

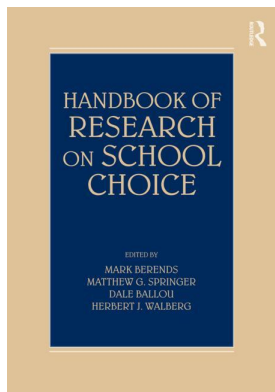
This article was downloaded by: 10.3.98.104

On: 21 Jan 2022

Access details: *subscription number*

Publisher: *CRC Press*

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: 5 Howick Place, London SW1P 1WG, UK



## **Handbook of Research on School Choice**

Mark Berends, Matthew G. Springer, Dale Ballou, Herbert J. Walberg, Ann Primus

### **Social Perspectives on School Choice**

Publication details

<https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9780203881781-3>

MARK BERENDS, GENEVIEVE C. ZOTTOLA

**Published online on: 20 Apr 2009**

**How to cite :-** MARK BERENDS, GENEVIEVE C. ZOTTOLA. 20 Apr 2009, *Social Perspectives on School Choice from: Handbook of Research on School Choice* CRC Press

Accessed on: 21 Jan 2022

<https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9780203881781-3>

**PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR DOCUMENT**

Full terms and conditions of use: <https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/legal-notices/terms>

This Document PDF may be used for research, teaching and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproductions, re-distribution, re-selling, loan or sub-licensing, systematic supply or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The publisher shall not be liable for an loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.

# 3

## Social Perspectives on School Choice

MARK BERENDS

*University of Notre Dame*

GENEVIEVE C. ZOTTOLA

*Vanderbilt University*

### Abstract

The rationale for school choice is that providing autonomy, innovation, and accountability will allow schools of choice to operate more effectively vis-à-vis regular public schools. However, from existing research, we do not know that this is the case. Here, we review several social perspectives on choice: rational choice theory, institutional theory, social capital theory, and the social organization of schooling. Rational choice theory provides a rationale for many forms of school choice, although several researchers have questioned its underlying assumptions. An alternative theory is the institutional perspective, which predicts that school choice will not result in widespread innovation and different school organizational forms. Social capital theory provides a lens to view how face-to-face social relationships among individuals and groups can promote certain goals and outcomes. The social organization of schooling perspective emphasizes how school structure and processes are related to student outcomes. We argue that there is a need for researchers to expand this latter perspective to examine what occurs inside the black box of schools of choice. By examining the social structure and processes within schools, classrooms, and families, we will further understand the conditions under which choice may (or may not) promote positive student outcomes.

As the school choice movement gathers steam, so too does the research examining whether or not it is doing what it aims to do—that is, advance the educational opportunities for America's students. It is interesting, however, that most of that research effort to date has neglected school structure and processes as they relate not only to student outcomes but the three key aspects of schools that the choice movement intends to improve—autonomy, innovation, and accountability (see Berends, Springer, & Walberg, 2008a; Bulkley & Fidler, 2003; Gill, Timpane, Ross, Brewer, & Booker, 2007; Lubienski, 2003). Central to advocates' argument for choice is that these aspects of reform will produce changes in organizational conditions that promote learning, curriculum, and instruction, which, in turn, will lead to better student outcomes. Moreover, the argument goes, practices and conditions related to autonomy, innovation, and accountability will differ across

schools (and school types), thus responding to parental and community preferences and further promoting student achievement. Notwithstanding this foundational claim of school choice advocates, research supporting or refuting it is either nonexistent or mixed.

For this reason, this chapter approaches the subject of social perspectives on school choice from the vantage point of social theory. We begin by focusing on the rational choice, or market, perspective, and then consider choice from the sociological frameworks of institutional, social capital, and social organization of schooling perspectives. After reviewing some of the evidence on school choice, we make the case that there is a dearth of, and thus a need for, research that examines what occurs inside the black box of school choice—that is, the social structure and processes within schools, classrooms, and families that shed light on the conditions under which choice may (or may not) help students succeed. Many forms of choice can be examined from this social organization of schooling perspective, including charter, magnet, or private schools; vouchers and tuition tax credits; homeschooling; and provisions under No Child Left Behind.

### **Rational Choice Perspective**

Many reformers maintain that market style mechanisms of consumer choice and competition between autonomous schools will encourage diverse and innovative approaches (e.g., Chubb & Moe, 1990; Walberg & Bast, 2003). The assumption is that as school choice undercuts bureaucratic political control of public education, it provides educators in schools of choice the opportunity and motivation to experiment with new organizational and instructional strategies for improving student achievement.

The mechanism of school choice gives parents the opportunity to pursue non-traditional schooling options for their children. Proponents of choice argue that providing this freedom not only diversifies educational opportunities, but also creates incentives for the improvement of traditional public schooling through increased market competition for services. For example, Chubb and Moe (1990) and others (e.g., Friedman, 1962; Kearns & Doyle, 1988; Lieberman, 1989, 1993) argue that, as choice allows market-like competition to increase and bureaucratic structures to decline, it provides parents with greater opportunities for home-school interaction and schools with greater openness to parents' demands. Supporters of debureaucratization contend that parents, especially low-income and minority parents, will be less intimidated by the schools and more willing to make their needs known to school personnel, resulting in school processes that will lead to higher achievement (see Cookson, 2002; Paulu, 1989; Rinehart & Lee, 1991).

Central to the market orientation of the school choice mechanism is rational choice theory, which suggests individuals will consistently choose those alternatives that they believe maximize the utility of their preferences (see Becker, 1986; Coleman & Fararo, 1992; Goldring & Shapira, 1993; Ostrom & Ostrom, 1971). Broadly speaking, rational choice theory (RCT) posits that individuals act out of self-interest; that is, they act only in terms of their personal preferences, and are rational in that they methodically order all choices from most to least desired.

When RCT is applied to school choice, three factors of the parent decision-making process emerge—information, available choices, and a cost-benefit analysis (Bast & Walberg, 2004). Researchers applying rational choice to schools assume that schooling markets are open, fair, and unbiased (Bell, 2005). They hypothesize that the selection process results both in “allocative efficiency,” or a better match between goods and services and consumer preferences, and “productive efficiency,” whereby schools are pressured to provide better services in a more efficient manner (Schneider, Teske, & Marschall, 2000; DeJarnett, 2008). Coleman (1992) goes farther, stating that parental choice options frame schools within a quasi-market mechanism. Schools are then compelled to react by attracting new parents to their school and/or to improve their school to prevent parents from being lured towards “better” schools.

*Research Informing Rational Choice Perspective and School Choice*

The application of RCT to school choice, however, is controversial (e.g., Wells & Crain, 1992; Bryk, Lee, & Holland, 1993; Henig, 1999). Specifically, researchers have raised questions about four issues: (1) the market metaphor implicit in the theory, (2) RCT's definition of what constitutes the "best" decision, (3) the uniqueness of parent choice sets, and (4) the role of race-ethnicity in RCT.

*Market Metaphor Implicit in RCT* RCT in school choice functions at the intersection of parental decision-making and market pressures. It predicts that parents utilize information and preferences to weigh the costs and benefits of choices in order to select the best school (Bast & Walberg, 2004). Within this dynamic, the hypothesis is that market pressures will drive lower performing schools to improve. Researchers note, however, that when given choices, parents will not necessarily choose the best schools, and they will not necessarily "vote with their feet" and exit failing schools. Instead, Holme (2002) finds that parents with resources will likely select schools on the basis of socioeconomic status (SES); that is, they choose schools composed of high-status students and avoid schools with poor and minority students. This finding implies that the expansion of choice may result in schools, pressured by the market, to attract higher-status families, rather than to improve the educational quality of the school (Gewirtz, Ball, & Bowe., 1995).

Similarly, empirical studies reveal that the school choice market, when framed within the constructs of RCT, has been overly simplified. Parents are portrayed as rational consumers who are fully informed, despite the fact that competitive private markets indicate that only a subset of consumers do research to make informed purchases (Buckley & Schneider, 2003). Also, parents as consumers are defined differently than "natural" consumers. Lubienski (2001) explains that within the context of school choice, the identity of the consumer is less than explicit due to the process by which education is produced and consumed. Although the most direct consumer of education is the student, most often the student is not making the choice among the many options available in the education market. Instead, parents serve as "proxy-consumers," in that while they make the choice, they do not actually "consume" and personally enjoy the direct benefits of the product (Brighthouse, 1997).

*RCT's Definition of "Best" Decision* Rational choice theory supports the idea that parents, if empowered, will opt for a school that can provide the best education for their child. In other words, they will choose a school that is higher performing than the school in which their child is currently enrolled. The focus, then, is aimed at uncovering the process parents use when choosing schools. Several researchers have set out to investigate that process. Buckley and Schneider (2002) find that parents value high academic standards, a strong curriculum, and good teaching. Elsewhere, Schneider and colleagues (2000) show that parents rank academic aspects of schools as the most important criteria for choice, particularly for those who feel marginalized by the unresponsiveness of traditional public schools (see also Horn & Miron, 1999).

Although many parents point to academics as the most important consideration in the choice process, numerous studies negate this claim. Goyette (2008), Saporito and Lareau (1999), and Henig (1996) all find that race is an important factor for choosing parents. Hastings, Kane, and Staiger (2005) show that school location relative to home plays an important role in the choice process, as does socioeconomic status, which influences the degree to which test scores affect the final decision (see also Wells & Crain, 1992). And Bell (2005) finds, after examining the process of choice for parents in a large Midwestern city including adjacent suburbs, that social networks are influential. Bell also shows that, although parents of every social class rate academic concerns above other categories, those of different social classes choose different kinds of schools: 53% of middle-class parents opt for schools ranked as non-failing compared to 36% of poor and working-class parents.

Thus, researchers note the ambiguity associated with defining parents as rational choosers who rank schools clearly in terms of their academic desirability. Much of the research points to the fact that RCT *does* provide the paradigm for parental motivation in so much as parents *believe* they are selecting the “best” schools. However, this theory falls short of predicting the choice process because parent behavior demonstrates that they choose schools to which they have been most exposed or those that are most comfortable for racial-ethnic or socioeconomic reasons (DeJarnett, 2008).

*The Uniqueness of Parent Choice Sets* Despite the arguments that parents act as rational choosers, the school choice mechanism is complex, such that the set of schools from which parents make their choice is in fact distinct from one parent to another. As we touched on earlier, socioeconomic status and networks are factors in the decision-making process. Holme (2002) finds that in high SES neighborhoods, parental judgments concerning school quality are formulated through social networks. The information gathered within high-status networks, appearing in the form of judgments labeling schools as either good or bad, not only circulates within these networks, but actually originates there.

Most parents state that they base their judgments about school quality primarily on information from individuals in their social networks. These social networks, however, do not provide information about a school’s curricula or instructional quality...instead they pass around the opinions of other parents about the quality of particular schools, that is, whether the school is considered generally good or bad by a number of high status parents. (Holme, 2002, p. 180)

In other words, parents within networks trust the information provided to them, assuming there to be a direct correlation between the quality of the school and the SES of the families it serves (Metz, 1990).

Similarly, Bell (2005) finds that middle-class parents are exposed more to non-failing, tuition-based schools with rigorous selection processes than are poor and working-class families. These differences in exposure are due to parents’ distinct social networks and traditional attendance patterns. Likewise, Horvat, Weininger, and Lareau (2003) report that middle-class parents’ social networks are comprised of professionals such as doctors and lawyers who are more inclined to have comprehensive knowledge pertaining to schools than their poor and working-class counterparts.

*Race-Ethnicity and RCT* The data on the role of race in shaping parents’ choice decisions is thin, contributing to a widespread belief among researchers that the process parents use when choosing schools is the same across racial groups. The argument is rarely made that racial differences imply differences in *models* of school selection (Massey & Denton, 1993). However, as mentioned above, there has been some research suggesting that the racial and ethnic make-up of schools appears to be important to parents.

Glazerman (1998) finds that parents in Minneapolis are more likely to transfer their children to schools with a student body comprised of the same racial and ethnic background as their own children. Saporito and Lareau (1999) find that race plays a key role in White parents’ choice process. Henig (1996) shows that both White and Black parents opt for schools where their children would racially “fit in,” whereas White parents do not even consider schools with a high minority population. In a recent study investigating the perceptions of school quality, Goyette (2008) concludes that race is a key determinant of school choice when she finds that parents rank schools’ quality in terms of the ratio of Whites to Blacks. In this case, an increase of African Americans in a school directly lowers the school’s rank irrespective of the school’s actual academic attributes. Interestingly,

these findings contradict parent survey results which indicate that race is not a factor in parents' choice preferences, but that they favor schools with diverse populations (Orfield, 1995). There is a need for more research to understand this discrepancy.

### *A Modified Application of RCT to School Choice*

Rather than ask the normative question, Are parents' decisions good to some object standard? Buckley & Schneider (2003) suggest that less rigid questions are more meaningful to school choice research—How are decisions made? and How do parents use information? Researchers who disagree with the one-size-fits-all approach of RCT propose a new model describing parents as adaptive decision-makers who are “meta-rational” in that they use a combination of cost-benefit, attendance patterns, and heuristics (Buckley & Schneider, 2003).

Hanson and Kysar (1999) state that RCT unrealistically assumes that choosers apply deductive logic to all possible solutions. Instead, individuals engaging in choice are actually less complex with their decision-making process. Choosers, these researchers suggest, use heuristic reasoning as a method to deal with challenging questions/problems, often substituting easier questions, and pairing such questions with easier answers from which to choose. This is not to say that the use of heuristics or short-cuts is utility maximizing. However, it is deemed necessary as decision-makers are often overwhelmed by the abundance of information pertaining to the myriad of choices before them (DeJarnett 2008).

Many researchers claim that the rigidity of RCT assumes a society without cultural constraints, describing it as oddly theoretical and abstract, likening it more to a faith than a testable hypothesis. Cookson (2002) and others interested in the process of parent decision-making, suggest that rather than consider RCT a theory, it should be referred to as a method by which heuristics are patterned.

### **Institutional Perspective**

An alternative social theory on the consequences of school choice rests with the institutional perspective. Stemming from broader organizational analysis, this “new institutionalism,” developed by John Meyer and colleagues several decades ago (Meyer, 1977, Meyer & Rowan, 1977, 1978; Powell & DiMaggio, 1991; Scott & Meyer, 1994; Scott & Davis, 2007), characterizes schools as institutions that have persistent patterns of social action that individuals take for granted.

Agreeing with rational choice theorists about the bureaucratic form of schooling that dominates the public school sector in the United States (and some other countries), institutional theorists take a different tack in their analysis of the education environment. For instance, the increase in bureaucratization of schools has led to an increase in rational coordination among the nested layers of the school—from the federal government to the state, districts, schools, and classrooms. According to institutional theorists such as Meyer and Rowan (1977, 1978), this bureaucratic, rational network has resulted in a system of categories or rules, called “ritual classifications,” that define the actions of schools, teachers, students. Over time these ritual classifications become institutionalized and accepted as the norm for what constitutes a legitimate school and schooling activities (Bidwell & Kasarda, 1980).

Examples of taken-for-granted classifications include certified teachers, instructional time, standardized curriculum subjects, age-based classes of reasonable size, and use of curricular materials. In large part, these rules have shaped schools, whatever the type in whatever sector, that look much more alike than different. Institutional theorists refer to this as “isomorphism” and have documented its diffusion both in the United States and throughout the world (Meyer & Ramirez,

2000). Summarizing the research and theory regarding the taken-for-granted school rules in the institutional perspective, Bidwell and Dreeben (2006) write:

For all schools, public and private, the academic curriculum has become standardized around state mandates, following worldwide patterns of convergence for teaching basic elementary school skills and a core of high school subjects, including: English (or a mother tongue), science, mathematics, social studies, and foreign language (Meyer, Kamens, & Benavot, 1992). To the same end, the constraints of college entrance requirements are felt equally keenly by both public and private high schools that offer college preparation. (p. 23)

To legitimize themselves within the broader community, school compliance to ritual classifications is important—more important, according to institutional theorists, than maximizing efficiency of school operations (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Scott & Meyer, 1994). In other words, schools adapt to their environments by adopting accepted rules and structures, leaving actual classroom instruction and learning relatively unexamined and unmonitored. Such loose coupling helps schools maintain their validity (Weick, 1977) and is further promoted by schools' logic of confidence that delegates instruction to teacher professionals who ultimately control what goes on inside their classrooms.

DiMaggio and Powell (1983) argue that there are different types of environmental pressures on organizations to make them more similar than different. These pressures include “coercive isomorphism,” which stems from formal and informal pressures by organizations and groups on which the school depends (e.g., federal and state mandates under NCLB); “mimetic isomorphism,” which stems from the adoption of similar structures and practices when facing uncertain tasks; and “normative isomorphism,” which stems primarily from professionalization of educators and professional networks.

### *Research Informing the Institutional Perspective and School Choice*

When applied to school choice—including public charter schools, magnet schools, private schools, and homeschooling arrangements—institutional theory emphasizes that *all* schools operate within highly institutionalized environments, which define what counts as legitimate schooling. All types of schools, no matter the sector or organizational form, adopt rituals, norms, and myths to support their validity (Meyer & Rowan, 1977, 1978; Scott & Davis, 2007). Thus, even schools of choice pay attention to institutional rules such as teacher certification, curricular subject matter, instructional time, reasonable class size, and mostly age-based grade organization.

Although institutional theory provides a perspective that counters the rational choice theory, few empirical studies within the context of choice have relied on it. One such study is Huerta's (2008), which relies on institutional theory as an analytic tool to understand the organization of a charter middle school in California. The aim of his study is to examine whether a school in a decentralized context exercises greater innovation in terms of the way it organizes and adopts new teaching and learning strategies. His interest is whether such a school can “resist the isomorphic pressures to adopt the institutional rituals, norms, and rules of the wider institutional environment” (Huerta, 2008, p. 2).

The school, Amigos (pseudonym), is located in a large urban district in northern California, enrolling about 170 Latino students who come from working class families. Huerta examines various aspects of Amigos over a 4-year period (1996–2000) from its early formation to its bid for renewing its charter, and relies on case study methods to interview parents, students, administrators, and policymakers. At the time the study began, teachers and administrators held a shared governance arrangement in which decisions were made collectively and administrative duties were shared. The school's goal was to make changes in teaching and learning—the core technology of

school organizations—at the expense of conforming to larger institutional rules. Because institutional theory posits that schools more attuned to their technical environment will earn legitimacy via performance (on such things as standardized test scores), Huerta found Amigos to provide an interesting case.

However, as Huerta observes, “because Amigos actively challenged the legitimacy of what it viewed as the institutionalized rituals and myths of the wider environment—choosing not to advance a logic of confidence sustained by ceremonial conformity or create a formal structure that would buffer the inner works of the organization—the school’s internal structure was left vulnerable” (Huerta, 2008, p. 29). Such a focus led to debates among teachers and administrators about effective innovations and how to communicate them to the larger school community. Over time, concern about these technical aspects of the school overwhelmed and motivated the staff to set criteria for how they would know whether innovations were successful.

Gradually, the school began adopting a more traditional governance structure. Thus, rather than shared decision-making and administrative duties, teachers focused their energies on the classroom, while the principal assumed oversight of administration. They clarified and codified job titles, roles, and tasks. And as Amigos prepared to renew its charter, which the authorizer stated would depend on institutional definitions of schools (e.g., staffing ratios, standardized academic programs), the transformation into a more traditional looking school was assured.

Huerta (2008) cites Meyer and Scott (1983, p. 56) to summarize the processes involved at Amigos as they relate to institutional theory:

Schools succeed and fail according to their conformity to institutional rules, rather than by the effectiveness of their technical performance. A school succeeds if everyone agrees that it is a school; it fails if no one believes that it is a school, regardless of its successes in instruction or socialization. This leads to the supposition that schools will be attentive to their general reputations and, as a component of this, will seek to satisfy their constituent and participant groups. (Huerta, p. 41)

Applying and building on institutional theory, Huerta emphasizes the micro-level processes that contribute to the institutionalization of schools (see also Coburn, 2004). He concludes that charter schools may be forced to balance internal goals for instructional processes and innovation with external controls that pull schools toward conformity with demands of the broader community. His findings are helpful in exposing some of the underlying processes in schools that are consistent with institutional theory.

Where Huerta’s study is limited in examining institutional theory within a broader set of schools, we turn to Goldring and Cravens (2008), who analyze survey data from a set of charter schools. Their aim is to understand organizational conditions associated with student achievement and compare whether these conditions differ in charter and traditional public schools. They embed their research in hypotheses stemming from market, or rational choice, versus institutional theory. That is, market theory predicts that mechanisms of consumer choice and competition between autonomous schools will encourage innovative approaches to school organization and instruction. By contrast, institutional theory predicts that there will not be substantial differences in conditions between school types due to isomorphism and the press for schools to maintain their legitimacy.

Goldring and Cravens (2008) analyze data collected through surveys of 29 charter and 43 matched traditional public schools, with a total teacher sample of about 850. Specifically, the authors look at organizational conditions that, according to the research, are related to student achievement and teachers’ academic focus on learning (e.g., principal leadership, teacher efficacy, time on task, instructional innovation). After comparing these conditions in the two types of schools,



Goldring and Cravens conclude that their findings are more consistent with institutional theory than with rational choice theory:

We interpret these findings to suggest that there are significant institutional forces driving all schools to believe that strong leadership and professional cultures and communities are integral aspects of the school organization, and that these aspects can impact the extent to which teachers focus on learning. The designation of a school as a charter school does not seem to alter these institutional forces or norms of practice. (p. 55)

Berends, Goldring, Stein, and Cravens (2008b) examine the achievement gains in charter and regular public schools and how these gains are mediated by the organizational and instructional conditions examined in the Goldring and Cravens (2008) study. Specifically, Berends et al. link the organizational enabling conditions and teachers' academic press for learning to the mathematics achievement gains of elementary school students in charter and regular public schools. They find no differences in achievement gains between charter and traditional public school students. Instructional conditions, such as teachers' focus on academic achievement, are related to mathematics gains in both sectors.

However, the measure for instructional innovation reveals a negative association with mathematics gains, net of other school factors and school type. That is, students in schools where teachers report greater instructional innovation have lower achievement gains than students in schools where teachers report less innovation. In part, this finding suggests that innovation for its own sake may not be the best strategy for improving student achievement.

The authors emphasize that this finding needs further examination, and have thus taken up a larger study examining whether institutional theory predicts similarity among schools in their organizational and instructional conditions, regardless of school type (see Berends et al., 2008b; Berends, Watral, Teasley, & Nicotera, 2008d). Additional studies such as this will also fill a significant gap in the research on instructional conditions in different types of choice schools compared with traditional public schools.

Future research on institutional theory needs to examine how the legal and regulatory environment influences school organization and instructional conditions (see DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). For instance, in his review of innovation within charter schools, Lubienski (2003) emphasizes how the charter schools laws vary across states. This could suggest that differences in flexibility and freedom from regulations would be associated with variation in innovation across charter schools. Yet, this is not the conclusion he comes to in his review. After examining state charter school laws, he finds that "the policy goals for charter schools in most states are rather similar" (Lubienski, 2003, p. 399). He states that the legislative language tends to have a specific target for what "innovation" means:

In surveying the legislative language, "innovation" was specified as a policy goal in approximately three-quarters of the laws, with virtually all of them explicitly seeking innovations in instructional practice such as "teaching methods." No other goal—including academic achievement and the diversification of programmatic options—was mentioned more frequently. (Lubienski, 2003, p. 399)

As with the other research discussed above, Lubienski's review suggests that teaching methods and instructional practices do not differ between charter schools and traditional public schools. He concludes by arguing that such findings are more consistent with institutional rather than market theory. Examining various analytic tools to summarize the findings in his review, Lubienski suggests that an important concept from institutional theory is relevant:

Perhaps more pertinent here, however, is the concept of *mimetic* isomorphism, wherein institutions employ a constricted set of responses to uncertainty. Particularly when facing a precarious environment or when operating on ambiguous goals, organizations are more likely to emulate “similar organizations in their field that they perceive to be more legitimate or successful” (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983, 152)...Employing standardized practices and strategies based on “appearances” may be a more effective and less costly option for an organization than experimenting with new approaches or mediating between conflicting goals. (Lubienski, 2003, pp. 423–424)

Although the extant research cited above focuses mainly on charter schools, school choice has many forms, each of which—proponents would argue—provides a way to challenge the bureaucratic nature of public schooling within the United States by introducing significant innovation. When choice is introduced, a freedom from regulations closely follows. Thus, one would expect that autonomy would lead to the technical aspects of schools rather than the norms and rules of the environment. Schools should exhibit less isomorphism, have less bureaucratic formal organizational structures, and be more tightly coupled around the technical aspects of the organization (see Davies & Quirke, 2006). Research to date calls this into question, but it is quite thin, so a fruitful line of future inquiry is to examine these hypotheses in a variety of samples that include the different types of school choice options.

### Social Capital Perspective

Several researchers have argued that social capital is important for school reform efforts, social and academic learning environments, and student learning (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Coleman, 1988; Furstenberg & Hughes, 1995; Portes, 1998). Because social capital has become popularized (Putnam, 2000), it is important to define it. As articulated by Coleman (1988) and Bourdieu (1986), social capital refers to the social relations between persons that provide resources for achieving certain goals (such as improvements in student learning).<sup>1</sup>

According to Coleman (1988), three facets of social relations constitute social resources: obligations and trust, information, and norms and sanctions. Coleman describes the form of social capital characterized by obligations and trust:

If A does something for B and trusts B to reciprocate in the future, this establishes an expectation in A and an obligation on the part of B. This obligation can be conceived as a credit slip held by A for performance by B. If A holds a large number of these credit slips, for a number of persons with whom A has relations, then the analogy to financial capital is direct. These credit slips constitute a large body of credit that A can call in if necessary—unless, of course, the placement of trust has been unwise, and these are bad debts that will not be repaid. (p. 102)

Social capital in this form consists of an environment of trust in which a series of exchanges build up for individuals or groups, resulting in embedded obligations, expectations, and norms between them (see also Granovetter, 1985).

The second facet of social relations relating to social capital is the amount of information flowing between individuals or groups. Through associations with others, people can gain information that may be pertinent to certain goals, such as keeping up-to-date in one’s professional area, learning about sales at a local retailer, or gaining information about the school choice options in a particular area.

A third facet of social capital, norms and sanctions, refers to the facilitation of some behaviors

and attitudes and constraining of others. On the one hand, interaction with those who support and invest themselves in school may be positively associated with a student's academic achievement, attitudes, and behavior (Bidwell & Friedkin, 1988; Brown, 1989; Epstein, 1983). On the other hand, associating with those who reject the norms of school may lead a student to reject school norms to avoid negative stereotypes (Willis, 1977; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). In short, social relations with others may have accompanying norms that pull students away or push them towards the school institution, depending on the expectations and norms of the group.

Networks of administrators, teachers, parents, and children generate social capital at the school level as a means to create an educational setting conducive to the exchange of social norms and information (Lin, 1999; Aston & McLanahan, 1991). It can be understood as a group resource that promotes the success of students through the function of trust mechanisms (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Goddard, 2003), such that all network members believe in the expectation that others will act reliably and confidently (Coleman, 1990). Schools that foster relationships bound by high degrees of social capital facilitate students' academic success (Goddard, Tschannen-Moran, & Hoy, 2001; Goddard, 2003); and social capital has been described as "the most proximal point of entry for reform efforts" directed at increasing the educational opportunities for at-risk youth (Connell, Spencer, & Aber, 1994).

### *Research Informing Social Capital Perspective and School Choice*

The application of social capital theory to school choice stems mainly from the line of research that has compared public to private schools, particularly Catholic schools. A number of researchers have examined whether students who attend Catholic schools learn more than similar students who attend public schools.<sup>2</sup> For example, in their study of High School and Beyond data from the 1980s, Coleman and Hoffer (1987) explain the positive relationship between Catholic school attendance and student achievement with the notion of functional communities.

According to Coleman (1990), there are three groups of school communities: nonfunctional, dysfunctional, and functional. Nonfunctional communities include parents who know their children's friends' parents but do not share information or enforce norms. Dysfunctional communities are closed groups that promote values and norms that discourage school success. Functional communities involve networks that are embedded in the larger community (school, church, synagogue, mosque, and other community organizations) that further social ties and face-to-face interactions. In addition, such communities have intergenerational closure. That is, parents know their children's friends, their children's friends' parents, and other adults in the school and community involved in their children's education.<sup>3</sup>

A distinguishing feature of functional school communities is the set of relationships forged among parents, involving face-to-face interaction. For instance, in such communities parents establish ties with the parents of their children's school friends to effectively monitor the out-of-school behavior of their children and to exchange information (Coleman & Hoffer, 1987). In addition, Morgan and Sorenson (1999) note that, as with every school, the core of a norm-enforcing school is the network of relationships among students, teachers, and parents. Schools function best when students build strong bonds with their classmates, when teachers cultivate nurturing relationships with their students, and when parents establish close ties with teachers (see also Bryk et al., 1993).

Coleman and Hoffer (1987) believe that the religious community is one of the few remaining strong bases of a functional community in modern society. Coleman (1990) argues that the network connectedness fostered by communal religious observance creates an additional stock of social capital for Catholic schools. By contrast, independent private schools ordinarily lack such a community, consisting of parents who have individually chosen a school but who do not constitute

a community outside the school. Non-religious private schools, charters, and magnets without a base in a religious community ordinarily draw children from a number of neighborhoods, and the parents have little or no occasion even to meet each other, except upon some school-related event (see Coleman & Hoffer, 1987).

With its emphasis on the benefits derived from participation in social networks and relations of reciprocity, social capital has encouraged researchers to examine relations between parents and their children, parents and teachers, students and teachers, and among the students themselves (see Bryk & Schneider, 2002). Some research on school choice other than private schools has relied on social capital theory, but the research studies are few. Schneider, Teske and Marschall (2000) examine two urban and two suburban districts in the context of public school choice. In interviews of over 1,600 parents, they consider the degree to which providing parents with choice increases parents' level of social capital.

Using four measures of social capital (PTA involvement, volunteer work at school, number of other parents respondents talked with about school matters, and the level of trust parents have in their child's teacher), Schneider et al. (2000) find that choosers in both urban and suburban settings are more likely to engage in activities they use to measure social capital. Their analyses reveal that that choice can increase parental involvement in voluntary organizations and school events; that choice can increase the trust between parents and teachers; and that choice can increase the level of interaction between parents. Schneider et al. argue that all these behaviors generate social capital and that choice, by increasing local social capital, helps to build stronger schools and communities.

In a multivariate analysis of the 1996 Household Education Survey, Campbell (2001) uses many measures related to social capital (such as community service and civic skills) to compare students from non-choice public schools with students from choice schools (excluding charters). Findings from this study indicate that levels of community service are higher among students in Catholic schools (which play a large role in the voucher program) by a statistically significant margin; however, no statistically significant differences among the other school sectors were found.

More research that analyzes specific measures of social capital is needed in other areas of school choice. The application of social capital theory in research that examines forms of choice other than Catholic or private schools—charters, magnets, homeschools, vouchers, tuition tax credits—is sparse.

### **Social Organization of Schooling Perspective**

In addition to studies of social capital, there is a long tradition among sociologists of examining the organization of schools, emphasizing the structure and processes that occur among and within different types of schools (see Dreeben, 1994; Gamoran, Secada, & Marrett, 2000; Schneider, 2003). Since the first Coleman report (Coleman et al., 1966), researchers have examined the relationship between school factors and student achievement, looking especially at how the structure and processes of schools correlate with the societal stratification of educational, occupational, and economic opportunities. More recently, research has shown that, although there is variation among schools in student achievement, the differences among classrooms and teachers are critical for student achievement growth (Rowan, Correnti, & Miller, 2002). A central focus in this line of research is what goes on inside the black box of schools and how school and schooling factors contribute to both social inequality and productivity.

Sociologists have argued for the importance of understanding the social relationships that occur within schools, particularly the interaction within classrooms, because these experiences provide students with the most immediate socialization (Bidwell, 1972; Bidwell & Friedkin, 1988; Gamoran, 1989; Oakes, Gamoran, & Page, 1992). For instance, Waller (1932) argues that the give

and take during classroom instruction constitutes the “nucleus” of the school (p. 33); Parsons (1959) writes that the classroom is “where the ‘business’ of formal education actually takes place” (p. 297); and Bidwell (1972) emphasizes studying the immediate social relations of students in schools and classrooms to discover “fairly sizable effects on students” (p. 5). Many have followed in this tradition of examining the organization of schools to understand school effects. Gamoran, Secade, and Marrett (2000) provide a summary of this approach:

An organization is a system of linked relationships, not simply a collection of individuals or of isolated categories...For this reason a sociological study of an organization calls for a study of relationships, centering on how relationships become ordered, how they change, and how they influence outcomes. What may prove intriguing across organizations are differences in the character of the linkages that prevail. (p. 59)

In addition to examining relationships within schools and classrooms, sociologists also emphasize understanding the collective nature of schools, particularly when examining different types of schools of choice. Bidwell and Dreeben (2006) point out the importance of examining the collective properties of schools and how these properties are related to the schooling activities that occur within:

...we should ask what properties of schools and school systems are conceptually important for understanding why they take the organizational forms they do, operate the way they do, and produce what they do. In other words, we should ask whether the distinction has any bearing on schooling (Bidwell & Kasarda, 1980), its nature and quality, and the curriculum, instruction, learning, and character of schools. (p. 10)

Elsewhere, Dreeben (1994) elaborates on the importance of looking at schooling processes in addition to the collective properties of schools (school structure):

Taking the internal structure of schools seriously will mean paying attention to those organizational properties and activities that immediately influence the experiences of students and shape their learning rather than assessing global characteristics of schools and school systems as if they were internally homogeneous. It will also mean thinking about the organization of instruction...and about the curriculum as both an organizational entity (Dreeben & Barr, 1987) and as an institutional one. (Meyer, 1977, p. 38)

Understanding schools as organizations provides an avenue for addressing the more macro rational choice and institutional theories described above. That is, by illuminating the structure and processes of different types of schools of choice (e.g., private, magnet, charter), a school organizational perspective can shed light on the hypotheses derived from the rational choice theory (e.g., autonomy fosters innovation) and from the institutional theory (e.g., environmental pressures make schools more alike than different). Social capital theory might be viewed as a component of school organizational theory in that social capital comprises a specific set of social processes.

### *Research Informing the Social Organization of Schooling Perspective and School Choice*

Sociologists have relied on the social organization of schooling perspective when examining school choice. Some of the best of this work has been applied to Catholic schools; future research, then, should apply the perspective to other schools of choice.

In their study of Catholic schools, Bryk et al. (1993) take a school organizational perspective because they “believe that a comparison of alternative organizational forms may help us better

understand how various features of school operations contribute to school life” (p. 55). The authors use a multi-method approach, including historical research, multivariate analyses of a number of databases (primarily the 1980s High School and Beyond), and an in-depth examination of school structure and instructional processes of seven Catholic high schools.

Their quantitative results are consistent with previous studies that find a Catholic school advantage in terms of student achievement (Coleman & Hoffer, 1987). The analysis also provides some insight into how Catholic schools are organized to promote higher academic achievement. It concludes that the strength of the curriculum focuses on core academic subjects, and teachers have high expectations of students and encourage them to take challenging course.

Shedding additional light on the Catholic school advantage, Bryk and colleagues’ (1993) study finds that teachers are willing to go beyond their specific teaching in classrooms to support students in their development. The authors also find that Catholic school climate, mission, and purpose are important for understanding the positive relationship between Catholic school attendance and student achievement. For instance, they observe that Catholic schools have environments that are orderly, safe, and secure. School discipline is consistently enforced. In addition, school staff, students, and parents have a close community characterized as respectful, caring, and service-oriented.

Bryk et al. (1993) emphasize that the faith-based orientation of Catholic schools provides coherence and integration of school structure and processes, integrates the school community, and provides students with emotional, social, and academic support. Although the researchers are not able to completely rule out selection effects in their analyses, the amount of different types of data they examine provide a compelling case that Catholic schools are organizationally different from traditional public schools, and these differences are important for understanding achievement effects. The Bryk et al. (1993) study provides a model for others’ research attempting to understand differences among school types in terms of organization, structure, process, and outcomes.

Nonetheless, Hallinan and Ellison (2006) criticize the Bryk et al. (1993) study for not analyzing specifically the mechanisms that lead to the Catholic school advantage in academic achievement. They argue that although Bryk and colleagues suggest that a rigorous curriculum, discipline, and a communal atmosphere promote student learning, they do not directly examine how Catholic schools guide learning opportunities for students and engage them in the learning process. Therefore, Hallinan and Ellison contribute to an organizational analysis of schools by analyzing ability grouping in Catholic compared with traditional public schools.

For decades, sociologists’ analysis of the organization of schools has examined ability grouping and tracking—the assignment of students to different curricular programs purportedly based on their interest and academic achievements. Across schools in the United States, prior research reveals that students in high ability groups have greater test score gains compared with students in low groups, leading to greater inequality between students placed in high- and low-group classes over time. This achievement gap between students in different ability groups remains even after taking into account other relevant factors such as family background, race-ethnicity, gender, and prior achievement.<sup>4</sup>

Yet, little is known about how ability grouping varies between schools types, a gap that Hallinan and Ellison address in their study of one Catholic high school and six public high schools. They find that public school students are more widely distributed across ability group levels in English and mathematics courses than in the Catholic school. That is, higher percentages of public school students are assigned to honors or advanced courses as well as to basic courses. By contrast, students in the Catholic school are primarily assigned to the regular ability group, which the authors say is consistent with the Catholic school philosophy that all students can learn and should be offered a challenging curriculum.

Controlling for a variety of student background characteristics and prior achievement, Hallinan

and Ellison (2006) find that Catholic students outperform public school students in English and mathematics. Moreover, they find that Catholic students in honors or advanced groups outperform their public school counterparts in high ability groups. They also find that Catholic students in the regular group have comparable scores to public school students in the honors or advanced groups, implying that the curriculum for regular students in a Catholic school is as rigorous as the honors or advance curriculum in the public schools. Although based on a small local sample of schools, Hallinan and Ellison's study highlights how the organizational practice of ability grouping may differ by school sector, something that needs further study not only in Catholic schools, but other schools of choice.

Despite the encouragement of several researchers to open the aforementioned black box of choice schools, few systematic studies apply the school organizational perspective to magnet or charter schools and compare them to regular public schools (Berends et al., 2008a; Betts et al., 2006; Betts & Loveless, 2005; Gill et al., 2007; Zimmer et al., 2003; Zimmer & Buddin, 2007). As Hess and Loveless (2005, p. 88) state, "Only by understanding how and why these programs work will we be able to replicate their benefits." Moreover, a recent consensus panel of prominent researchers on choice concludes that researchers should seek to distinguish among schools of choice in terms of effectiveness, and to distinguish the reasons for those differences (Betts et al., 2006). They go on to say that such research requires detailed information about curriculum, instruction, organizational conditions that promote achievement, and teacher characteristics and qualifications.

As previously discussed, the Goldring and Cravens (2008) and Berends et al. (2008b) studies aim to understand the organizational conditions that differ across school types and possibly explain achievement differences. Such conditions include measures of shared mission and goals, instructional leadership of principals, teachers' expectations for student learning, instructional program coherence, professional development, and teacher community. In addition, this line of inquiry is examining curriculum content, cognitive demand, and alignment to standards and assessments to better understand how school organization and process differ among schools of choice and traditional public schools (see Berends, Stein, & Smithson, 2008c).

For example, in the state of Indiana, Berends et al. (2008c) examine the enacted mathematics curriculum of charter and traditional public school teachers, considering differences in the breadth and depth of instruction, the cognitive complexity of instruction, and alignment of instruction to standards and assessments (Porter, 2002). Using a quasi-experimental design relying on propensity score analysis, they find that charter school teachers' mathematics instruction goes into more depth than breadth compared with traditional public school teachers. However, both charter and traditional public school teachers' mathematics instruction is aligned to the Indiana state standards and assessment, and there are no observed differences in cognitive demand in mathematics instruction. Following this approach to examining organizational differences among schools of choice and traditional public schools would fill a significant gap in our understanding about variation in structure and process among school types (see Berends et al., 2008d).

## Conclusion

In this chapter, we have reviewed several social perspectives on choice: rational choice theory, institutional theory, social capital theory, and the social organization of schooling perspective. Although rational choice theory provides a rationale for many forms of school choice, its assumptions have been criticized. As an alternative, institutional theory predicts that school choice will not result in widespread innovation and different school organizational forms, but the school choice research base informing this perspective is quite sparse. Social capital theory provides a lens to understand how the face-to-face social relationships among individuals and groups can promote

certain goals and outcomes, but most of the existing research has been limited to comparisons of Catholic and traditional public schools. Similarly, the social organization of schooling perspective has been limited to examination of Catholic and public schools, though we believe the studies in the Catholic sector provide a model for examining other areas of school choice, particularly charter, magnet, and other private schools.

The rationale for school choice is that providing autonomy, innovation, and accountability will allow schools of choice to operate more effectively vis-à-vis regular public schools. However, from existing research, we do not know that this is the case. For years, the usefulness of educational research to policymakers and educators has been challenged by the fact that knowing the characteristics of effective schools does not necessarily translate into creating such schools at scale (see Berends, 2004). Moreover, from a policy perspective, “Choice-based reform is not a discrete treatment that can be expected to have consistent effects... While some of the changes produced by choice-based reform are a consequence of choice qua choice, many others are only incidentally related to choice and may or may not be replicated in any future choice-based arrangement” (Hess & Loveless, 2005, p. 97). It may be, for example, that schools of choice are highly effective with certain curricula alignment and data-focused instructional strategies, while choice schools without these specific conditions (or those that allow teachers to be completely autonomous in their individual classrooms) are not effective at all.

In any case, because the research on the effects of school choice on achievement is mixed, we know that some schools are likely to be more effective than others. For learning why this is so, the social organization of schools (informed by the ideas of social capital theory) provides a promising perspective. Only by gathering measures of school effectiveness—with a particular focus on a variety of data on organization, structure, and processes—will we be able to understand the conditions under which different school types improve student learning.

## Notes

1. Those familiar with the work of Bourdieu (1984, 1986, 1990) and the rational choice perspective of Coleman (1990) may question the conciliatory discussion of these two sociologists. However, our aim here is to focus on the concept of social capital to further our understanding of schooling processes rather than testing the differences between Bourdieu's and Coleman's larger theoretical perspectives.
2. See Altonji, Elder, and Taber, 2005; Bryk, Lee, and Holland, 1993; Coleman and Hoffer, 1987; Coleman, Hoffer, and Kilgore, 1982; Evans and Schwab, 1995; Gamoran, 1992; Goldberger and Cain, 1982; Hoffer, Greeley, and Coleman, 1985; Jencks, 1985; Lee, Chow-Hoy, Burkam, Gevert, and Smerdon, 1998; Murnane, 1984; Sander and Krautman, 1995; Willms, 1985.
3. There is some debate about whether social capital is only an individual attribute of students or also an attribute of the aggregate school and community. On the one hand, Carbonaro (1999) argues that “if the effects of closure on educational outcomes are positive, then students with high levels of closure will benefit, while those with low levels will not” (p. 682). On the other hand, Morgan and Sorensen (1999) emphasize the importance of measuring social capital (particularly intergenerational closure) at the school level. In their view, students with low levels of individual closure who attend a school with a high overall level of closure will benefit as much as students with high individual levels (Morgan & Sorensen, 1999). To separate individual from school level social capital effects, Carbonaro (1999) suggests constructing a two-level model, which would further our understanding about how closure is related to student achievement at both individual and school levels.
4. For a review, see Gamoran and Berends, 1987; Gamoran and Hallinan, 1995; Oakes, Gamoran, and Page, 1992.

## References

- Altonji, J. G., Elder, T., & Taber, C. (2005). Selection on observed and unobserved variables: Assessing the effectiveness of Catholic schools. *Journal of Political Economy*, 113(1), 151–183.
- Aston, N. M., & McLanahan, S. S. (1991). Family structure, parental practices and high school completion. *American Sociological Review*, 56, 309–320.



- Bast, J. L., & Walberg, H. J. (2004). Can parents choose the best schools for their children? *Economics of Education Review*, 23(4), 431–440.
- Becker, G. (1986). The economic approach to human behavior. In J. Elster (Ed.), *Rational choice* (pp. 108–122). Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell.
- Bell, C. A. (2005). *All choice created equal? How good parents select “failing” schools* (Working paper). National Center for the Study of Privatization in Education, Teachers College, Columbia University.
- Berends, M., Springer, M. G., & Walberg, H. J. (Eds.). (2008a). *Charter school outcomes*. New York: Erlbaum.
- Berends, M., Goldring, E., Stein, M., & Cravens, X. (2008b). *Instructional conditions in charter schools and students’ mathematics achievement gains*. Paper presented at the Society for Research on Educational Effectiveness, First Annual Conference, Washington, DC.
- Berends, M., Stein, M., & Smithson, J. (2008c). *Differences between charter and traditional public school teachers’ instructional practices and curriculum alignment to mathematics standards and state assessment in Indiana*. Paper Presented at the Society for Research on Educational Effectiveness First Annual Conference, Washington, DC.
- Berends, M., Watral, C., Teasley, B., & Nicotera, A. (2008d). Charter school effects on achievement: Where we are and where we’re going. In M. Berends, M. G. Springer, & H. J. Walberg (Eds.), *Charter school outcomes* (pp. 243–267). New York: Taylor & Francis.
- Betts, J. R., & Loveless, T. (2005). *Getting choice right: Ensuring equity and efficiency in education policy*. Washington, DC: Brookings.
- Betts, J., Hill, P. T., Brewer, D. J., Bryk, A., Goldhaber, D., Hamilton, L., Henig, J. R., Loeb, S., & McEwan, P. (2006). *Key issues in studying charter schools and achievement: A review and suggestions for national guidelines*. Seattle, WA: Center on Reinventing Public Education.
- Bulkey, K., & Fisler, J. (2003). A decade of charter schools: From theory to practice. *Educational Policy*, 17(3), 317–342.
- Bidwell, C. (1972). Schooling and socialization for moral commitment. *Interchange*, 3, 1–27.
- Bidwell, C. E., & Dreeben, R. (2006). Public and private education: Conceptualizing the distinction. In M. T. Hallinan (Ed.), *School sector and student outcomes* (pp. 9–37). Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.
- Bidwell, C. E., & Friedkin, N. E. (1988). The sociology of education. In N. J. Smelser (Ed.), *The Handbook of Sociology* (pp. 449–471). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Bidwell, C. E., & Kasarda, J. D. (1980). Conceptualizing and measuring the effects of school and schooling. *American Journal of Education*, 88, 401–430.
- Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction: A social critique of the judgment of taste*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. In J. G. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of theory and research for the sociology of education* (pp. 241–258). New York: Greenwood Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1990). *In other words: Essays towards a reflexive sociology*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Brighouse, H. (1997). Two philosophical errors concerning school choice. *Oxford Review of Education*, 23(4), 503–510.
- Brown, B. B. (1989). The role of the peer group in adolescents’ adjustment to secondary school. In T. Berndt & G. Ladd (Eds.), *Peer relationships in child development* (pp. 188–215). New York: Wiley.
- Bryk, A. S., & Schneider, B. (2002). *Trust in schools: A core resource for improvement*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Bryk, A. S., Lee, V. E., & Holland, P. B. (1993). *Catholic schools and the common good*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Buckley, J., & Schneider, M. (2003). Shopping for schools: How do marginal consumers gather information about schools? *The Policy Studies Journal*, 31(2), 121–145.
- Buckley, J., & Schneider, M. (2007). *Charter schools: Hope or hype?* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Campbell, D. E. (2001). Making democratic education work. In P. E. Peterson & D. E. Campbell (Eds.), *Charters, vouchers, and public education* (pp. 247–267). Washington DC: Brookings Institution.
- Carbonaro, W. J. (1999). Opening the debate of closure and school outcomes: Comment on Morgan and Sorensen. *American Sociological Review*, 64(5), 682–686.
- Chubb, J. E., & Moe, T. M. (1990). *Politics, markets, and America’s schools*. Washington, DC: Brookings.
- Coburn, C.E. (2004). Beyond decoupling: Rethinking the relationship between the institutional environment and the classroom. *Sociology of Education*, 77(3), 211–244.
- Coleman, J. S. (1988). Social capital in the creation of human capital. *American Journal of Sociology*, 94, 95–121.
- Coleman, J. S. (1990). *Foundations of social theory*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Coleman, J. S. (1992). Some points on choice in education. *Sociology of Education*, 65(4), 260–262.
- Coleman, J. S., & Fararo, T. J. (1992). *Rational choice theory: Advocacy and critique*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Coleman, J. S., & Hoffer, T. (1987). *Public and private high schools: The impact of communities*. New York: Basic Books.
- Coleman, J. S., Campbell, E., Hobson, C., McPartland, J., Mood, A., Weinfield, F., & York, R. (1966). *Equality of educational opportunity*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- Connell, J. P., Spencer, M. B., & Aber, J. L. (1994). Educational risk and resilience in African-America youth: Context, self, action and outcomes in school. *Child Development*, 65(2), 493–506.
- Cookson, P. W. (2002). Privatization and educational equity: Can markets create a just school system? *Current Issues in Comparative Education*, 1(2), 57–64.

- Coons, J. E., & Sugarman, S. (1978). *Education by choice: The case for family control*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Davies, S., & Quirke, L. (2006). Innovation in education markets: An organizational analysis of third sector private schools in Toronto. In M. T. Hallinan (Ed.), *School sector and student outcomes* (pp. 39–71). Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.
- DeJarnett, S. L. (2008). School choice and the (ir)rational parent. *Georgetown Journal of Poverty Law and Policy*, 15.
- DiMaggio, P. J., & Powell, W. W. (1983). The iron cage revisited: Institutional isomorphism and collective rationality in organizational fields. *American Sociological Review*, 48(2), 147–160.
- Dreeben, R. (1994). The sociology of education: Its development in the United States. In A. Pallas (Ed.), *Research in sociology of education and socialization* (Vol. 10, pp. 7–52). Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.
- Dreeben, R., & Barr, R. (1987). An organizational analysis of curriculum and instruction. In M. T. Hallinan (Ed.), *The social organization of schools: New conceptualizing of the learning process* (pp. 13–39). New York: Plenum.
- Epstein, J. L. (1983). The influence of friends on achievement and affective outcomes. In J. L. Epstein & N. Karweit (Eds.), *Friends in school: Patterns of selection and influence in secondary schools* (pp. 177–200). New York: Academic Press.
- Evans, W., & Schwab, R. (1995). Finishing high school and starting college: Do Catholic schools make a difference? *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 110, 941–974.
- Fordham, S., & Ogbu, J. U. (1986). Black students' school success: Coping with the burden of 'acting white.' *Urban Review*, 18, 176–206.
- Friedman, M. (1962). *Capitalism and freedom*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Furstenbuerg, F. F., Jr., & Hughes, M. E. (1995). Social capital and successful development among at-risk youth. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 57, 580–592.
- Gamoran, A. (1992). The variable effect of high school tracking. *American Sociological Review*, 57, 812–828.
- Gamoran, A., & Berends, M. (1987). The effects of stratification in secondary schools: Synthesis of survey and ethnographic research. *Review of Educational Research*, 57, 415–435.
- Gamoran, A., & Hallinan, M. T. (1995). Tracking students for instruction: Consequences and implications for school restructuring. In M. T. Hallinan (Ed.), *Restructuring schools: Promising practices and policies* (pp. 113–131). New York: Plenum Press.
- Gamoran, A., Secada, W. G., & Marrett, C. B. (2000). The organizational context of teaching and learning. In M. R. Hallinan (Ed.), *Handbook of the sociology of education* (pp. 37–63). New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum.
- Gewirtz, S., Ball, S. J., & Bowe, R. (1995). *Markets, choice and equity in education*. Buckingham, UK: Open University Press.
- Gill, B. P., Timpane, P. M., Ross, K. E., Brewer, D. J., & Booker, K. (2007). *Rhetoric versus reality: What we know and what we need to know about vouchers and charter schools*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND.
- Glazeran, S. (1998). *School quality and social stratification: The determinants and consequences of parental choice*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Education Research Association, San Diego.
- Goddard, R. D. (2003). Relational networks, social trust and norms: A social capital perspective on students' chances of academic success. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 25(1), 59–74.
- Goddard, R. D., Tschannen-Moran, M., & Hoy, W. K. (2001). A multilevel examination of the distribution effects of teacher trust in students and parents in urban elementary schools. *The Elementary School Journal*, 102(1), 3–17.
- Goldberger, A., & Cain, G. (1982). The causal analysis of cognitive outcomes in the Coleman, Hoffer and Kilgore report. *Sociology of Education*, 55, 103–122.
- Goldring, E., & Cravens, X. (2008). Teachers' academic focus on learning in charter and traditional public schools. In M. Berends, M. G. Springer, & H. J. Walberg (Eds.), *Charter school outcomes* (pp. 39–60). New York: Taylor & Francis.
- Goldring, E., & Shapira, R. (1993). Choice, empowerment, and involvement: What satisfies parents? *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 15(4), 396–409.
- Goldring, E., & Sullivan, A. S. (1995). Privatization: Integrating private services in public schools. In P. Cookson and B. Schneider (Eds.), *Transforming Schools* (pp. 533–556). New York: Garland.
- Goyette, K. A. (2008). Race, social background, and school choice options. *Equity and Excellence in Education*, 41(1), 114–129.
- Granovetter, M. (1985). Economic action, social structure, and embeddedness. *American Journal of Sociology*, 91, 481–510.
- Hallinan, M. T., & Ellison, B. J. (2006). The practice of ability grouping. Sector differences in implementation. In M. T. Hallinan (Ed.), *School sector and student outcomes* (pp. 125–152). Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.
- Hanson, J., & Kysar, D. A. (1999). Taking behavioralism seriously: Some evidence of market manipulation. *Harvard Law Review*, 112(7), 1420–1572.
- Hastings, J. S., Kane, T. J., & Staiger, D. (2005, November). Parental preferences and school competition: Evidence from a public school choice program. *Yale Economic Applications and Policy*, Paper No. 10.
- Henig, J. R. (1996). The local dynamics of choice: Ethnic preferences and institutional responses. In B. Fuller & R. F. Elmore (Eds.), *Who chooses? Who loses? Culture, institutions and the unequal effects of school choice* (pp. 95–117). New York: Teachers College Press.

- Henig, J. R. (1999). School choice outcomes. In S. Sugarman & F. Kemerer (Eds.), *School choice and social controversy* (pp. 68–102). Washington, DC: Brookings.
- Hess, F. M., & Loveless, T. (2005). How school choice affects student achievement. In J. Betts & T. Loveless (Eds.), *Getting choice right: Ensuring equity, and efficiency in education policy* (pp. 85–100). Washington, DC: Brookings.
- Hoffer, T., Greeley, A., & Coleman, J. (1985). Achievement growth in public and Catholic schools. *Sociology of Education*, 58, 74–97.
- Holme, J. J. (2002). Buying homes, buying schools: School choice and the social construction of school quality. *Harvard Education Review*, 72(2), 177–205.
- Horn, J., & Miron, G. (1999). *Evaluation of the Michigan public school academy initiative*. Kalamazoo: Western Michigan University, The Evaluation Center.
- Horvat, E. M., Weininger, E. B., & Lareau, A. (2003). From social ties to social capital: Class differences in the relations between schools and parent networks. *American Educational Research Journal*, 40(2), 319–351.
- Huerta, L. A. (2008). *Institutional vs. technical environments: Reconciling the goals of decentralization in an evolving charter school organization*. Unpublished manuscript. Teachers College-Columbia University, New York.
- Jencks, C. L. (1985). How much do high school students learn? *Sociology of Education*, 58, 128–135.
- Kearns, D. T., & Doyle, D. P. (1988). *Winning the brain race*. San Francisco: ICS Press.
- Lee, V. E., Chow-Hoy, T., Burkam, D., Gevert, D., & Smerdon, B. (1998). Sector differences in high school course taking: A private school or Catholic school effect? *Sociology of Education*, 71, 314–335.
- Lee, V. E., Croninger, R. G., & Smith, J. B. (1994). Parental choice of schools and social stratification in education: The paradox of Detroit. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 16(4), 434–457.
- Lieberman, M. (1989). *Privatization and educational choice*. New York: Wiley.
- Lieberman, M. (1993). *Public education: An autopsy*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Lin, N. (1999). Building a network theory of social capital. *Connections*, 22(1), 28–51.
- Lubienski, C. (2001). *The relationship of competition and choice to innovation in education markets: A review of research on four cases*. Occasional Paper No. 26, National Center for the Study of Privatization in Education. New York: Teachers College, Columbia University.
- Lubienski, C. (2003). Innovation in education markets: Theory and evidence on the impact of competition and choice in charter schools. *American Educational Research Journal*, 40(2), 395–443.
- Maddeaus, J. (1990). Parental choice of school: What parents think and do. *Review of Research in Education*, 16, 267–295.
- Massey, D., & Denton, N. (1993). *American apartheid*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Metz, M. H. (1990). Magnet schools and the reform of public schools. In W. L. Boyd & H. J. Walberg (Eds.), *Choice in education: Potentials and problems* (pp. 123–147). Berkeley, CA: McCutchan.
- Meyer, J. W. (1977). The effects of education as an institution. *American Journal of Sociology*, 83(1), 55–77.
- Meyer, J. W., & Ramirez, F. (2000). The world institutionalization of education. In J. Schriewer (Ed.), *Discourse formation in comparative education* (pp. 111–132). Frankfurt: Peter Lang.
- Meyer, J. W., & Rowan, B. (1977). Institutionalized organizations: Formal structure as myth and ceremony. *American Journal of Sociology*, 83, 340–363.
- Meyer, J. W., & Rowan, B. (1978). The structure of educational organizations. In M. W. Meyer & Associates (Eds.), *Environments and organizations* (pp. 78–109). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Meyer, J. W., & Scott, W. R. (1983). Institutional and technical sources of organizational structure: Explaining the structure of educational organizations. In J. W. Meyer & W. R. Scott (Eds.), *Organizational environments: Ritual and rationality* (pp. 45–67). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Meyer, J. W., Kamens, D. H., & Benavot, A. (1992). *School knowledge for the masses: World models and national primary curricular categories in the twentieth century*. Washington, DC: Falmer Press.
- Morgan, S. L., & Sorenson, A. B. (1999). Parental networks, social closure, and mathematics learning: A test of Coleman's social capital explanation of school effects. *American Sociological Review*, 64(5), 661–681.
- Murnane, R. (1984). A review essay: Comparisons of public and private schools: Lessons from the uproar. *Journal of Human Resources*, 21, 263–277.
- Oakes, J., Gamoran, A., & Page, R. N. (1992). Curriculum differentiation: Opportunities, outcomes, and meanings. In P. W. Jackson (Ed.), *Handbook of research on curriculum* (pp. 570–608). New York: Macmillan.
- Oakes, J., Wells, A. S., Jones, M., & Datnow, A. (1997). Detracking: The social construction of ability, cultural politics, and resistance to reform. *Teachers College Record*, 98, 482–510.
- Orfield, G. (1995). Public opinion and school desegregation. *Teachers College Record*, 96, 655–670.
- Ostrom, V., & Ostrom, E. (1971). Public Choice: A Different approach to the study of public administration. *Public Administration Review*, 31, 203–216.
- Paulu, N. (1989). *Improving schools and empowering parents: Choice in American education*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- Porter, A. C. (2002). Measuring the content of instruction: Uses in research and practice. *Educational Researcher*, 31(7), 3–14.

- Portes, A. (1998). Social capital: Its origins and applications in modern sociology. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 24, 1–24.
- Powell, W. W. & DiMaggio, P. J. (1991). *The new institutionalism in organizational analysis*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Putnam, R. D. (2000). *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of the American community*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Rinehart, J. R., & Lee, J. F., Jr. (1991). *American education and the Dynamics of Choice*. New York: Praeger.
- Rowan, B., Correnti, R., & Miller, R. J. (2002). What large-scale survey research tells us about teacher effects on student achievement. Insights from the Prospects study of elementary schools. *Teachers College Record*, 104(8), 1525–1567.
- Sander, W., & Krautman, A., (1995). Catholic schools, dropout rates and educational attainment. *Economic Inquiry*, 23, 217–233.
- Saporito, S., & Lareau, A. (1999). School selection as a process: The multiple dimensions of race in framing educational choice. *Social Problems*, 46, 418–435.
- Schneider, B. (2003). Sociology of education: An overview of the field at the turn of the twenty-first century. In M. T. Hallinan, A. Gamoran, W. Kubitshek, & T. Loveless. *Stability and change in American education: Structure, process, and outcomes* (pp. 193–226). Clinton Corners, NY: Eliot Werner.
- Schneider, M., Teske, P., Marschall, M., Mintrom, M., & Roch, C. (1997). Institutional arrangements and the creation of social capital: The effects of public school choice. *The American Political Science Review*, 91(1), 82–93.
- Schneider, M., Teske, P., & Marschall, M. (2000). *Choosing schools: Consumer choice and the quality of American schools*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Scott, W. R., & Davis, G. F. (2007). *Organizations & organizing: Rational, natural and open system perspectives*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall.
- Scott, W. R., & Meyer, J. W. (1994). *Institutional environments and organizations: Structural complexity and individualism*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Walberg, H. J., & Bast, J. L. (2003). *Education and capitalism: How overcoming our fear of markets and economic can improve America's schools*. Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press.
- Weick, K. E. (1976). Educational organizations as loosely coupled systems. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 21(1), 1–19.
- Wells, A. S., & Crain, R. L. (1992). Do parents choose school quality or school status? A sociological theory of free market education. In P. W. Cookson (Ed.), *The choice controversy* (pp. 65–82). Newbury Park, CA: Corwin Press.
- Willis, P. L. (1977). *Learning to labour: How working class kids get working class jobs*. Driffield, UK: Nafferton.
- Willms, D. (1985). Catholic-school effects on academic achievement: New evidence from the High School and Beyond follow-up study. *Sociology of Education*, 58, 98–114.
- Zimmer, R., & Buddin, R. (2007). Getting inside the black box: Examining how the operations of charter schools affect performance. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 82(2–3), 231–273.
- Zimmer, R., Buddin, R., Chau, D. Gill, B., Guarino, C., Hamilton, L., Krop, C., McCaffrey, D., Sandler, M., & Brewer, D. (2003). *Charter school operations and performance: Evidence from California*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND.