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*The Education Trap: Schools and the Remaking of Inequality
in Boston* by Christina Viviana Groeger (review)

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who disliked official U.S. banking and monetary policy in the first half of the twentieth century.

Robert E. Wright
American Institute for Economic Research

The Education Trap: Schools and the Remaking of Inequality in Boston. By Christina Viviana Groeger (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 2021) 384 pp. \$35.00

In *The Education Trap*, Groeger explores how the modern American education system and corporate economy mutually constituted one another from 1880 through the Great Depression. Using Boston as a case study, she analyzes how schooling expanded and became the primary pathway to work across the employment structure in this period, replacing a wide array of pathways and informal training, including apprenticeships, kinship, and ethnic networks. This transformation took place within, and became part of, political and economic struggles for power in the workplace. Groeger traces these contests and their different outcomes within the fields of low-wage work, trades and craftwork, “pink collar” jobs in stores and offices, the legal and education professions, and corporate management.

Whereas human-capital theory and popular narratives about this change equate more education with greater skills, opportunity, and equality, Groeger shows how employers and elites used education to assert control or status within changing workplaces and to impose new hierarchies, inequalities, and exclusions within education. While these education pathways may have opened opportunities for some, they also created and obscured new inequalities under a rhetoric of merit, as defined by those in power, with myriad gender, racial, ethnic, and class discriminations built into it. Groeger argues that education alone did not empower workers or reduce inequality; workers who had the power to control the nature of, and entry to, work fared the best in the new corporate economy. Now and in the past, we have fallen into a persistent “policy trap” when we posit education as the solution to inequality without attending to the larger dynamics of power within the economy.

The Education Trap makes too many contributions to history, policy, education, and interdisciplinary social science about the relationship between education and the economy to be described adequately in this limited space. The book engages but challenges human-capital theory in economics and credentialing theory in sociology, exploring their strengths and limitations when subjected to rigorous historical, empirical examination. It offers an important historical interpretation of the corporate reconstruction of the economy and the systematization of education in the early twentieth century, including the development of high schools and relationship between public and private schools. It offers a compelling

analysis of how and why myths about merit and mobility through education were constructed through these economic and educational transformations. Most of all, it critiques the way in which social scientists and policymakers assert education as an answer to social inequality without attending to the larger dynamics of power that structure work and education. These contributions are important not only to how we understand the past but also to how we understand the present.

Many of these contributions come from Groeger's innovative use of sources, her deep dive into institutional contexts, and the wide lens that she applies across educational institutions and the economy. The quantitative census data that provide the spine of the book enable her to trace the occupational, educational, household, and demographic characteristics of Boston workers from 1890 to 1940. As she notes in the book and explains in more detail on the book's website, Groeger made particular use of historical census material from the recently released Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS), with 100 percent samples of individual-level data for the years of her study. She contextualized these data with qualitative sources from seventeen archives, including school and university institutional records, occupational trade journals, employee personnel files, newspapers, personal correspondence, and student testimonials and yearbooks. These integrated data allow Groeger to explore large-scale trends as well as individual stories in the context of workplaces and educational sites. This deep context is essential to understanding how power operates, how it impacts individuals' lives, and how changes and people are linked across these settings.

Another methodological strength of the book is Groeger's linking of domains usually treated separately—schools and workplaces, K–12 schools and universities, and public and private schools—which brings a holistic perspective to systems and change. The light that *The Education Trap's* historical analysis sheds on contemporary theory and policy will interest a wide array of scholars who study the relationship between education and the economy and question the enduring trap of education as a cure for social inequality.

Tracy Steffes
Brown University

Policing Sex in the Sunflower State: The Story of the Kansas State Industrial Farm for Women. By Nicole Perry (Kansas, University Press of Kansas, 2021) 270 pp. \$65.00 cloth \$27.95 paper

Studying the history of girls' and women's imprisonment is a vital but often neglected area of feminist criminology. A proper understanding of the current patterns, practices, and challenges of female incarceration requires placing these issues in their historical context, as Perry does in this important book. In the tradition of Nicole Hahn Rafter's *Partial Justice:*