

**Mary Healy**

**« A Philosophical Exploration of the Consequences of the Market Metaphor  
for Social Cohesion »**

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Education and schools, more than any other institutions, shape normative values and beliefs and transmit these to successive generations. However, the commodification of education through the increasing prevalence of school choice and market values leads to undermining and might, under certain conditions, erase the very structures of such ties necessary for schools to function in their civic task of educating the future citizenry.

The focal point of a vision of what a democratic society should be must consider how its citizens relate to each other and the bonds and loyalties required of them. It is through our associations with others that we learn to practice and develop the civic skills and attitudes needed to uphold the civic bond. Promoting social cohesion is thus a key policy challenge in current social theory: how societies cooperate and hold together. Where associations are restricted amongst particular sectors of a populace, the development of the *civic* virtues of toleration, respect etc may themselves also be restricted.

I propose to apply a philosophical perspective to this dilemma by examining it through the lens of different strains of loyalty: that in looking on education and schooling as having only strict instrumental

value solely in terms of the person being educated, we neglect the value of education and schooling in the flourishing life and downplay particular civic virtues valued in a modern liberal state. I argue that the

market metaphor imports a form of loyalty within school systems and organisations, more akin to the vertical loyalty of the ruler and ruled (brand loyalty) than the horizontal loyalty needed of the equal citizens in a democratic society.

Using both theories of brand loyalty and Albert Hirschman's distinction between exit and voice, I examine how human loyalties may be formed. I contrast this instrumental approach with the philosophical work on civic loyalty through the work of Oldenquist, Fletcher and Franck. I shall argue that the market metaphor within education systems can conflict with and even undermine other commitments in social policy. Whilst schools are required to work in competition with each other through school choice mechanisms, they are equally required to cooperate with each other to raise standards and share best practice. The mixed metaphors generated by ideals of cooperation and market competition simply undermine each other. This will lead to a re-evaluation of the social and public good of education drawing on the work of Ball, Labaree and Barber.