreases in higher education funding at the state level. This decrease in government funding directly contributes to this increase in cost as the university has to receive its operating funds from somewhere – once the share allotted from the federal government decreases, the share from the students must increase. The decrease in state funding for higher education also results in an increase in the power of private or corporate funding. Once again, the university must receive its operating costs. and in the space left by the decrease in state funding, private dollars help to fill the gap. This increases the universities' need for private funding, which in turn increases the power of private funding.

The neoliberal university disseminates power-knowledge in support of the dominant social force. The increased influence of corporatists, conservative foundations, and general neoliberal logic has led to universities becoming one of the key pillars of the legitimization of neoliberalism and the status quo. It is up to individual professors, administrators, and students

to resist this domination and instead produce information for the sake of people and truth rather than profit.

## Conclusion

The United States' education system is dominated by private interests and serves to legitimate and hegemonize the neoliberal regime. The increase in private spending on education policy implementation in both higher and lower education, the increased importance of nationalized standards and practices and standardized tests, increased corporate curriculum control, and the increase in private spending on university research evidence this claim. The fight against this private control of education is vitally important. Education has the potential to be a force of immense positivity, cooperation, and redistribution in the world; however, under the current paradigm, it serves the opposite purposes. The changes needed to combat this trend are many; however, there is one change that could have profound and far-reaching effects on education: greater respect for teachers and administrators. Here, respect must function operationally, it is not an idyllic or normative determination. Respecting teachers and administrators means trusting them to craft and implement education policy at the local level. The largest turn in education policy in the neoliberal era occurred with the federalization of education policy and implementation. Teachers fought against this change tooth and nail; in fact, in the story told through this paper there is but one hero – Dr. Joanne Yatvin. Dr. Yatvin was a member of the panel selected to study and select the literacy education strategy for the *No Child Left Behind Act*. She filed a minority view in dissent of the panel's filing because the panel had systematically rejected all evidence that did not meet the already-formed interpretation of the panel's leader. Dr. Yatvin was the only principal and one of only two public school representatives on the panel. The federal education policy crafted in part by that panel and included in the *No Child Left Behind Act* does not educate for democracy; they educate for

business. The teacher and administrators of The United States are present in their students' lives and can more readily craft, implement, and adopt policy at the individual level. A more personalized, democratic education system is possible, but only if we listen to the people who actually run it.

The force of neoliberal subject-formation must be combated for two reasons. On the one hand, this subject formation further cements neoliberalism as a regime. Individuals cannot be entirely understood as neoliberal subjects and never will; however, as the subject forming effects of neoliberal policy persist, individuals subjected to the neoliberal logic become more and more engrained with a worldview of neoliberalism. Their behaviors come to be more and more based upon the economic considerations that bounds their relationship with the neoliberal government as its subject. Neoliberalism as a regime has had a disastrous effect on worldwide wealth and income inequality, as discussed in the "History of Neoliberalism" section of this paper.

The other reason that neoliberal subjectification is a negative force in world politics is that the purely rational, economic nature of the neoliberal subject (which will never be fully reached but has been and will continue to be approached) erases numerous aspects of human behavior, understanding, and creation. There are aspects of human behavior that are purely economic and rational; however, they are not representative of the whole of human activity. If the other aspects of human behavior are mitigated in favor of purely economic or rational aspects of human behavior, humanity would lose out on many of its most treasured parts of life. Art, philosophy, play, sports, theater, film, music, and other creative overflows of humanity would be reformulated or lost in the effort to economize human behavior. Love, friendship, and

other human relationships would be similarly reformulated. This logical underpinning leaking into the non-economic aspects of life will have disastrous effects for the whole of human social organization and general happiness.

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