There are no more ideologies in the authentic sense of false consciousness, only advertisements for the world through its duplication and the provocative lie which does not seek belief but commands silence.

Theodor W. Adorno

# University of Alberta

The dominance of neoliberal ideology in public schooling and possibilities for reconstructing the common good in education

by

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# Dedication

To my children: Anthony, Elaina and Melina, who make it all worthwhile.

## Abstract

Neoliberal ideology has transformed education into a market model as competition, deregulation, stratification and the spread of market discourse and market ideology seep into public educational institutions, causing potentially negative social consequences and threatening their democratic nature. This study examines the processes by which neoliberalism seeks to reframe the context of public education by promoting market-based principles and values through the implementation of educational policies and reforms; principles and values that have become so firmly embedded in the vision of education, they subsequently operate as mechanisms for upholding and reproducing the asymmetrical power relations in society.

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# Chapter 1 – Introduction

## *Statement of the Problem*

Public schools and universities, today, are competing in order to survive and competition is fierce. In a world dominated by the mechanics of American consumer-capitalism, mono-dimensionality, individualism and intolerance, the commodification and marketization of virtually everything around us proceeds apace, to the point where the "enterprise" of schooling is beginning to resemble a global flea market;[1] multi-faceted, untidy, perhaps even, unpredictable (Ball, 2004). The governing discourses of consumerism, corruption, and deception have, indeed, cut across national borders, continental boundaries and cultures making neoliberalism's potent market-driven ideology a force to be reckoned with (Giroux, 2009).

As profit-based logic pervades public policy, it creates a domino effect that has the potential to spread its insatiable excesses to all corners of the globe. National and transnational corporations and other profit-seeking entities have been on the prowl in search of potential opportunities, or prey – depending, of course, on how one construes the motive force and "raison d'être" (profit maximization) which, alone, has failed to create the conditions that generate maximum human well-being – by tapping into "reliable," if not extremely lucrative education markets across the globe,

[1]The expression "flea market" as a metaphor for schooling, or education was borrowed from the title in the article found in: CICE, Current Issues in Comparative Education, Teachers College, Columbia University, vol. I, n. 2 (1999) Education in the Market, Free Market, Flea Market, and Supermarkets.

particularly in developing and Third World countries, to sell their goods and impose their services, often with callous disregard for human rights and values. In North America, the aims are slightly different; namely, to commodify and standardize education (Levidow, 2000) through formal or informal channels. Students are treated as potential customers in order to justify commodifying educational services (Levidow, 2000), while standardization not only masks persistent inequalities, but eventually, limits public discourse on the nature and purpose of education by blurring or diminishing the role of the "public" in public education (McNeil, 2000).

Public schools have been unceremoniously thrust into a testing system that takes very little account of what is truly best for students; but more so, it aims at serving the needs of politicians, neoliberal reformers and people who stand to gain by imposing standards-based or test-based accountability in public schools. While ensuring accountability through standardized testing may seem somewhat paradoxical – since education is meant to extend far beyond standardized test scores and graduation rates – regardless, this craze with standardized testing not only promotes teaching to the test, but has also become a vehicle to restrict educational opportunities from those who need those opportunities the most.

Right-wing "think tanks" have had an impact on public understanding; essentially, confusing the public into thinking that the quality of education can be determined by standardized tests and a market approach of ranking schools (Kuehn, 2009). Those aims have not only been resisted by students

and teachers, but furthermore, teachers unions have been moving beyond resistance, trying other alternatives to testing, and many times, succeeding. Larry Kuehn (2009) writes that "The Alberta Teacher's Association engaged in a campaign of lobbying the members of the legislature to eliminate the Grade 3 exam. Amazingly, the legislature passed a motion calling for an end to mandatory testing of Grade 3 students" (para. 16). Not surprising, however, is that the motion was moved forward by Conservative MLA and former teacher, Genia Leskiw, and was, subsequently, passed by a majority of MLAs after an hour-long debate. Hence, as educators, we must never lose sight of how possibilities of resistance can subsequently effect successful transformation. However, with this particular case, the government is under no obligation to further the motion as it is not binding. While there are numerous examples of "successful revolutions" that are aimed at resisting the use of standardized testing, education as an ideological state apparatus, insidiously works to ensure the perpetuation of the dominant ideology by immersing students in ideologically determined practices like measuring student learning and the quality of teaching by percentage improvement test scores and on standardized tests. Such practices are perceived as universal, rational, and obvious, but in actuality, they merely support segmented ways of understanding and ordering the world (Brookfield, 2005).

Neoliberal ideologies not only produce, legitimate, exacerbate and reproduce the existence of persistent poverty, inadequate health care, racial

apartheid and growing inequalities between the rich and the poor (see Giroux, 2004), but furthermore, impede, if not destroy, opportunities for students to become educated. Educational institutions have become a principle target of marketization agendas that have sought to discursively reconstitute and redefine the nature of education by transforming it from a collective public good into an individualistic commodity that can be bought and sold in the marketplace. We must, however, keep in mind that there has always been a need for education systems to change and, perhaps, replace more "traditional" systems that were run by long-standing authoritarian, paternalistic practices run by despotic educators who were "productive" or gained a sense of self worth and authority only by imposing their autocratic principles aimed at belittling, denigrating, humiliating and excluding students. The neoliberal project has certainly built upon the critique of the authoritarian welfare state and redirected it against individual subjects. But at the same time, these new technologies of power have attempted to individualize social risks, dismantle erstwhile social rights and subject people to self-regulation (Goonewardena & Lefebvre, 2008). While efforts have been made to build more democratic education systems, the deep inequalities of the past doggedly persist.

School reform initiatives have been driven by "marketization" business models and an overly simplistic – if not superficial – understanding of the causal relationship between education and the economy (Johnson, 2000), while turning to quantifiable measurement and standards-based

assessment models that are carefully controlled by top-down, data-driven operations that are in strict alignment with strategic business goals and objectives. As a result, student identity has been reshaped so that the "new" student (homo economicus) could "fit into" his or her entrepreneurial role as an economically productive member of society, responsible only, for "number one." Educational institutions, on the other hand, are strongly urged to adopt commercial models of knowledge, skills, curriculum, finance, accounting, and management organization in order to "keep up" with the competitive market and to protect themselves from competitive threats (Levidow, 2000).

The neoliberal agenda has, literally, transformed education into a market model, as competition, deregulation, stratification and the spread of market discourse and market ideology seep into our public school systems, causing potentially negative social consequences and threatening the democratic nature of our public schools and universities. The marketization and decentralization of education is a relatively current trend, but its force has rapidly swept away long-held political and economic beliefs. It is, mainly, within the last 30 years that we have witnessed massive economic, political and cultural changes. Dominant views of the appropriate relationship between the state and the market have shifted considerably, as proponents of neoliberalism have sought to convince not only power brokers, but the general public to "buy into" the hype that a strong market free of government interference, would provide the desired prosperity

(Bartlett, Frederick, Gulbrandsen & Murillo, 2002). The rhetoric of the marketplace has seeped into policy and educational reform initiatives, while the application of business discourse to educational management has replaced "leadership" and "headship" with "mission statements," "business plans," "performance measures," and "performance-related pay" (Blake, 2003).

But as neoliberal market ideology penetrates into education policy, it likely enables us to acknowledge and, perhaps, explain its dominance in the education system and educational reform discourse (Rikowski, 2008). Educational sectors across the globe have adopted marketization and decentralization as "popular response strategies" in educational policy, which have re-oriented and reshaped financing and provision to curriculum development and governance (Lun & Keung, 2003). In actuality, governments and social sponsors have been propagating, for quite some time, that public institutions—be they hospitals, schools, universities, and libraries—become "self-sufficient" if they are to purposefully work and demonstrate their relevance and competence to their clients (Rao, 1999).

In educational reform discourse, decentralization has become a common rallying point, as it seeks to join non-governmental organizations, the state bureaucracy and international aid agencies (Kamat, 2002) as a means of improving efficiency, transparency, accountability, and responsiveness of service provision. And while decentralized educational provision promises to be more efficient or to better reflect local priorities,

encourage participation, and, eventually, improve quality in education (Bray, 2007), it also opens the floodgates to alternative funding strategies for educational institutions; alternatives that not always serve to benefit public educational institutions. And even though decentralization may appear to be a positive measure, depending of course, on how it is applied, it can mask potential dangers, especially when it is aimed at reducing the government's financial and administrative responsibilities towards public institutions that are as vitally important as healthcare and education.

As a result of government decentralization, many local governments are beginning to rely more on private entities such as professional associations, multinational corporations, private businesses or public private partnerships (PPPs) to achieve public ends. Public schools also rely highly on the support of parents, local businesses, corporations, and community-based organizations to augment their school budgets. Underfunding, coupled by the pressure to reduce expenditures to balance their annual budgets has meant that public school boards and post secondary institutions locally, nationally and globally, have often been lured into making "Faustian bargains" with major companies, like Coca-Cola, that are presented as being lucrative and enticing, when in actuality, schools, universities and, most certainly, students get the short end of the stick. Exclusivity contracts and agreements – that give beverage companies exclusive rights to sell their products on school or district grounds – have been, nonetheless, met with resistance from students and school

administrators for a variety of reasons, while the financial benefits of these contracts have certainly been weighed against the many costs (Harden & Flecker, 2007).

As the noose tightens around the public sphere under neoliberal and marketization pressures, markets as forms of governance are gaining increasing popularity among neoconservatives who typically view governments as wasteful and insufficient and, as such, strive to replace the government provision of services with market-based solutions in many parts of the globe, believing that competition is the key to improving productivity, which has, ultimately, led to the growing support of market reforms like charter schools and school voucher programs (Provenzo & Renaud, 2008). Neoliberal policies are no longer being devised, merely, to justify the superiority of the market as a means of promoting economic development and securing political liberty – through the process of deregulation and privatization – they are further seeking to reshape the public's understanding of the purposes of public institutions and apparatuses, such as schools (Hill, 2006), thus making public education one of the latest "casualties" of neoliberal policy making. According to Henry Giroux (2004):

> Not only does neoliberalism bankrupt public funds, hollow out public services, limit the vocabulary and imagery available… it also undermines the critical functions of any viable democracy by undercutting the ability of individuals to

> engage in the continuous translation between public considerations and private interests by collapsing the public into the realm of the private (p. 494).

In a world of blurred and shifting boundaries, the purpose of education has certainly shifted from that of a public good to a commodity, while meanings of education have become reconstituted, as have the roles of educators and students. Although it may appear to be "a given" that the main constituents are, in fact, the students, it has become quite clear that the emergence of neoliberal ideologies, reforms and pedagogies have challenged that "given" by exacerbating the achievement gap and increasing inequalities (Hursh, 2001). As Daniel Saunders (2007) notes, "No longer is education seen as a social good with intrinsic value but has been re-conceptualized as a commodity that a student purchases for individualistic gain" (p. 4).

As a teacher who has served in the public education system for over ten years, I have witnessed neoliberal movements toward choice, teacher accountability, standardization, marketization, decentralization and so forth. I have also seen, up close and personally, in the schools and classrooms I have taught, as well as through collegial relationships, how neoliberalism has sought, not only to undermine the very notion of teacher professionalism, but also, to undermine the very essence of education, which is to create learners who can make informed decisions and critically engage in their learning. As I see it, neoliberal capital and governments not

only stifle, but destroy critical thought by compressing and repressing critical space in education (Hill & Kumar, 2008). The Edmonton Public School district's preoccupation and heavy emphasis on standardized testing and the ample time devoted to preparation and review, eventually, wore down my persistence and determination to challenge and resist the dominant neoliberal policy agendas; to challenge capitalist market imperatives of competition and choice, as I felt I was swimming against the tide. I soon came to the realization that capital gain and market needs utterly surpassed my own autonomy as an educator. I have observed the relentless restructurings of schools and the schools system, the changing roles and responsibilities of teachers and administrators, the policy fever and so much more pursued under the neoliberal banner (Rikowski, 2006) that continually and tenaciously disrupts, undermines and reconfigures the goals of equality, equity and social inclusion.

I have always considered myself to be an educator who creates opportunities that could enable and encourage learners to achieve their true potentials; I had always strived to create for my students the conditions necessary to embrace a holistic way of thinking that seeks to encompass and integrate multiple layers of meaning and experience, including creativity, spontaneity and team work, rather than narrowly defining human possibilities or minimizing them to capital outcomes. I considered and continue to regard every child as being more than just a potential employee that could be slotted in his or her place within the market; I also attach

immense value in the attainment of knowledge as being so much more than a transmission or a transaction. A child's abilities and intelligence warrant far greater value than his or her scores on standardized tests.

As I understood more of the school system, I began to see that my philosophy of education did not necessarily "fit" within the neoliberal philosophy; in fact, I felt that my philosophical ideals were likely an intrusion to the neoliberalist mindset. As I reflect back upon my teaching career, I am now able to say with certainty that I was a vehicle through which the delivery of reform policies took place. It took ten years of teaching for me to realize that despite my efforts and very best intentions to promote critical thinking, that I was simply part of a the very process of the reproduction of knowledge and the promotion of neoliberal policy making. It was also apparent that most of my colleagues had, themselves, fallen under the spell of neoliberalism, while those who attempted (including myself) to resist its nightmarish vision were immediately met with counter-resistance from "superiors" whose educational power and privilege was, likely, to be threatened.

The process of market-oriented reforms have placed a greater emphasis on school autonomy and competition, while shifting the schema of educational reform away from critical matters concerning equity, fairness and diversity, to those of capital gain and "big business." Indeed, education, itself, appears to be increasingly reserved for the privileged few, rather than a fundamental right for all. Michael Apple (2002) claims that while such

reforms are often met with the "best of intentions," in the long run, they only exacerbate inequalities, especially around class and race (Apple, 2002). Marketization has, therefore, transformed the very essence of education into a commodity that can be bought, sold and traded in the marketplace; but at what cost?

*Purpose of the Study*

The hedonistic, possession-driven, impulsive ethos of ostentatious consumption that serves to engender, sustain and reproduce the basis of modern capitalism rampantly dominates, corrodes and, ultimately, blurs the boundaries between the public and private divide. The omnipresent, omnipotent and seemingly inescapable forces of globalization have further reinforced, and in a sense, "popularized" this hedonistic, materialistic, individualistic consumer culture that has pervaded and transformed the economic, social, political and educational landscape in a profound and ineffaceable manner, as it fervently strives to restructure and, subsequently, redefine the role of the public realm. As a result, public services have come under increased pressure to compete globally with private corporations in order to survive; should they wish to thrive, however, they must become even more "responsive" and "consumer savvy."

This study will examine the processes by which neoliberalism has sought to reframe the context of public education by promoting market-based principles and values through the implementation of educational

policies and reforms; principles and values that have become so firmly rooted in the vision of education, they subsequently operate as mechanisms for upholding and reproducing the asymmetrical power relations in society. The overarching principles of neoliberalism that reflect the economic orthodoxies of free trade, free capital mobility, the growing flexibility of labour, privatization, restructuring of the welfare state, market economics and decentralization (Kenny, English & Kilmartin, 2007), have taken precedence insofar that they eliminate the notion of common good and deepen structural inequalities and social exclusion.

The study further argues that neoliberalism has extensively shaped, reshaped and, perhaps even, *deformed* educational practices and policies at a local, national and global level. It is important to be cognizant of the challenges facing education on all levels, locally, nationally and globally so that we may, in turn, further enhance our own reflection on policy and practice which will, subsequently, lead to a greater understanding of the processes of global policy making and help us locate where our responsibilities lie across national boundaries.

I thus propose to critically examine the effects of marketization on education and schooling during this crisis ridden period of possessive individualism and consumerism, while attempting to present a better understanding of the marketing culture that has emerged in public educational institutions. I will elaborate on the implications of neoliberal reforms and provide a critical assessment of how the underlying neoliberal

agenda conflicts with educational values, as it seeks to hinder and undermine the quality of public education and transform it from a public good into a transnationalized commodity, framed in neoliberal market jargon.

Lastly, I will address the research questions I have posed by drawing on sociological knowledge and, more specifically, upon the works of Louis Althusser (1970) and Pierre Bourdieu (1977), which form the crux of my research project, complemented by a review of the literature that aims to explore the hegemonic underpinnings of ideology by arguing that educational institutions are primary sites for the reproduction and transmission of the dominant ideology (Althusser, 1970; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). But for ideology to be politically useful it must be widely disseminated (Hirschl, Ahlquist & Glenna, 2008). The wide-spread acceptance of neoliberalism through the implementation of international educational policies of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization have caused devastating consequences for developing and Third World countries through interventionist programs and services like Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) (Stromquist, 1999; Leonard, 2006) and, more recently, through the General Agreement in Trade and Services (GATS) that have emerged as global proxies of the old colonial powers with the same goals and power to influence policies that define or shape education (Codersia, 12th General Assembly, Governing the African Pubic Sphere, 2008). The onslaught of privatization and

restructuring of government institutions, fiscal austerity, deregulation, market liberation and the cutting back of the state, along with programs and agreements such as SAPs and GATS have "increased and globalized poverty, migration, unemployment and temporary work contracts and produced extremely polarized income and living conditions across the world to the exclusive benefit of big capital" (Useche & Cabezas, 2005, p.7).

The thesis will, thus, identify the processes by which educational institutions play a substantial role in spreading the dominant ideology and explore how this ideology works, pedagogically, to produce and reproduce social inequalities. I will, therefore, argue that schools and education systems play, perhaps, one of the most (if not *the* most) important roles in inculcating the dominant (neoliberal) ideology and sustaining the system of domination. With this in place, I will proffer, through critical engagement, pedagogical alternatives for contesting neoliberal education.

*Research Questions*

The research questions posed in this thesis serve to address the key themes discussed throughout the preceding sections of this chapter and have, primarily, been constructed on the basis of their educational significance; more specifically, the role schooling plays in inculcating the dominant ideology. The study will further be defined by a comprehensive review of the literature and critical discussions and analyses of the major theoretical locations of the case, which will all lend important insights into

the contextual issues that impact the study. The research questions will, additionally, provide an important link between the perceived causes of neoliberal restructuring, while analysis will seek to identify and describe the processes or steps which can be taken to reduce some of the gaps through a critical discussion of how dominant ideologies work to further perpetuate the systems of domination.

The primary research question of this study is: "How has the dominant neoliberal ideology become manifest through educational policies and pedagogical practices in public spaces of schooling?" The sub questions that follow will further serve to augment, but at the same time, narrow the focus of the study.

The sub questions are:

1. In what ways has neoliberal ideology influenced educational policy and how is it changing the notion of education as a public good?

2. What is the impact of neoliberal reforms in education and what are the implications in the formation of a new student identity?

3. How are basic values of students threatened by the impacts of neoliberalism, and what is the impact of neoliberal market policies on equity and equality?

4. In what ways is trade liberalization of educational services under the GATS designed to serve capitalist profitability

*Analysis of Terms*

The educational landscape has significantly changed as have the capitalist economic discourses that surround educational institutions, casting doubt on the notion that public schools and universities are, in fact, dedicated to advancing the "public good." Schools, today, function as institutionalized discursive spaces of neoliberalism where political discourses and the breathless rhetoric of the global victory of free-market rationality – to cut public expenditures and undermine non-commodified public spheres – serve as the repository for critical education, language and public intervention (Giroux, 2004). As neoliberal rhetoric and concepts such as "managerialism" manage to circulate from government policy to educational policy and eventually penetrate into schools and post secondary institutions, notions of "competition," "markets," "performativity" and "quality assurance," that are most commonly associated with industry and commerce, converge in education and re-define it in terms of its contribution to the economy (Hursh, 2001). Through the predominant neoliberal discourse, many concepts such as "restructuring," "reform," "management," "governance" have been rethought, redefined and carried out into political and educational arenas producing fundamental changes in perspectives on education that are radically different from the earlier "help" conceptions of education (Cooper, Cibulka & Fusarelli, 2008). Sadie Plant (1996) conveys, that even though today's academy appears to have its sources in Platonic

conceptions of knowledge, teaching and teacher-student relationships are based on a model in which learning barely figures at all (Thrift, 1996, as cited in Ray & Sayer, 1999).

Marketization, as conveyed in *Marketization and Management in Higher Education*, can be understood as "the use of markets, or market type mechanisms, with the (explicit or implicit) aim of improving public sector activities, including the production of public goods" (Brunner & Tillett, 2005, Marketization: origin and effects, section, para.1.2). The marketization process is often viewed as the solution to many educational problems or as a "recipe for correcting the perceived failings of traditional public bureaucracies over efficiency, quality, customer-responsiveness and effective leadership" (as cited in Brunner & Tillett, 2005, para.1.2). The rise of market capitalism in the world, along with principles of neoliberal economics, has led to the privatization of education in a number of countries, by turning education into a product, framing it in market jargon, and encouraging the entry of commercial motives.

The growing unrest with the quality of the public education system has spurred a movement toward privatization that places the private sector directly in the public arena. More specifically, there appears to be an infiltration of private sector concepts into public policy. When educational institutions, such as charter schools and voucher programs emerge, they influence how education is conceived, experienced and valued; what were at one time familiar distinctions between public and

private have now shifted into a different entity, a new breed of schooling. These new breeds, or "hybrids[2]" hold out the promise of creating new schools that will be more responsive and accountable to community needs. Perhaps, in a way, these educational alternatives frame education largely as a consumer good, thus privatizing the purpose of public education, which raises questions about whether education is viewed as a public good, or purely as a commodity framing education as a consumer good. Governments are beginning to rely more on private or private-like entities, such as charter schools, to institute non-public or private educational reforms to achieve public ends. Although different political contexts produce different charter school policies, most, if not all cases are somehow linked to similarities in the political ideology of neoliberalism and the New Right.

The word "choice" rings a tone of appeal, and certainly reflects a market-centered approach to education. After all, why settle for a standard mattress when you can get a Postupedic, or better yet, a mattress with a Plush NapSoft cover? Harold Howe conveys, perhaps with a tone of caution, that choice "has a nice sound to it. It connotes freedom. It fits into assumptions of democracy. It awakens feeling of personal responsibility. It raises dreams of fairness. What could possibly be wrong with it?" (Howe, as cited in Bosetti, 2000, p. 1). Numerous questions

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[2] Charter schools and voucher programs are often referred to as "hybrids" by a number of different writers because they bear similarities to public schools in that they are opened to all students, publicly funded, and ultimately, responsible to a public authority for their performance.

dominate the school choice debate. Who truly benefits from school choice reforms? Do public schools benefit from competition brought forth by charter schools and other programs of choice? Do students actually do better when they attend schools of choice, such as charter schools, and do these schools provide equitable educational opportunities for all students? School choice creates the illusion that all people can exercise their democratic rights to *choose* the best schools for themselves and/or for their children.

School choice has, as such, become part of the discourse "that brooks no dissension or argument, for to argue against it is to deny democracy" (Macedo & Freire, 2006, p. 165) and is, indeed, one of the strongest, most commonly articulated and most firmly embedded applications of market ideology. Whether school choice poses a threat or is seen as an opportunity, it sparks great debate and stirs up considerable controversy, while conflicting views make school choice the topic of "choice" for politicians and scholars alike. Finally, because dominant neoliberal discourses are omnipresent, they can lead to "naturalization" of certain ways of understanding things as common sense. Once such discourses become common sense, it becomes all the more difficult to question the underlying assumptions; as a result, the dominant ideology becomes entrenched, resulting in the reproduction of knowledge and beliefs.

*Significance of the Study*

It is now a well established fact that neoliberalism holds the track record of undermining equity and democracy which, in the short run, has directed attention to education needs that have been inadequately addressed (Sleeter, 2008). This has led academics, teachers and researchers to question whether or not neoliberal policies and reforms are even compatible with democracy. Giroux and Polychroniou (2008) convey in "The scourge of global neoliberalism and the need to reclaim democracy" that "within the discourse of neoliberalism, democracy becomes synonymous with free markets while issues of equality, social justice, and freedom are stripped of any substantive meaning" (Giroux & Polychroniou, 2008, para. 20). The tensions between democracy – which guarantees equal political rights for all citizens – and market capitalism – which permits, or perhaps even requires considerable socioeconomic inequality to surface – come into conflict with marketization, i.e., the political process of instituting a capitalist market economy (Weyland, 2002). It is, therefore, important to underscore the fragility of democracy under the auspices of neoliberal policies and reforms in education.

The significance of this study, therefore, lies in exposing or making explicit the inherent flaws in neoliberal thought and the role of the market in education. David Hill speaks of the market "perverting education" and goes on to argue that capitalist markets and education hold opposing goals and motivations with democracy (Hill, 2004). Education should not be

about satisfying market demand in order to make a profit; education "should be about satisfying the needs of those motivated to learn – allowing them possibilities to explore different understandings and ways of being regardless of profit considerations" (Cooper, 2009, p. 207).

This study should hold considerable significance for educators, researchers, parents, students and may also help provide useful information for provincial policymakers, school and district leaders and curriculum specialists who are making important decisions about the future of education. Whether or not neoliberal policies in education provide the answers to our "educational woes" or whether they produce more educational woes really depends on who is being asked and what they stand to gain from such policies. For policymakers, politicians, stakeholders and the public, many of these policies appear to be a "convenient" option, not only because it has the potential to affect the behavior of educators, but also because it is viewed by the public as a way to guarantee a basic level of "quality" in education (Natriello & Pallas, 1998). But, is a "basic" level of quality education what we truly want for our children? Perhaps it is important to define and analyze what is meant by "quality" in education and ask ourselves if all we truly want for our children is a "basic level" of *quality* in education, one that aims to cater to market needs and demands.

Perhaps resistance may allow us to evaluate nonconformity and offer strategies against the "common sense" "forced normality" of

neoliberalism. Neoliberal policies in education have been detrimental, while the changes in recent years in education policy have severely damaged public institutions, particularly, schools and universities. It is important to underscore the urgency for strategies of resistance, or resistance campaigns against neoliberal organizing in education.

*Summary*

As schools drastically change to meet the emerging market demands, education itself as a social institution has been subordinated to market-driven goals. Public schools have been going through a process of transformation and reinvention to meet the needs of a demanding and diverse society by adopting new operating strategies, while struggling to maintain their public creed, in being accessible to every child, yet at the same time becoming further responsive to the economic, political, and social conditions in a market-oriented competitive world, "unleashed by the forces of globalization" (Azad, 2004). The marketization of schools involves the substitution of economic categories for pedagogical categories of thought (Lander & Hughs, 1999) that seek to undermine democratic control of the public service ethos that should be a central element governing education.

# Chapter 2 – Literature Review and Theoretical Analysis

## *Introduction*

The manifestation of neoliberal, free-market ideologies in the realm of education which postulate that competitive and unregulated markets, free of government interference, are the optimal mechanisms for raising the "standards" in education, simply provide a benevolent mask full of wonderful-sounding words like "freedom," "liberty," "choice," and "rights," (Harvey, 2005), yet beneath the gilded façade lurk the corrosive and rapacious forces of capitalism that are inimical to democratic principles. Not only has the promotion of individualism and savage competition severed the links of collective solidarity, increased racial and gender inequality, dropped the quality of education and increased social differences (López, 1999), it has also "penetrated into the arteries and capillaries of deliberative life" (Plehwe, Walpen & Neunhöffer, 2006, p. xv) bringing about an ideological reorientation.

This chapter will provide a comprehensive review of the literature, with select theoretical analysis, and will attempt to examine current writings in the area; as such, it should present new understandings of the marketization culture in education worldwide. I will critically assess some of the existing neoliberal educational models, discourses and policy initiatives at the national and international levels and, subsequently, share what is known about the development, implementation, and outcomes of

neoliberal education programs and policies by further analyzing the ideological implications.

*National Trends*

Public education has been under attack for many decades; dissatisfaction with public schooling seems to be a recurring and rising feature of public discourse. Disgruntled parents, frustrated teachers, and seemingly devastating numbers from standardized testing results, appear to be reason enough to attack and place the onus of failure on the system of public education (Stossel, 2006, January 13). The constant complaints levied against public education and schooling are often so out of control, that teachers can no longer focus on teaching and frequently see themselves as "glorified" babysitters, while lack of trust in their professionalism as educators has led not only to a widespread move toward audits, micromanagement and regulation, but to rigorous documentation and standardization in all facets of the profession.

Some critics like fundamentalist Christian radio talk show host Marlin Maddoux (2006), have gone so far to say that public schools have become "a cauldron of toxic pathologies inimical to the welfare of our children, our families, our churches and our culture for a number of years" (as cited in Shortt, 2006, para. 4). Rather spiteful words against a system that has been constructed as being a social or public good; a cornerstone of democracy. Antipathy in the public school system is strongly conveyed by all sorts of

groups representing not only religious, but cultural, economic and political views, which offer little or no support for public schooling (Bracey, 2002; Giroux; 2002; Hill, Pierce & Guthrie, & Hill, 1997). It appears that public schools are just not "living up" to parent's expectations; they are not performing their basic civil duties and they are not teaching students, so parents are taking matters into their own hands (see Freedman, 1995) by seeking alternative means to school their children and ensure their academic success. But is the current state of public education and the antipathy toward public education simply a reflection of society at large?

If we lend official credence to the notion that schools play a fundamental role in seeking to prepare students for active, participatory citizenship and informed decision-making in an interdependent world, we may then assert, with conviction, that schools reflect societal values and are, in fact, microcosms of society that serve to prepare the younger generation for civic life and duties. John Dewey and Emile Durkheim were consistent in their theories that schools are "social microcosms" and their views have been very influential on developments in the educational policy making process. John Dewey's holistic approach to education encompasses the view that schools are a microcosm of the type of society that is desired (Dewey, 1941). Therefore, based on Dewey's conception of moral judgment that hinges on achieving desired ends (Johnston, 2006), it appears that the type of society we presently desire is one driven by market forces and individual profit motives.

Emile Durkheim, on the other hand, while not an educational reformer, per se, argued in favour of education[3] but not as having the power to transform society, nor to cure it of social ills (Durkheim, 1956). Durkheim went further on to explain that while education reflects societal values, as well as the underlying changes that occur within societies, trying to come into opposition with the social system could be problematic; unless of course, society, itself, is first reformed through moral education (Thompson, 1982). Because educational systems are necessarily a construct of society that naturally seeks to reproduce the collectively held values, beliefs, norms and conditions, they come to contain the imprint of past stages in societal development (Hoenisch, 2005). In other words, it is educational institutions that promote and reproduce the ideal human that is to be constructed vis-à-vis society.

Pierre Bourdieu (1977) adopts a slightly different perspective than that of Durkheim and Dewey by arguing that schools do not simply mirror society or the dominant culture but are relatively autonomous institutions that are indirectly influenced by the more powerful economic and political institutions (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1987). In short, schools mirror and reproduce social structures, patterns and practices of the capitalist economy. Furthermore, Bourdieu argues that education functions as such to transmit cultural hierarchies, which subsequently reproduces social classes and maintains structural inequalities through the distribution of cultural capital

[3] Durkheim discussed the argument in favour of education as a cure for suicide (Thompson, 1982)

(Bourdieu, 1977). These power asymmetries are only further legitimated as educational institutions promote the meritocratic ideology of social and economic mobility through the rhetoric of equal opportunity and fair competition.

Indeed, schools mirror and reproduce the structures and practices of the capitalist economy in that they emulate the ideals of participation, as well as the skills and faculties required for democratic citizenship; they also mirror, and perhaps mimic the rhythms and characteristics of a market-driven, highly individualized society. Can we change an increasingly apolitical, individualized, technologized, commoditized society? Is it too late to change the education system so as to reduce its overwhelming emphasis on money and the free market when, in essence, market-driven, free enterprise solutions are present in virtually every aspect of our lives? Perhaps we must readily accept that the marketization of schooling is a "fait accompli"; that there is no turning away from the dominant neoliberal path. Or is there?

The marketization of education appears to be a natural "consequence" of today's consumer oriented society; a reflection of today's capitalist economies and consumerist societal values. In a visionary quote taken from the *Communist Manifesto*, Karl Marx (1848) states that "the world market gives a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country… All old established national industries have been destroyed and are daily being destroyed" (as cited in Calhoun et al., 2006, p. 13). Karl

Marx was a thinker far ahead of his time in his profoundly rational portrayal of marketization in the capitalist economy. According to Chris Harman (2005), the quote presents "a prophetic vision of capitalism filling the world—of what today is called 'globalization'" (Harman, 2005, p. 326). Harman's words hold truth in that globalization may embody some, or perhaps all features of capitalism. But, could Noam Chomksy (2000) be accurate in going so far as to describe globalization as the "new face" of capitalism[4]?

The penetration of market logic into schooling has driven schools to seek resources from the business community, as funds intended for local schools are being further reduced. Alternately, business has sought to enter the new schooling marketplace in search of profitable activity. Hence, the intrusion of "fast" capital into schools has become a stark reality, while the conception of self-management is driven by a quest for money, power and status, which schools have now come to depend on for their ultimate survival (Robertson, 2000). Susan Robertson (2000) illustrates that major computer companies in Australia ran a nationwide campaign in conjunction with a large grocery chain and schools were asked to participate in the program by collecting receipts from their purchases from the grocery chain. Of course, schools became competitive; classrooms were pitted against each other to bring in the highest totals on receipts. The exchange for the highest totals: an Apple computer. The price: classroom competition and subtle

[4] Naom Chomsky's radio speech titled - Globalization: *The New Face of Capitalism.*

enticements to value one product over another. Furthermore, teachers became the endorsees of consumer products and services (Robertson, 2000).

When independently operated, quasi-market reforms that are funded with public tax dollars emerge they often deplete the much needed funds from the public education system. Many, including political scientists Peter C. Emberley and Waller R. Newell (1995) "lament the fragmentation, bureaucratization, political opportunism, and deluded reformism that have informed the restructuring of public schooling in Canada" (Emberley & Newell, 1995 p. 206). As the schism between the private and public spheres grows deeper, the boundaries are becoming increasingly blurred, mainly due to the growth of charter schools and other non-private programs, such as school voucher programs, "while growing debates on whether school choice—as the leading and most widespread instance of market penetration of education—is, and/or is not, a form of privatization" (Lubienski, 2006, para. 2). This raises questions as to how education lends itself to a consumer model, and whether education would be more "efficient" and "effective" if it were organized more completely under a private or market paradigm (Lubienski, 2006).

The foundation of charter schooling was built upon the values of "opportunity," "choice," and "accountability." Charter schools were considered one of the fastest growing innovations in education policy. The US Department of Education had provided grants and continues to support charter school efforts, while President George W. Bush had called for over

$300 million dollars to support charter schools. (US Charter Schools, 2000). Here in Canada, the province of Alberta had been the first and only province to "boldly" test the waters of charter schools (McConaghy, 1996). The ever so familiar rhetoric of public school failure echoed in the report *Charter School: Provision for Choice in Public Schools* that was released in 1993 by Alberta Education that cites that: "the absence of competition as the primary reason for the failure of public schools to provide the level of excellence in education necessary for success in an increasingly competitive society" (Bosetti, 2005, p. 1 Abstract). Echoing the "Nation at Risk," educational reforms in Alberta during the "Klein Revolution" became "the prime ammunition in the arsenal of the Right" (Bosetti, 2005, p. 438). It is, however, important to note that even though charter schools in Alberta appear(ed) to have many commonalities with their US counterparts, there are structural and value differences between the two, which is, perhaps, why voucher programs and charter schools did not flourish in Alberta.

The marketization of schools involves the substitution of economic categories for pedagogical categories of thought. Market discourse dominates the concepts of education as notions of "cost-effectiveness," "commodities," "customer choice" and "competitiveness" have replaced "educational opportunity," "social and personal development" and "social integration" (Ahonen, 2000). Phillip Wexler (1996) asserts that "The language of education is the language of restructured, post Fordist, post industrial work" (as cited in Townsend, 1998 p. 216). More than ever,

schools today are using advertising techniques to "sell" their products and attract clientele, while slogans such as "Essential skills for a technological age" or "Grasp the forces driving the change" appear as part of the advertising campaigns used to market schools and post secondary institutions. Even seminars on "How to Market your School" are advertised and offered as professional development opportunities, leading to a free-market version of public education (Townsend, 1998).

The growing obsession with a system of accountability which, of course, is modeled on what passes for accountability in corporate America (Ohanian, 2007), has placed restrictions not only on educators, but has attempted to mold students into particular modes of thinking that conceptualizes education in terms of producing individuals who are economically productive. Standards-based assessments are a perfect example of how schools seek to essentialize and homogenize students by stripping them of their individuality and reducing them to a mere test score which, in turn, defines them as individuals (Kincheloe & Horn, 2008). Are not "standards," after all, but a set of metrics by which an industrial or market product is rated? And is not "accountability" a process by which teachers are assessed and evaluated on how successful they are at homogenizing students? Education is no longer valued for its role in developing political, ethical, and aesthetic citizens, it is seen as contributing to economic productivity and producing students who are compliant and productive (Hursh, 2001).

For neoliberals, "free choice" is the answer to what is perceived as an unsound and structurally problematic system of public education. Aguirre and Johnson (2005) state that, "the push for charter schools during the 1990s was dominated by neoliberal rhetoric in which children were depicted as 'human capital' and schools were portrayed as 'training centers' for workers needed in an expanding global economy" (Aguirre & Johnson, 2005, para. 8). These changes that have taken place have engendered an expanded range of alternatives for students at the elementary, junior high and senior high school levels. But where there is choice, there is brutal competition and capitalizing. Masao Miyoshi (1998) states that:

> Nowhere do we see this cultural morphing of capital and the citizen more than schooling. Students now approach their school and university curricula as the savvy consumer shopping for courses. And courses are weighted by educational administrations on the cases of their "drawing power" – the numbers of enrollees per class (as cited in Dolby et al., 2004, p.160).

Market forces, especially in the form of school choice, have affected the practice of schooling in response to globalization and are increasingly leading to consumer oriented policies that are driven by parents and students, who demand more from their schools.

We must not forget, however, that the political factors prompting a market-driven agenda in education were the New Right's attack on public

schools, which has established itself with anti-welfare and anti-egalitarian inclinations. Society today is significantly exposed to market forces, which are in essence, the result of market driven politics. The Reagan administration released the report "A Nation at Risk" (1983), basically, proposing the complete and utter disbanding of the public schooling monopoly by stating that: "The educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and a people" (A Nation at Risk, 1983, para. 1). Hence, school choice would not be brought to the forefront had it not been for the neo-conservative interest in education during the Reagan-Bush years and the preoccupation on "choice" as a preferred method of educational reform. This, in a way, catapulted education into the forefront of the market agendas. Following the "Nation at Risk," Charter school legislation was passed and accountability programs were implemented. At the same time, standardized testing was expanded; business-organized education foundations (fund-raising groups) flourished, districts implemented school-to-work programs and business interests were overly represented on education task forces (as well as on school boards). Schools were, literally, "cleaned up" in order to foster economic growth in the aftermath of "A Nation at Risk" (Bartlett et al., 2002).

Christopher Lubienski (2006) maintains that market-like incentives corrupt the fundamental nature of education because they thrust schools to adapt their focus on marketing, public relations, and the symbolic

management aimed at enhancing the school's image rather than focusing on innovative practices and substantive improvements in teaching and learning (as cited in Bosetti, 2005). Public schools are those that appear to be under more pressure to reinvent themselves in terms of their mission and program to attract students and appeal to the values and preferences of middle-class parents (Bosetti, 2005). Issues regarding equity face schools and school boards across the country as the struggle to find the means – either via fundraisers or casinos – to provide technologically savvy programs and to equip every student or every classroom with the latest technology. This can be a very costly process, which often excludes students that live in lower SES neighborhoods, who may not have the resources or parental support to even conduct such fundraising activities.

These kinds of processes alter the mission of public education and drive it into competition. Many raise the question of whether public education is suited for "market-style" organization (Belfield & Levin, 2005; Evans, 1993; Lubienski, 2006). While some analysts argue that public schools should dive into the competative market, others like Walberg and Bast (2003) contend that "we should harness these economic principles for education just as we do with more explicitly market-based goods and services" (as cited in Lubienski, 2006, para. 1). Consequently, agendas of reform adopt market mechanisms to organize the production and distribution of education services, while sceptics wrestle over the extent to which this use of market mechanisms constitutes a form of "privatization"

in public education. The result was the rise of charter schools in the United States, with skills-based curricula and traditional, "back to the basics" pedagogies that have a good track record in the market economy and that appeal to families of higher achieving students. When schools are faced with the option of producing better products or focusing on better marketing, marketing appears to be less risky.

Could the acceleration of commodification, consumerism, markets, and the seepage of managerialism into education and schooling by market driven, fiscal, governance reforms (Molnar, 2001) be bringing about the construction of a new student identity? It appears that a student's identity has been reshaped into an economically productive, non-critical citizen (Hursh, 2007). Knowledge and learning have become products for students to consume or to invest in, rather than as a public good that adds meaning and growth to one's life, which truly goes beyond anything money could ever buy, or does it? Even student-teacher relationships have become reified as relationships between consumers and providers of things; this "relationship" marginalizes any learning partnership between them as people (Levidow, 2001). An educator's ability to ask critical questions about the world in which we live has been deeply compromised. The curriculum is now required to "deliver" in preparing students for universities, schools and agencies that have openly embraced corporate sponsorship. Corporatizing education truly degrades student work to such an extent that it raises questions regarding whether what students are

engaged in can rightfully be called "education" (Smith, 2002). In a very real sense, students are now engaged in furthering what the author of *The Sane Society's* Erich Fromm described as alienation. Fromm (1957) argues that: "Modern man is alienated from himself, from his fellow men, and from nature. He has been transformed into a commodity, experiences his life forces as an investment which must bring him the maximum profit obtainable under existing market conditions" (p. 72).

Market advocates and skeptics alike, acknowledge the efficiency of markets for producing and distributing various goods and services. And yet, instead of markets serving as a useful tool for aspects of a society, they are increasingly central to the very essence of social existence. Karl Polanyi (1944) has described society as a market society (as opposed to a society with markets) where markets order and drive most aspects of human life (Polanyi, 1944). Another indication of the increasing marketization in education is the growth in the movement of various programs such as private tutoring institutions, which promise new types of educational models, new forms of delivery, new models of collaboration and new types of qualifications, which go as far as to take education programs to students both in their home countries and abroad.

*The Spread of Neoliberalism across the Globe through the GATS*

Neoliberal consumerist ideologies have not only produced, legitimated and exacerbated the existence of persistent poverty, inadequate

health care, racial apartheid and growing inequalities between the rich and the poor (see Giroux, 2004), but have furthermore, obstructed, if not destroyed, opportunities for students to become educated. The inexorable drive to expand global markets by increasing global trade and cross-border services – a legitimate "offspring" of globalization, that seeks to isomorphize ways of knowing and prescribe "best ways" of doing (Tettey, 2006) – has managed to seep into education systems under the umbrella of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) and transform education into a legally protected industry and tradable commodity (Robertson, et al, 2002). GATS are intended to force countries, in exchange for debt relief and aid, particularly poor southern countries, to open up their service sectors to "big business" and bring about complete liberalization of international trade in all services, including higher education (Knight, 2002). And while the GATS promises to generate (economic) benefits "that more trade can bring in terms of innovations through new providers and delivery modes, greater student access, and (of course) increased economic gain" (Knight, 2002, p. 2), one cannot help but question, even though this question may have a fairly obvious answer: Who will be the primary beneficiaries of GATS? Will the agreement truly benefit Third World countries and meet their educational needs, or will such agreement, once more serve to further fill the already overflowing pockets of the "helping" institutions?

According to the WTO, The creation of the GATS was a landmark achievement of the Uruguay Round – one of the largest negotiating mandates on trade ever agreed (WTO, n.d). The main ideology behind GATS, which is structured around neoliberal principles, is to further extend and widen the trading system and intellectual property (TRIPs) into several new areas, as well as to reform trade in the sensitive sectors of agriculture and textiles (WTO, n.d.). Initially, global trade was guided by the General Agreement in Tariff and Trade (GATT) – an agreement that primarily covered trade in goods; but the WTO had much greater and more far-reaching plans, since the U.S. government determined that the interests of its corporations were no longer served by a "loose" and "flexible" GATT (Cavanagh & Mander, 2004). The new system, which was essentially inspired by the same objectives as its counterpart (GATT), included many agreements that were related, directly and indirectly, to global trade. One such agreement, the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), deals in different aspects of service trade and is structurally more complex than the GATT. When the original GATT articles were up for review, the eighth GATT round (known as the Uruguay Round), was launched in September 1986, while the results of the round entered into force in January 1995 (WTO, n.d.). Hence, the GATS are a fairly new area of trade services and GATS negotiations are in the early stages of implementation in many Third World countries.

Ruth Caplan (2001) reaffirms in the article "GATS: Service Economy Gets the WTO Treatment," that: "The GATS regime fits in nicely with the IMF and World Bank's agenda to promote privatization of public services" (Caplan, 2001). And while the WTO has helped encourage a surge in global trade, it has failed in its every attempt – even though the WTO will purport otherwise – to raise economic growth and alleviate poverty in Third World countries. How is giving more power to the already powerful WTO – which has ultimately proven to be untrustworthy undemocratic, unfair, unaccountable and unbendable (Cavanagh & Mander, 2004; Ellwood, 2006; Peet, 2004; Levidow, 2005) – going to be of any benefit this time? Why should the GATS, then, be any different?

The goals of the GATS was "to create a credible and reliable system of international trade rules; ensuring fair and equitable treatment of all participants (principle of non-discrimination); stimulating economic activity through guaranteed policy bindings; and promoting trade and development through progressive liberalization" (WTO, n.d.). GATS, for example, introduced new transmission technologies like electronic banking, tele-health or tele-education services, which opened up monopolies like voice telephony and postal services in many countries (WTO, n.d.). The ever-changing consumer demands and preferences in technical and regulatory innovations have further enhanced the "tradability" of services, thus, creating a need for multilateral disciplines. All WTO member countries –

about 140 economies at present – are to varying degrees, Members of the GATS (WTO, n.d).

The World Trade Organization provides a rather convincing and seemingly clear explanation of the provisions and decisions of the GATS. Perhaps those who stand to benefit from trade expansion, may find the GATS agreement not only benign in nature, but view it as a significant opportunity to expand trade and investment that will pave the way for the rapid development of the global economy. These purportedly "well-intentioned," even promising agreements (GATS) and programs (SAPs), however, elicit skepticism and are wide open to interpretation (Ellwood, 2006; Stromquist, 1999). Glenn Rikowski (2002) notes that the GATS language is cleverly crafted, while many GATS provisions are rather obscure and there is confusion regarding the interpretation of some rules and obligations, as well as a great deal of uncertainty about which services are covered or exempted from the agreement (Rikowski, 2002). Thus, there is an urgent need to examine the fine print and perhaps clarify any ambiguities.

Trade supporters and proponents of the GATS, on the other hand, celebrate the Agreement's existence and push to ensure its effective implementation. So far, it appears that corporate service providers, who are determined to expand their global commercial markets and maximize their benefits (Clarke, 2001), are those who have benefited from such programs and agreements, because their agendas centre on increasing, protecting and

extending their own interests of "big business" at the expense of public good. In addition, much of the GATS structure owes its composition to the ideas born at Bretton Woods (Senunas, 1997); this, in itself, implies that the growth and power of these "prodigious institutions" operates under undemocratic principles that have dramatically affected the lives and livelihoods of people on many levels (Peet, 2003; Ellwood, 2006; Cavanagh & Mander, 2004).

Yet, the WTO, IMF and World Bank continue to show their intellectual dishonesty by refusing to acknowledge that their policies have adversely affected most developing countries and have increased the poverty levels (Michelo, 2004). How can we be sure that history will not repeat itself this time? In his book *Unholy Trinity: The IMF, World Bank and WTO Richard Peet* (2003) denounces the WTO's scope and principle of free trade "within an overall neoliberal conception of economic growth, justified through the universalistic belief that everyone benefits (mainly as consumers) from trade and growth" (Peet, 2003, p. 198), which has ultimately done very little (if anything) to produce economic growth and higher incomes for poor people and countries.

The WTO's propagation of trade in education services is – clearly – a part of the larger neoliberal agenda aimed at securing economic advantage, competition, and consumerism lead by political and economic powers like the United States and the European Union (Hamm, 2005). The often illusive rewards, benefits and enticing images of wealth and prosperity of

consumption are being mercilessly promoted through various "programs" and "agreements" that are aimed at liberalizing Third World economies so that the "invisible hand" of capitalism will rush in and like a tide lift all boats towards the ultimate end of all human existence: economic growth. The GATS agreement, essentially, widely opens the markets for cross-border trade without any regard for the Commons – or what is left of them - and the principles of collective choice arenas that are protected by democratically decided laws aimed at promoting peoples' well-being and quality of life (Clarke, 2001).

The manufactured images of wealth and prosperity in the West are often used to lure Third World countries into borrowing and borrowing more, in order to finance the public sector and to service their existing debts, in exchange for implementing GATS programs. Such and many other Faustian bargains occur, whereby poor countries opt for dependency, in this case, a legally binding commitment to the GATS, in exchange for "security," which in most cases implies debt relief for Third World countries. And while the infamous Doctor Faustus was in a position to make a choice (between good and evil), the poor are often left with no choice at all. Faustian bargains are a prime characteristic of the neoliberal model of globalization. Social and economic development through global trade tools like GATS and SAPs provide the passageway to the "promised land" of Western modernity through the gates of consumption, while the West lies basking in the glow of profit and wealth, as neoliberal market

ideology insidiously penetrates all spheres of life into development trajectories of the Third World.

*Bottom-up or Top-Down?*

The WTO insists that the GATS is a bottom-up agreement because member-nations are "free" to choose the service sectors they wish to open up to competition with foreign providers. In truth, however, the WTO was left with little choice but to present the GATS as a bottom-up agreement because during GATS negotiations, developing countries objected to the inclusion of services in the WTO (Caplan, 2001). Hence, the (supposed) bottom-up structure played a decisive role in gaining the approval of the member-nations in order to finalize the GATS framework. But how can the GATS be a bottom-up agreement when it serves to indulge the corrupt, self-serving governments who are solely absorbed in the process of making themselves richer at the expense of their poor citizens, who often remain clueless and unaware about the rules and obligations surrounding GATS, and other agreements and policies, for that matter?

Vandana Shiva (2001) comments on the WTO's use of "clever language" to depict GATS as a "bottom-up," rather than a "top-down" treaty because it "allows" countries the autonomy to make commitments for trade liberation in different sectors through progressive liberalization (Shiva, 2001). "Such treaties", argues Shiva, "completely bypasses national democratic decision making and exclude citizen participation. As such,

these treaties can hardly be called "bottom-up." To be truly bottom-up, the rules and subject matter of GATS need to first be discussed among local communities and regional and national parliaments. They then need to be amended on the basis of democratic feedback. Without such a "democracy round," GATS is not a bottom-up but a top-down agreement being forced on the people of the world" (Shiva, 2001, para. 1). GATS indeed correspond to their very own world view and not to that of the people and they infringe upon cultural issues and resources (Shiva, 2001). Hence, such "plans" are only destined to fail when they do not reflect the desire of the people, for "their authors designed them according to their own personal views of reality, never once taking into account the men (and women) in a situation to whom their program was ostensibly directed" (Freire, 2007, p. 94). And what about democracy? Could GATS be a threat to democratic decision making? While some may argue that the provision of any education is obviously better than no provision at all (Nunn & Worth, 2000), should not the citizens, at least, be aware of the options that are available to them and then collectively agree (or not) to those provisions? The mere existence of the GATS is largely unknown to the citizens, which undermines their very right to determine their own social, cultural, environmental and educational priorities.

*The Case of South Africa: "To GATS, or Not to GATS?" That is the Question*

The GATS is a fairly new program and many countries have been hesitant to adopt, or comply with them and open up their service markets to large foreign investment companies. In fact, education is one of the least covered sectors in GATS (Education International, 2006); as such, education systems in Third World countries are summoned to adapt themselves to this massification and merchantization of education in order to sustain, more efficiently, the economic competition by educating the workforce and adapting it to the so-called "knowledge economy" (Hirtt, 2003). Private sector partnership, particularly with universities, must promote the commercialization of intellectual property, by creating a propriety right to knowledge that is not possible within the public domain; consequently, higher education institutions must adapt their traditional and organizational practices to this new knowledge economy (Olsen & Maassen, 2007).

South Africa presents a very interesting and bold case that illustrates how the country firmly stood its ground and blatantly refused Norway's request to open up her higher education sector to the GATS. Professor, and then Minister of Education Asmal Kader (2003) proclaimed his opposition to GATS in education by adamantly declaring that placing education under the GATS umbrella would not only compromise the quality of public education in the South African context, but the mere notion of simply

allowing education to become part of the GATS would be analogous to supporting the commodification of education and undermining the status of education as a public good and a basic human right (Jobbins, Maslen & Wojtas, 2003).

Although Norway quickly backed down from demanding further access to South Africa's higher education market, one cannot possibly overlook a very significant detail that makes this case even more striking. Apparently, countries wishing to engage in trade negotiations must not make public the requests they receive from the countries they wish to trade with (SØrensen, 2005). South Africa openly "broke" the explicit rule in the GATS protocol by "leaking" Norway's request to include higher education in the GATS. This pervasive shroud of secrecy and obscurity that surrounds GATS is, simultaneously, a prime characteristic of corporations that, in a sense, enables them to apply double standards of flaunting their public image of corporate social responsibility, on the one hand, while protecting corporate information on the other. The corporate embrace manifest in the GATS negotiations threatens to undermine the core values of education and higher educational institutions as they shroud university cultures in secrecy, creating an atmosphere of silence, intimidation, and self-censorship that signals the demise of free speech and academic freedom (Noble, 2002). The implication of South Africa's confrontation, perhaps, illustrates the dangers of the basic lack of transparency in the GATS (SØrensen, 2005) and verifies how the agreement largely follows a double corporate agenda.

And while GATS negotiations are ongoing in Africa – albeit with more caution and skepticism – there is an increased realization, at the political level, of the need for more open trade systems in order to stimulate Africa's development mission. At the same time, however, issues of national sovereignty and the potential impact of trade liberalization on higher education institutions have stirred heated debates. Because South Africa is currently undergoing vast transformation in the higher education realm, there appears to be lack of consensus about the values of education in the South African system, which poses a major dilemma. On the one hand, there is the challenge of trying to build an identity and to ensure that institutions contribute to the "public good;" on the other hand, the system encourages them to operate in a business-like fashion. Added to this dilemma, is the growing realization that education is the gateway towards supporting new economic structures (Mtembu & Yeowart, 2004).

As higher education is becoming a hot commodity in the South African context, the country is struggling with the question of whether or not education should in fact be exempted from the GATS negotiations. Arguing for education as an exception, Pascal Mihyo (2004) asserts that:

> The human development processes involved in education including the shaping of human thinking, the conditioning of the cognitive and perceptive capabilities of learners and the socialization and integration functions of these processes are seen as factors qualifying education to be

given differential treatment in the reorganization of the global economy"(as cited in Mtembu & Yeowart, 2004, p. 5).

Mihyo's argument stimulates further critical reflection and raises another fundamental question of whether education can be both a public good and a tradable commodity. How realistic is this notion? There are lucrative markets already emerging independently from GATS, which have created a climate of mistrust that is nurtured by the implications that result from treating education "as a merchandise" (Garcia-Guadilla, 2002). Could it be – as Mtembu and Yeohart argue – that education as a public good and education as a tradable commodity is involved in some integrative evolutionary process? Is it a victory for utilitarian market oriented programming, or is there still room for formative and intellectual learning spaces that transcend economic interest and promote human evolution? There does not appear to be a clear or uniform understanding of what values higher education should instill or embody in the South African context (Mtembu & Yeowart, 2004).

On the other hand, Mtembu and Yeowart (2004) affirm that the entrance of new international providers or programs to promote the development of African scholars has had a profoundly positive impact and therefore, question whether there is a need to undo the positive impact that the entrance of new international providers has had towards their goal to massify education (Mtembu & Yeowart, 2004). Should Africa derive some "positive impact" in meeting her educational demands and then dump the

system? Countries in Latin America are examining the potential impact of commercial agreements and weigh the disadvantages. Would taking on the maximum benefits of the advantages – have their cake and eat it too – be a plausible solution, perhaps? Why not? This is what the "unholy" institutions have been doing for years. Perhaps all nations should prudently adopt an attentive and watchful eye against World Trade Organization policies, altogether, and take what they can from such policies to meet their own needs. Realistically, however, many of these countries are in massive debt and find themselves in a devastating cycle of dependence and obligation; as such, the need to adopt agreements like GATS will only grow. Furthermore, taking on the maximum benefits may, perhaps, require a great amount of effort to subsequently overcome the disadvantages (Garcia-Guadilla, 2002).

Regardless of the variably positive and negative implications, however, African higher educational institutions do, in fact, participate in commercial activities, with or without GATS. This is so because attempting to reform, or transform the current world order – characterized by globalization – may not be pragmatic in terms of sidelining the market forces on education (Mtembu & Yeowart, 2004). Hence, South Africa is considering her position in the world by examining the state of collective values first, and perhaps coming to some sort of consensus that will help her wrestle with the structural and conceptual issues and moreover, identify

what areas of international relations are covered and excluded by the GATS (Mtembu & Yeowart, 2004).

*Education is Not a Tradable Commodity*

In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire speaks about the banking metaphor of education that aptly describes the student as consumer, which according to Freire, is antithetical to the meaning of education. Freire goes on to criticize consumerism's invasive penetration into education by implying that it kills student's spirit and thinking as it transforms them into receiving objects, thus inhibiting their natural creativity (Freire, 2007). The oppressors use their so-called "humanitarianism" – a façade for a neoliberal set of guidelines that are designed to cater to the needs of contemporary capitalism (Levidow, 2005) – to promote or preserve a profitable situation (Freire, 2007). Director General of the WTO Pascal Lamy maintains that "members are determined to ensure that the WTO's trading system contributes to humanitarian and development goals." That may be so, but the WTO deals with humanitarian issues as if they are trade issues (Bullard, 2003). Can humanitarian voices have a place in trade? Does this not, in a sense, undermine the vocabulary of humanitarianism itself? Humanitarianism is concerned with devoting and promoting human welfare and the advancement of social reforms. Signatory countries must conform to the GATS policies and rules; any government's attempt to intervene, once the GATS agreement has been

signed, will face heavy trade sanctions, which may threaten to cripple developing economies. Trade sanctions have caused severely undesirable humanitarian consequences that include declines in public health, nutrition, safety nets, and employment (see Pesken, 2006). There is also a negative association between trade sanctions and life expectancy, as well as a decline in secondary school enrolment rates (Pesken, 2006). So what kind of "humanitarianism" is the WTO talking about?

Freire asserts that instead of seeking the expansion of wisdom and knowledge, students work at their studies in order to get the grades for a diploma that will land them a higher-paying job (Freire, 2007). Freire echoes criticisms that reveal that school practices and educational structures characterize today's commodified world. Programs such as GATS furthermore perpetuate this "student as consumer" model by adopting market ideologies that underpin or move towards privatizing education, thus making it available to those who can afford to pay for education, not to mention that services like GATS and SAPs also pose considerable threat to the capacity of the developing world to determine its own affairs. In *Cultural Imperialism*, Christoph Scherrer (2005) describes GATS as providing a political and legal framework for deregulation and privatization of education, which is directly in line with the spread of neoliberal constitutionalism, thus GATS is an enabling structure for cultural imperialism (Scherrer, 2005). In other words, the GATS are just another intrusive mission to impose values upon other nations, as they become

acculturated to an individualist culture that defines the West. Education has been traditionally seen as a vehicle of acculturation, while colonialism provided the arena for acculturation to occur and severely threatened to make indigenous knowledge obsolete. The GATS, in a sense, perpetuates the structure for cultural imperialism, by denying educational systems in developing countries the right to develop their capacities, which can have an impact on the recognition and promotion of indigenous knowledge.

*A Neoliberal Assault on Public Education*

The GATS is, beyond any doubt, an instrument of neoliberal governance and while the GATS itself cannot be held responsible for the emergence of commercial trends in education, it most certainly does not prevent the further opening up of local markets to transnational corporations and the advancement of the neoliberal economic model. The mounting evidence indicates that neoliberal reforms have not only failed to combat extreme poverty, but, on the contrary, exacerbate global inequality and hamper international aid and development efforts.

The global market and its dominant neoliberal ideology promotes and normalizes relations of capital by promoting educational agendas that are tied to consumerist, meritocratic and market oriented ideologies aimed at transforming educational institutions into corporations. This consumerist mentality is on a highly successful path towards penetrating education systems in the GATS by transforming university students into consumers, as

they shop for a university or college that will equip them with the necessary diploma to enter the workforce (Tettey, 2005)

Neoliberal ideologies have been, thus far, rejected by countries in Latin America and as I have discussed, by South Africa, while the moral basis of GATS is now widely questioned. Recent protests against the WTO, IMF and World Bank are, essentially, protests against the neoliberal policies that these organizations implement, particularly in low-income countries (Makwana, 2006). The Bologna process is made of the same ideology that is promoted by the WTO; however, increasing public pressure and protests have resulted in a growing interest of governments and reluctance to go any further in trade in education (ESIB, 2003).

There are, nonetheless, countries that bend under the pressure and comply with GATS. As public subsidies decline and market globalization encompasses the world, education and schooling are metamorphosing into services, indeed business exchanges, rather than as personally meaningful processes. The very nature of education has shifted from that of a public good, to a heterogeneous investment alternative and consumption good (Alstadsaeter, 2003), advertised and sold in education markets with GATS as the highway to consumption.

*Summary*

The synthesis of information in this literature review reveals that the realm of public education is crammed with uncertainty as waves of

neoliberal reform and restructuring sweep through what appears to be a public education system treading water. Governments and citizens alike must ask themselves want kind of direction they want public education to take. Is it possible to control market forces through public policy and investment so that the most valuable traditions and democratic values of public education remain unscathed, or is Ivan Illich (1970) accurate in stating that it is not possible to go beyond the consumer society unless we first understand that public schools, inevitably, reproduce such a society, no matter what is taught in them? It appears that competition and commercial pressures of the marketplace have penetrated our public education system, leaving behind a schooling enterprise that is characterized by mediocrity.

Perhaps subjecting the GATS to public scrutiny is a way to provide critical opportunity to redefine the meaning of public services away from the corporate notion of the public as a mere body of consumers. But for this to happen, the public must reclaim their democratic control over the conditions of their very existence (McLaren, 2000). Education is a fundamental human right and as such, must reflect human rights principles and values. Committing education sectors to the GATS protocol, not only threatens its status as a human right, but could potentially diminish its status of remaining a public good that ought to be delivered through public institutions, with the ethos of the public sector that emphasizes quality, access and equal opportunity (Education International, 2006). As such,

education must not be treated as a commodity and, subsequently, not be subject to commercial trade rules.

In this literature review I have examined some of the potential threats that have emerged from GATS-driven privatization and have illustrated how GATS attempts to dismantle infrastructures in the higher education sector by coercing Third World countries to change their domestic policies and conform to the rules of international competition, under the auspices of the World Trade Organization (WTO). While agreements such as the GATS, which are designed to promote trade, can obviously bring about large economic benefits (to private investors), the market-oriented approach is fiercely challenging the notion of education as a public good, as form and content of education fall into the hands of private investors – which is the very rationale of the GATS, designed as such to provide certainty to private investors – while businesses and educational administrators become the main partnerships (Levidow, 2005).

# Chapter 3 - Methodology

## *Introduction*

Education has transformed into an increasingly competitive and demanding market place and educational institutions, be they public schools or post secondary institutions, are "encouraged" to adopt business sensibilities to "stay afloat" throughout this – seemingly inevitable – process of evolutionary "survival" that postulates an inherent market wisdom, whereby the best able to compete in a global market will, ultimately, survive. Several studies have been conducted – and are currently underway – to further investigate the impact of neoliberal education policies. Policies that embrace and promote privatization, marketization and decentralization; policies that have waged relentless and unjust attacks on the rights and conditions of educators by devaluing their authority and by dictating not only *what* they should teach, but also, *how* they should teach (Giroux, 2001); policies that are marked by selection, exclusion and inequality leading to the increased polarization of raced and gendered social classes; policies that, inevitably, spell the demise of democracy.

Many renowned scholars have delved into – but have not nearly exhausted – the dominant and highly contested discourses of neoliberalism, with the intention to propose analytical avenues through which to understand, critique and eventually, denounce neoliberal educational practices and policies. The burgeoning literature on neoliberal governance

in education suggests that the increased marketization of education has exacerbated inequalities, globally and nationally, as it seeks to further diminish democratic accountability and stifle critical thought, not only by compressing and repressing critical space, but by "deforming" a number of aspects in education through the implementation of policies and experimental reform designs that blatantly treat teachers and students like laboratory "guinea pigs" to "test out" their latest "improvement" trends and/or fads (Hursh, 2002; Hill, 2005; Giroux, 1984; Levidow, 2000; Rikowski, 2007 McLaren, 1993 Apple, 2006). Once the novelty of these emerging trends – like NCLB[5] – wears off and the seemingly "noble" causes fade away – as is quite common with market-based reforms that typically have a very short shelf life – fragmentation rears its ugly head and "the collateral damage is the millions of young lives brutalized and lost in mismanaged, and incompetent schools" (Rotherham & Whitmire, 2009, para. 13).

But the danger of treating educational institutions like businesses lies not only in the increase of capital accumulation, but in producing and reproducing a work force and citizenry composed of consumers fit for capital (Hill, 2006), which, all in all, serves the interests and fills the pockets of the ruling class, the business elites, as it further perpetuates and legitimizes a system of social stratification (Althusser, 2008; Bowles & Gintis, 1976). In addition to examining the economic and structural

[5] No Child Left Behind.

processes in current educational policies and school reforms, I propose a comprehensive analysis to include the position of neoliberal ideology as a hegemonic mode of discourse by highlighting the centrality of ideology as an instrument of reproduction and by investigating the interplay between theories of reproduction. I will, subsequently, suggest transformative and resistance techniques to neoliberal agendas in education, which call for struggle against, rather than submission to domination (MacLeod, 2008). Neoliberalism has become dominant as an ideology precisely because its principles have become so deeply embedded in so many different institutional contexts. Reform pedagogies are, more or less, tailored to the overall goals of the dominant ideology as they seek to, essentially, indoctrinate students, educators, parents and the general public – through the assiduous propagation of "myths" (that essentially drive current reforms and policy agendas) that are presumably intended to promote equitable and quality schooling for all children – to accept claims that liberalization, deregulation and privatization produce unrivaled benefits, which in turn, they accept as inalienable truths.

In an attempt to address and explore the broad, yet highly imperative question: "How has the dominant neoliberal ideology become manifest through educational policies and pedagogical practices?" a substantive review and thorough analysis of the relevant literature and related theories has been actively employed to further examine, reexamine and problematize neoliberal policies in education. This very question and sub questions that

follow, have further prompted me to explore *how* and *why* neoliberal tropes and narratives have ever so deeply penetrated individual and cultural consciousness, so much so, that they have become second nature; common sense. My analysis will, therefore, emphasize the profoundly harmful effects of neoliberal policies on public educational institutions evidenced by widening inequalities, the erosion of democracy and critical thought and the increasing alienation of teachers and students from the learning process (Cooper, 2008). The purpose of this chapter is to, therefore, outline the processes undertaken to find, summarize, interpret and critically analyze the extensive body of literature relevant to the primary and secondary research questions. I will initially proceed to explain the ontological nature of reality from my point-of-view, the epistemological orientation of the research and the methodological framework that I have employed to conduct the research, which will provide a critical lens through which to gain a better understanding of the viewpoint and framework this thesis has been based upon.

*Selected Research Paradigm*

The ways in which we view the world and construct knowledge clearly determines how we make decisions and carry out research. Hence, in the more formal structure of a thesis, the research paradigms and corresponding methodologies we select, establish a set of practices that can range from thought patterns to action. According to Guba and Lincoln

(1994), a research paradigm "represents a worldview that defines for its holder, the nature of the "world," the individual's place in it, and the range of possible relationships to that world and its parts … The beliefs are basic in the sense that they must be accepted simply on faith (however well argued); there is no way to establish their ultimate truthfulness" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, pp. 107-108). Hence, the investigation undertaken through this qualitative approach is not, merely, a reflection of my desire to discover and engage in social critique, but moreover, to somehow partake in social and institutional change through a close examination of sources of resistance and how advocates of change can, perhaps, be mobilized to serve as platforms that may facilitate improvement or transform aspects of social life. The crux of my research, therefore, is one of social critique that aims to dissolve the blurred dichotomies or, perhaps, shed light upon the obscurities that abound, through deconstruction and contestation of the hegemonic discourses that maintain and reproduce the often restrictive and alienating conditions of the status quo (Richardson, Tapia, & Kvasny, 2006).

The research questions I pose emerge from my personal conceptions and interpretations of social reality, complemented by my critical reading of the relevant literature, and have, as such, guided my research. Due to the very broad focus of this study and due to my personal involvement as an agent in the construction of a just social world, I contend that it is my duty, as an educator and parent, to create an awareness of the political nature of

social phenomena – in which education plays a crucial role – and to develop the capacity to reflect, critically, upon those "common sense" or "taken-for-granted" realities which I am, inevitably, a part of. The research paradigm best suited to explore and develop a critical understanding of how the dominant neoliberal ideology not only subverts other ideologies through educational institutions, but also emphasizes the ways social structures are produced and reproduced, is the critical theory paradigm.

My perspective is that of an educator who views the current world as a world intensely and pervasively marked by market influences that have become so deeply ingrained in the collective psyche, in a culture's way of thinking, that we often remain unaware of how exactly dominant ideologies pass as commonsense. Moreover, we are often blind to actions (or lack thereof) that further enable and maintain a society structured by dominance. The dominant neoliberal ideology is structured as such to conform to a dominant value system that proffers maximization of production and consumption and stakes claims of universality and absolute validity as it permeates the socio-symbolic order, threatening the very unity and equilibrium of the subject and the social realm. It will take much concerted effort and time to unlearn these inclinations that the dominant ideology has engendered within us. If we are to unmask what the dominant ideology obscures, we must actively engage in a process of de-ideologization, which involves breaking down discourses and taken-for-granted thought patterns. Many teachers, students, even schools today do not regard themselves as

being influenced by neoliberal market forces and actively engage, consciously or not, in practices that mime and extend neoliberal principles (Fish, 2009). We must, therefore, recognize that as long as the dominant ideology of any society functions as a dangerously latent force within dominant public spheres, individual critique and collective political struggles become all the more difficult (Giroux, 2004). Hence, my purpose, here, is not only to create an awareness of how the dominant ideology functions, but also, to examine the nature of the domination we, as agents, are subjected to.

As educators, we must be involved as (change) agents in the construction of a just social world, which necessarily implies creating awareness through the critical lens. Critical theory suggests two kinds of research methodologies for undertaking research work and exploring phenomena: a critique of ideology and action research (Dash, 2005). While action research – that employs a dialectical view of rationality as socially constructed and historically embedded –primarily involves participatory procedures, community involvement, gathering data, reflection and deciding on a course of action, I have resorted to a critique of ideology, that is "associated with the Frankfurt School thinkers (Adorno, 1973; Fromm, 1941; Habermas, 1984, 1987; Horkheimer, 1947; Marcuse, 1964), and that describes a process we can use to reveal uncritically accepted, unjust, and normalized dominant ideologies that are embedded in our everyday lives" (Brookfield, 1997, p. 38).

Jürgen Habermas (1970) has developed an approach of investigation and action in the social sciences to describe the historical forces through the ideological justification of those forces that restrict human freedom (Habermas 1970). Habermas suggests a tripartite epistemological framework for ways of understanding the world which include: 1) a technical interest concerned with the control of the physical environment, which generates empirical and analytical knowledge, 2) a practical interest concerned with understanding the meaning of a situation, which generates hermeneutic and historical knowledge and 3) an emancipating interest concerned with the provision for growth and advancement, which generates critical knowledge and is concerned with exposing conditions of constraints and domination (Habermas, 1970; Dash, 2005).

In this thesis, I will be employing a critique of ideology that will serve an emancipatory interest, not necessarily aimed at predicting and/or controlling behavior but, more so, in identifying the factors which constrain people's conduct, which hinders them from reflecting on and overcoming these constrains. It is the reflective features of critical theory that have allowed me to embrace, and go beyond, both instrumental and hermeneutic forms of rationality, making it possible to critique ideology through the elimination of constraining or dominating forms of self-deception and socially constructed illusions (Schroyer, 1973; Bernstein, 1976 as cited in Codd, 1983).

*Ontological and Epistemological Beliefs*

Since a researcher's epistemological stance – a set of assumptions about the world, knowledge, and human behavior – guide all types of research and determine how a researcher interacts with the data at hand, it is imperative that the researcher maintains a balance between subjectivity and objectivity. While I am fully aware that it is my responsibility as a researcher to value the idea of objectivity by looking for absolute truths and causal relationships, this thesis challenges positions of objectivity. My research questions have opened up avenues of exploration that are only made possible by problematizing the relationship between research and experience. Because a research paradigm represents a worldview that defines for its holder the nature of the world and the individual's place within that world (Guba and Lincoln, 1994), it would be nearly impossible to maintain neutrality and impartiality when conducting critical research of this nature. The greatest influence that has determined the direction of my research work has been my ten year occupation as an educator/teacher, which has, first hand, contributed to my understanding of how short lived educational reforms, practices and policies have sought to reframe education. In developing the ontological and epistemological considerations of this thesis, I have chosen to utilize an approach that demonstrates my personal involvement in incorporating scholarly ideas, thoughts and realities. Reflecting on my practice as an educator has led to my understanding of how neoliberal ideology has become manifest in

pedagogical practices. In addition, a review and active engagement with the literature has allowed me to better interpret analytical findings to illustrate how the educational landscape has been significantly altered by neoliberal pedagogies.

I have positioned this study in the larger ontological discussion regarding the effects of neoliberalism in education; as such, I will provide a summary of the big theoretical picture through a substantive review of the literature. I have made no attempt to measure human behaviour or experience, but rather, characterize people's experiences of the world – the ways in which the world is "real" to those who are studied. The data that I have collected is strictly confined to my personal input and literature analysis and, as such, is not amenable to statistical analysis. Nevertheless, I have attempted to organize the research in a meaningful way by providing interpretations and reflecting upon these interpretations, while maintaining an awareness of how my own views and inherent biases influence these interpretations.

*Literature Review and Analysis*

The methodology of this thesis is located in qualitative research within a critical theory paradigm, while the method consists of literature review complemented by a document analysis that will serve to investigate the ideological infiltration and material effects of neoliberal policies and their impact on education. Furthermore, the argument employs a qualitative

analysis to contest the hegemony of neoliberalism by drawing the contextualized complexities and contradictions into relief, thus opening a space for critique and resistance. The educational domain lends itself to qualitative investigations. In fact, it is not uncommon to adopt a qualitative paradigm in educational research despite the often harsh criticisms by quantitative researchers who attempt to discredit qualitative approaches on the grounds of what they see as "lack of methodological rigor" (Byrne-Armstrong, Higgs & Horsfall, 2001). And while the proliferation of qualitative methods in educational research has often led to considerable controversy about standards for the design and conduct of research (Howe & Eisenhart, 1990), a qualitative approach is one that best serves the purposes of this study, as it will generate specific detailed information on the areas in question.

Qualitative research in education recognizes that the researcher's subjectivity deeply affects the research and accepts the researcher's point of view as a crucial factor of the research (Hara, 1995). With this in mind, it is important to acknowledge that the relationship between the researcher and what is being researched is impossible to separate. It is my firm belief that research facts and a researcher's value judgments or interpretations of the research are inextricably intertwined (Hara, 1995). The qualitative research framework along with a document analysis and literature review have led me to delve deeper into the conceptual apparatus of how and why neoliberalism has become embedded in common sense, as to be taken for

granted and not open to question (Kaur, 2008). It has, furthermore, allowed me not only to critically examine educational reforms that promote market ideologies, high-stakes testing, accountability, and competitive markets, but also, to examine some of the reasons *why* they continue to receive such wide support despite the widening achievement gap. It is through my own experience as an educator that I have witnessed year after year a widening achievement gap at my own school, which leads me to believe that the reforms are not achieving their stated goals. Consequently, as an educator, it has been impossible for me not to question and take a stance against neoliberal approaches to education.

It is, therefore, my contention that the methodology I have employed will achieve the objectives of this study and is the most appropriate for the topic at hand. Although this study has been labour intensive in the sense that it has required an extensive review of a wide range of literature, I am confident that the qualitative approach has enabled me to examine several viewpoints and select, organize, interpret and summarize those most pertinent to my study.

*Literature Selection*

The literature review along with a scrupulous evaluation of the selected documents, form an essential part of this thesis and, in many ways, constitute the bulk of this theoretical research endeavor. Documents were obtained from a number of scholarly journals, drawn mainly from online

searches of multiple databases some of which include: Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC), Project MUSE, JCEPS: *Journal for Critical Education Policy Studies*, The International Journal of Inclusive Democracy and through the University of Alberta Library online database.

In order to target the specific areas of interest and to narrow down the search, I included search terms and key descriptors such as: "neoliberal policies in education," "dominant neoliberal ideology" and "market reforms in education" etc., which yielded numerous accredited books, articles and related resources. The selection of the articles was conducted using the following criteria: articles were accredited or scholarly published, peer reviewed or refereed journals. Additional articles were also collected through a comparative review of references cited in the articles. I have mainly confined my review and synthesis of research to the past 20 years, yet this thesis, logically, encompasses a fraction of the content that I have unearthed and is limited in its account because of the magnitude and depth of the research topic at hand. Furthermore a review of abstracts, web-based searches, and finally, bibliographies of the books and sources utilized, guided my search.

In conclusion, the selection and evaluation of the content was based on: 1) Currency: when the article, book or Internet source was written or produced, 2) Relevance: whether the source addressed my topic and research questions, 3) Authority: the author's credibility, 4) Accuracy: comparing the article or book to other sources vis-à-vis the topic and if the

information was published by a credible source, and 5) Purpose: assessing whether or not the material was written from a biased point of view or if the document was written to persuade or inform (Riedling, 2004).

*Limitations*

Although the limitation of this study may, perhaps, be its confinement to an analysis of the current literature, its strength lies in the in-depth and individualized perspective that has been obtained. The purpose of selecting a theoretical approach is that it lends itself to an in-depth critique by integrating the works of others. I understand that a major limitation in adopting a theoretical model is that it may not be generalizable or representative of the general group or population because it relies more on descriptive information that is provided by different groups; as such, the findings and conclusions I have made cannot be directly generalizable to the larger population. The quality of the data/ideas that have been collected through the literature analysis have been highly influenced by my personal worldview and have guided this analysis. Moreover, my personal experience has influenced the direction of the data, which I have summarized into themes and insights.

This study has allowed me to include my personal experience both as researcher and as an educator. The purpose of this research has, essentially, surfaced from the many years of experience I have had as a teacher – working under immense pressure to meet the provincial benchmarks and

carry out “flavor of the month” reform objectives aimed at commodifying and standardizing education; hence, my influence as a researcher on this particular research topic should not and cannot be ignored. I acknowledge that not only will I be integrating my influence as a researcher into the research itself, but that I will also be providing personal and institutional insight to the study. As an educator, I have been implicated in the construction of education, as a full participant, but have often felt as neither an agent who perpetuated the status quo, nor as an agent of transformation who created contexts to question dominant practices. As a graduate student I have been given the opportunity to question, discover and critique dominant discourses and practices and lend my voice and insights to policy and to the need for change. By building on already existing research, I feel that I am somehow expanding on the current research boundaries and furthering the discipline through a constant accumulation of knowledge.

*Situating Myself as a Researcher*

Situating myself as a reflexive researcher is an imperative aspect of this research endeavour. As an educator, I have been subject to the threats that face schools and have often worked under increased pressure to ensure that my school meets its projected enrollment numbers, in fear of school closure and consequently, staff cuts. Many schools, including the schools I have worked at, have adopted highly sophisticated marketing strategies in order to extend their student pool. As an educator, I have been directed by

school administrators, who in turn, are pressed from the district Superintendent to raise test scores and fully embrace marketing strategies that serve to boost enrollment numbers, which have, much too often, taken precedence over the students' individual developmental and learning needs.

It is common practice at the beginning of every school year, or during the months of January to March, for school administrators, such as principals and vice or assistant principals from the Public School District[6] to prepare their marketing strategies and make their way out to "feeder schools" in order to attract future students to their junior highs or high schools by employing elaborate briefings or visual presentations, usually for their school's promotional purposes. The marketing barrage takes on a number of different forms. From fancy, high gloss flyers that are usually sent out to potential student/clients inviting them to attend open houses, to attractive and carefully implemented brochures featuring specialty course offerings and sports programs, to name a few.

During a school's open house, the school is refurbished, "dolled up" and showcased with the best pieces of student's work. Teachers stand by their classrooms with "sales" pitches that include "how great the teaching staff is" or "how the Spanish program is second to none." Teachers and administrators are also quick to mention their Provincial Achievement or Departmental exam averages and how their schools are doing compared to

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[6] I am referring to my personal experience(s) with the marketing process as head of the department Social Studies and language arts departments when I was employed with the Edmonton Public School District.

other schools in the district. Accountability has become the means of enforcement and control used not only by businesses, but by schools as well. The marketing strategy continues as teachers and administrators promote the school's extracurricular programs, sports, foreign language programs and/or International Baccalaureate or Advanced Placement programs the school has to offer. The brightly decorated booths and the smell of baked goods from the Home Economics room fill the school's corridors. The cheerleaders take centre stage, while the gymnasium is set up with various other activities, again, as a means to impress "the clients." The school athletes wear the appropriate sports attire that represents the plethora of sports that could be offered, while the music of the band plays in the background to attract and, seemingly, please a crowd that must ultimately leave with the best impressions because other open houses in neighbouring schools will be just as good, if not better. As I reflect back and begin to interpret and synthesize the theories and research I have compiled, I have become aware of the extent to which the selection and sorting process has been a reflection of my own identity as a teacher in a classroom and school organized along neoliberal lines. My contextual perspective may, possibly, identify some of the cracks in the patterns from where alternatives or possibilities for the future can arise.

*Summary*

The methodological aim of this study has been carried out through personal experience and a thorough investigation of the literature related to the topic. An in-depth investigation into the nature of dominant ideologies and how they become manifest through educational reforms and policies, will be carried out to provide the theoretical basis which will follow an argumentative pattern organised around providing solutions or alternatives to the problem /investigation and will be carried out within a critical realist/analytical perspective. While I do acknowledge that a contribution to knowledge has important implications for the balance of theoretical and empirical work, the provision of new empirical evidence is not absolutely necessary as part of a contribution to knowledge. And while I fully acknowledge that it is far more difficult to make a contribution to knowledge that is purely theoretical than it is to make one that includes some new empirical evidence, I have chosen to write a theoretical thesis because it intimately involves developing a new basis for explaining important empirical phenomena that consists of reading, analyzing, thinking, reflecting and writing.

# Chapter 4 - Analysis

## *Introduction*

The current global economic crisis has, most certainly, left world capitalism systemically shaken, but definitely not "stirred" until dissolution. And while many analysts, scholars and world leaders view this crisis as one of the greatest assaults on global economic stability to have occurred in three-quarters of a century,[7] it has, merely brought the inexorable march of neoliberalism to an abrupt *pause*. We must not, however, rush to make funeral arrangements, just yet. "Neoliberalism is not *really* dead, it is just tuckered out" (Clemmons, 2008, para. 3) and continues its relentless reign as the dominant – if not insidiously hegemonic – highly pervasive, all encompassing global ideology that serves to engender, sustain and reproduce the rapacious capitalist order and its hedonistic consumer culture. As with all (dominant) ideologies, neoliberalism has become naturalized, legitimized, universalized and firmly embedded in everyday discourse, operating as a mechanism for upholding and reproducing the asymmetrical power relations in society that favour "the haves over the have-nots, men over women, the conventional over the dissenting, the dominant over the subordinate" (Hoffman, 2004, p. 91).

The ever expanding tentacles of this growing hydra have prodigiously metastasized[8] and spread across the globe, permeating almost every "organ"

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[7] "The Global Financial Crisis," by Australian Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd (February 17, 2009).

[8] Neoliberalism signifies the metastatic stage of the planetary cancer (Kovel, 2008).

of society under the guise of an illusory, yet highly seductive rhetoric that connotes “freedom,” “choice” and “consumer liberty,” while fiercely seeking to neutralize and destroy potential pockets of resistance to global corporate expansion and capital interests at the expense of the global and national working class (Hill & Kumar, 2008). Such rhetoric has been ever so effectively and strategically utilized to justify deregulation, privatization of state resources and the utter dismantling of the historically guaranteed welfare state, “defining profit-making as the essence of democracy and equating freedom with the unrestricted ability of markets to govern economic relations free of government regulation” (Aronowitz, 2003, p. 121). Neoliberalism recognizes no boundaries in its pursuit of new markets and blatantly and repeatedly violates its own commitment to individual freedoms and aspirations. It undermines democratic values, social justice, critical thought and social citizenship, while adhering to the ideology of global mono-economics that intends to remove state boundaries and weaken the rights of individuals and communities.

Neoliberal ideology has deeply saturated our very consciousness, toying with our emotions and muddling our instincts; capitalizing on our values and manipulating our desires with a seeming multitude of “endless choices” and possibilities inherent in the social world which we inhabit (Harvey, 2005). Neoliberalism is defended not as normatively superior to any alternatives, but as the *only* alternative, insofar that the educational, economic and social world we see and interact with and the commonsense

interpretations we put on it have become the "real world," the only world we know (Hay, 2007; Apple, 2004). The propagation and enforcement of the seemingly omnipresent, omnipotent, inescapable ramifications of neoliberalism are irrefutable. But the strength of neoliberalism as an ideology lies not only in its ability to reproduce itself, per se, but rather in its capacity to mutate or adjust to the "underdetermined" evolution of its own policies and practices (Weiner, 2003). Indeed, the conditions of the domination of neoliberal ideology as an "ultra-right utopia[9]" are articulated in Pierre Bourdieu's (1998) *Acts of Resistance: Against the Tyranny of the Market*, whereby Bourdieu's "resistance" against the neoliberal consensus is precisely encapsulated in the following statement: "Everywhere we hear [it] said, all day long – and this is what gives the dominant discourse its strength – that there is nothing to put forward in opposition to the neoliberal view" (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 29). Neoliberalism, as such, has not only become a hegemonic mode of discourse, but has pervasively effected ways of thought and political-economic practices "to the point where it has become incorporated into the common-sense way we interpret, live in and understand the world" (Harvey, 2005, p. 3). In short, neoliberal ideology has presented itself as self-evident; as common-sense and simply as: "the way things are."

[9] Ljubiša Mitrović, 2005.

*Sociological Analysis*

This section of the thesis investigates the interplay between economic-political and social-cultural theories of reproduction by highlighting the centrality of ideology as an instrument of reproduction. I will explore how the dominant ideology works, pedagogically, to produce and reproduce social inequalities and how schools and education systems play, perhaps, one of the most (if not *the* most) important roles in inculcating the dominant (neoliberal) ideology and sustaining the system of domination. I will first provide an outline of Louis Althusser's (1971) analysis of ideology and discuss the role of the educational apparatus – as the dominant ideological state apparatus in capitalist societies – that secures the ruling ideology. I will subsequently proceed to investigate Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis's (1986) highly influential – and broadly criticized for embodying an overly reductionistic and deterministic worldview – "correspondence thesis," that not only extends and reinforces Althusser's conception of ideology, but that truly represents "a pivotal moment in critical studies of education and work in advanced capitalist societies" (Livingstone, 1998, p. 198). Finally, I will turn to Pierre Bourdieu's (1977) social-cultural reproduction framework that provides a more complex, yet subtle account of inequality and transference of social stratification by proposing that cultural elements – such as cultural capital – mediate the relationship between economic structures, schooling and students' lives (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977).

Althusser's critique of schools in his well known essay "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" bears great similarities to Bourdieu and Passeron's *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*. And whilst Althusser and Bourdieu share a very similar materialistic view, "Bourdieu expresses a rather ambivalent relationship with Althusserianism" (Pilario, 2005, p. 115) and criticizes Althusserian Marxism for treating actors as simple adjuncts to structures, amongst other things (Swartz, 1997). Nevertheless, in attempting to, perhaps, conflate the theories of Bourdieu and Althusser vis-à-vis the role of education, we run the risk of overlooking the very real differences that separate the two (Lane, 2000). Althusser and Bourdieu have, undoubtedly, made a significant contribution to reproduction theory in a host of valuable and distinctive ways – some of which will be discussed further in the analysis – and provide an invaluable lens through which to view and understand why schools, today, continue to reproduce inequalities despite the decades of seemingly ameliorative reforms.

In "Ideology and the Ideological State Apparatus," Althusser "traces ideology as a discourse which leads the individual subject to understand itself and others in such a way as to support the reproduction of ruling class power" (Elliot as cited in Turner, 2000, p. 146). Althusser argues how it comes to be that people accept submission or acquiescence to the dominant order, while the dominant class is able to manipulate the ruling ideology as such to serve their own needs, through exploitation and repression. The

reproduction of social order is extremely powerful in that it does not necessarily require a deep underlying consensus concerning values and beliefs; it simply requires sufficient dissensus to prevent the formation of an effective oppositional movement (Thompson, 1990) of resistance that may eventually lead to social transformation.

While theories of social reproduction may, perhaps, proffer a basis for understanding *how* and *why* inequalities are reproduced, they do not necessarily provide any immediate solutions that could potentially help put an end to, or alleviate the reproduction and perpetuation of the vicious cycle of inequality that persists in schools. If these theories are to be of any importance they could, perhaps, allow us to raise practical questions that may, possibly, serve to guide and extend educational policy action. Hence, in the conclusion, I will draw attention to theories of resistance – that go beyond the structural determinism of reproduction theories – which may, indeed, provide a more optimistic outlook to the "one-sidedness" of reproduction theories and may potentially even lead to the championing of viable alternatives that are in direct opposition to the attempts that depict neoliberal policies as natural and necessary (Heynen, McCarthy, Prudham & Robbins, 2007).

*The Dominant Ideology*

Dominant ideologies tend to work in favour of the capitalist interests and the powerful networks of corporate and political elites. It is this small

cadre of the global economic power elites who sustain and support their dominance through the reproduction of knowledge that favours *their* interests; meanwhile, the subordinate classes appear to willingly accept their exploitation and oppression without necessarily considering themselves as being manipulated or coerced. Are we but mere prisoners trapped in a state of "false consciousness?" Are we but helpless subjects that are numbed in our capacities so as to recognize the source of conscious (mis)recognition of our objective interests? Furthermore, are we deluded into thinking that we can change or mold the conditions of our existence? Throughout the analysis that follows, I will argue beyond the notion of ideology predicated on false consciousness and examine the ideological state apparatuses and the ways in which they operate in educational institutions to reproduce capitalist relations of production. Moreover, Bourdieu argues that the social world does not merely operate through levels of consciousness, but through practices and mechanisms. Bourdieu urges us to "move away from the Cartesian philosophy of the Marxist tradition towards a different philosophy in which agents are not aiming consciously towards things, or mistakenly guided by false representation" (Bourdieu & Eagleton, 1992, p. 113). Bourdieu's concepts of cultural reproduction and symbolic violence present an alternative to the misunderstandings and misuse of the concept of ideology (Cox & Brennan, 2003).

In developed capitalist countries,[10] power is predominantly exercised through consent rather than coercion; through ideology rather than physical force (Fairclough, 1995). More specifically, ideologies are transmitted through or within social structures of civil society (hegemony) and are exercised within institutions like the family, church and schools, while "consent of the governed" (those who allow the hegemony to remain in power) is achieved through practices, meanings, values and identities that are taught and learned (Gramsci, 1971; Althusser, 1971; Fairclough, 1995). Hegemony is thus practiced and preached, materialized and propagated through educational systems (Apple, 1982) and schools are the vehicle through which attempts have been made to disseminate and reinforce the dominant ideology. Schools and higher education institutions, therefore, not only mirror and extend neoliberal principles like privatization, competition and the proliferation of the markets, but also seek to uphold, perpetuate and contribute to the reproduction of the dominant ideology. Education today has, essentially, been usurped by the institutionalization of neoliberal individualistic principles and by the neoliberal objectives of customer service, credentializing, technical training and instrumental learning (Hyslop-Margison & Naseem, 2008). Therefore, not only does education comply with neoliberal ideology, but moreover, educational institutions

[10] Developing countries are often left with little or no choice but to follow in the footsteps of the industrial or developed countries by adopting policies that are gleaned from developed countries' mainstream thinking. Governments in developing countries follow a largely neoliberal logic and are often found "locked into" neoliberal regimes such as the GATS (Hall, 2007). Others are "kicking away the ladder" to achieving development by adopting ideologies that suit their own economic needs (Makwana, 2006).

provide the perfect "breeding grounds" for the "reproduction" and inculcation of the dominant (neoliberal) ideology.

*Theories of Social Reproduction*

Theories of social reproduction are primarily concerned with *how* and *why* relationships of inequality and domination are reproduced through or within groups by providing conceptual models – like Bowles and Gintis's economic-reproductive model and Bourdieu and Passeron's cultural reproduction model – for investigating this process, particularly as it relates to education. While there is no single, comprehensive "theory of social reproduction," *per se*, the process of reproduction in the analytical framework of political economy constitutes a fundamental problem that has been tackled in contemporary sociological theory, predominantly in the study of educational institutions (Kvasny, 2006). My purpose, therefore, is to present two conceptual models of social reproduction as a basis for understanding how the dominant neoliberal ideology, in fact, serves to reproduce, rather than to alleviate inequalities in schools. Theories of cultural and social reproduction have been concerned with the ways in which "innocent," yet highly questionable pedagogical policies and practices like market-driven school choice policies, curriculum reforms, accountability reforms and student enrolment rules, contribute to the reproduction of forms of domination and inequality (Torres, 1995). The economic-reproductive model, on the other hand, suggests that educational

systems are homologous reflections of the workplace (Walker, 2003) and expose structural processes of schooling that are responsible for social and economic inequalities. By examining how schools perpetuate these systems of inequality, we may then posit "transformative pedagogies" or "pedagogies of resistance" – aimed at challenging coercive power relations and neoliberal educational agendas that increasingly subordinate education to the requirements of capital – and possibly work towards enabling the resourcefulness of historically underserved communities in meeting their self-determined needs (Kvasny, 2006).

*Louis Althusser: Ideological Apparatuses and Societal Reproduction*

Louis Althusser's theory of reproduction (of the relations of production) is especially important because it opens the door to understanding the effects and significance of ideology and societal reproduction, which Althusser believes have been particularly under-theorized within the Marxist (German) tradition (Althusser, 2008). One of Althusser's most significant contributions – as it pertains to this thesis – is his analysis of education as one of the most important institutions by which the ruling classes establish and maintain their hegemony and reproduce the conditions of capitalist production (Young & Whitty, 1977). For Althusser, the dominant, most important "Ideological State Apparatus" (Althusser, 2008, p. 30) in developed capitalist societies that has replaced in its function the church (the previously dominant ISA), is the educational ideological

state apparatus (Althusser, 2008). According to Althusser, "…no other Ideological State Apparatus has the obligatory (and not least free) audience of the totality of the children of the social capitalist formation eight hours a day for five or six days out of seven" (Althusser, 2008, p. 30). As such, school systems – that are intimately involved in the process of sorting and selection – slot students neatly into a hierarchy that is a homologous reflection of the workplace so that by the time they reach the age of sixteen, students are "ejected into production" (Althusser, 2008). The "scholastically adapted" youth are then sent into positions of power and privilege (managers, business owners, professionals), while the vast majority, the "huge mass," are sent into more exploited positions (labourers, minimum wage workers etc.) (Althusser, 2008). "Each mass ejected *en route* is practically provided with the ideology which suits the role it has to fulfill of the exploited... the role of the agent of exploitation... of the agent of repression... or of the professional ideologist" (Althusser, 2008, pp 29-30).

Althusser rejects the earlier Marxist[11] notion that ideology functions to perpetuate a sense of "false consciousness" and argues that ideology is "profoundly unconscious" and thus invokes the Lacanian "subject" as the destination of all ideology (Belsey, 2002). Althusser analyzes ideology in terms of materialist concepts or "representations" such as "practices," "rituals" and "apparatuses" (Žižek, 2003). By "representations," Althusser

[11] It is important to note that Marx, himself, never used the phrase "false consciousness" and that it originated from Friedrich Engels.

is referring not to the ideas in one's head, *per se*, but rather, to the "implicit beliefs," the propositional schemata that structure human practices that do not necessarily emerge at the level of consciousness (Žižek, 2003). In the words of Althusser: "ideology represents an imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence" (Althusser, 2001) by transforming them into subjects. Hence, while subjects may see themselves as self-determining agents, they are but merely shaped by the ideological process. For Althusser, ideology is inculcated at an unconscious level and involves an eternal and inescapable structure of misrecognition. It is, therefore, ideology that constructs humans as subjects and not subjects that construct ideology.

Ideology "acts" or "functions" in such a way that it "recruits" subjects among the individuals, or "transforms" the individuals into subjects by that very precise operation which Althusser calls: *interpellation* (Althusser, 2008). Within the imaginary sense, individuals see or hear themselves being addressed, interpellated, hailed – primarily through language by the dominant ideology – in ways that they may find flattering, or not, through subliminal or subconscious indoctrination of the social vis-à-vis the psychological. The individual may turn around believing or suspecting that the hailing was intended for her, putting her in a position whereby she feels to be "unique." Most people when hailed, within hearing distance, will immediately assume that they are the ones being summoned, even if they have done nothing to warrant the summon. The individual's reaction

merely positions the individual as a subject. It is through this process of interpellation that individuals submit, unconsciously, to the dominant ideology, while they come to construe their relation to the world as "natural." This subconsciously located objectification encourages people to see themselves as fully autonomous or as self-determining agents, while suppressing their awareness that their lives are actually being determined by other forces – like economic or political forces – that function beyond their control. In sum, ideology is constituted by the dominant beliefs, values and practices which serve a political or economic function and work through state institutions, like schools, to interpellate or construct individuals into particular subject positions (Azre-Bravo, Murray, Robertson, & Tunzelman, n.d).

Society functions, as such, to maintain conditions favourable to the accumulation of capital and ideology functions in ways that helps to perpetuate these conditions. For Althusser, societies are thought of as a multi-layered complex of interrelated structures in which the form of each is affected by the action of all the others (Hughes, Sharrock & Martin, 2003); in other words, they are "over-determined" (combined of different, often opposed forces but not necessarily in the over-simplified sense of these forces being merely contradictory elements). The economic base (mode of production) refers to sites of production (cultural productions like art, music, religion, etc.), while the superstructure consists of the political and legal systems. The base and superstructure are related to each other in

definite ways, while the ideological structure – which refers to institutions such as churches and schools that perpetuate dominant beliefs and values – is not a mere expression of the economic base, it essentially determines which element is to be dominant in a social formation because of the effects it has upon both structures and the dynamic of society. Although culture (the economic base) and politics (the superstructure) are independent (relatively autonomous) of each other, they still share the ideological interconnections which serve to perpetuate the capitalist system (Azre-Bravo, Murray, Robertson, & Tunzelman, n.d).

Although Althusser does not necessarily reject the Marxist model of base/superstructure, he does, more or less, emphasize how ideology is more pervasive and more "material" than previously acknowledged in the Marxist tradition and thus seeks out to distinguish ISAs from the "Repressive State Apparatus" (RSA). The ISA, of which schools are a part of, maintains ideological hegemony for the ruling class. Althusser believes that: "the Ideological State Apparatus, which has been installed in the *dominant* position in mature capitalist social formations... is the *educational ideological apparatus*" (Althusser, 2008, p. 26) and argues that: "The mechanisms which produce this vital result for the capitalist regime are naturally covered up and concealed by a universally reigning ideology of the School, universally reigning because it is one of the essential forms of the ruling bourgeois ideology: an ideology which represents the School as a neutral environment purged of ideology ..." (p. 30). In short, schools are an

instrument of bourgeois hegemony and are presented as a universally neutral and natural mechanism (Au, 2006). Ideology, then, contributes to the ongoing reproduction of the existing social conditions of production by inculcating every child with the ruling ideology; this is done through education: "it is in the forms and under the forms of ideological subjection that provision is made for the reproduction of the skills of labour power" (Althusser, 2008, p. 7).

But the capitalist education system does not simply reproduce labour power and its diversified skills, it also, at the same time, reproduces its submission to the rules of the established order, "i.e. a reproduction of submission to the ruling ideology for the workers and a reproduction of the ability to manipulate the ruling ideology correctly for the agents of exploitation and repression" (Althusser, 2008, p. 6-7). Drawing from Lacanian psychoanalysis (particularly on the "mirror stage" of development) to formulate his theory of ideology, Althusser explains how the ideological state apparatus creates an illusory sense of identity by interpellating individuals as subjects of the ruling class. Althusser is suggesting that the subject desires to be recognized by members of the ruling class; it is the subject's desire, itself, that invests the ruling class with prestige (which is what the ruling class desires). This desire to be recognized serves the ruling class because it subjects all others to the ruling (dominant) ideology. This (unconscious) desire to be recognized, as a subject, by the Other may, in fact, fulfill the subject's desire to be

recognized, but is exploitative, merely serving to legitimate the ruling ideology (Althusser, 2008; Lacan, 2005). In order for exploitation and repression – the dominant ideology – to continue to function, the desire of those who are ruled *needs* to be the desire(d) of the ruling class. The desire to be the desire(d), effectively becomes the desire to be recognized (i.e., validated as a "good subject") by the ruling class. What it essentially comes down to is that it is the ruling class who desire that recognition – who, in fact, *need* that recognition in order to remain in their dominant/hegemonic position. Thus, the propagation of the desire to be the desire(d) of the ruling class is how that *ressentiment*,[12] which might otherwise manifest itself in revolutionary energies, is sublimated in support of the dominant ideology – becomes, indeed, a naturalized part of that ideology: work hard, and you might be promoted to a managerial position by your boss, and may, in time, come to be the factory owner. Hence the subject/student comes into being only on the basis of a massive repression of its own unconscious determinants.

Althusser's conception of ideology and how it is reproduced to uphold the prevailing system of social domination has been highly influential, albeit, not free from criticism. Althusser does not particularly take note of other forces of domination and power, such as those derived from gender, race, and ethnic relations. Thus, the class reductionism implicit in his approach does not necessarily account for how the intersection of these

[12] This submission results in what Nietzsche terms "*ressentiment*" – not just *resentment* but *envy*.

relations (of gender, race and ethnicity) with class, structure or shape ideology (Puehretmayer, 2001, as cited in Walker, 2003). Althusser also makes no direct mention of the importance of student/teacher relations or what actually takes place within classrooms and schools. Moreover, Althusser does not make clear the ways in which knowledge is produced and how it becomes transmitted, constructed and legitimized, which is crucial to understanding the contexts and conditions of schooling. Lastly, Althusser fails to explain how resistance can emerge from the influences of the State Apparatus. Mainly, Althusser's analysis of interpellation appears to be rather deterministic in that it fails to recognize human agency and the possibility of resistance. It is Althusser's "anti-humanism" that minimizes or undermines the significance of human agency. Bourdieu's theory of cultural reproduction, on the other hand, attempts to reconcile such difficulties by attempting to recognize the subject within objective structures. But before looking at Bourdieu and Passeron's social-cultural theory of reproduction, I will examine the ways in which Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis expand upon Althusser's ideology though their "correspondence principle."

*Public Education: The Unequal Equalizer*

The long held notion of public education as the "great equalizer" and the most powerful instrument of social mobility that will bridge the chasm of opportunity that divides underprivileged children from children from

more affluent backgrounds, has apparently, turned out to be nothing more than an enduring myth, riddled with false assumptions, inconsistencies and half truths. Rather than serving as "great equalizers," educational institutions play a key role in reproducing inequalities. The growing disparities among children are not necessarily being addressed through the opportunities offered by public schools, as the "mythology" would have us believe. And while we may argue that education certainly facilitates opportunities for "upward" social and occupational mobility or that education may, so to speak, provide "the oil that lubricates upward mobility," evidence suggests[13] – at least for the vast majority of students – that public education simply reinforces the status quo by reproducing the existing hierarchy of social and economic relationships (Finn, 2007).

Stimulated by raging academic debates and social conflicts about the structure and purposes of education in the late 1960s (Bowles & Gintis, 2002), American economist Samuel Bowles and professor of economics Herbert Gintis de-*mythicized* the ideal of public education as "the great equalizer" among disparate social classes in the United States in their popularly read book *Schooling in Capitalist America*. Bowles and Gintis and Althusser agree that schools function as such to reproduce the labour power necessary for capital accumulation. While Althusser uses the concept of ideology to explain the role schools play in securing the

[13] Numerous studies, research, empirical evidence and very powerful opinions suggest that public schools not only perpetuate the status quo of society, but they are proficient at implementing and maintaining practices that serve that purpose (Kozol, 2005; Oakes, 1985).

domination of the working class, Bowles and Gintis employ a different theoretical vehicle through the notion of the "correspondence principle."

By adopting a traditional ontological perspective, central to the Marxist tradition, the economists propose through the "correspondence principle"– that postulates a systematic parallel or a homology between features of the school and workplace (Small, 2005) – that schools not only contribute to the maintenance of the capitalist system, but that ideological inculcation of social relations are learned in schools, which essentially, correspond to the social relations of production (Torres & Antikainen, 2002). In other words, public schooling reproduces and perpetuates social divisions and class-based inequalities, while the social relations that take place within schools, like the hierarchical division of labour that exists between teachers and students, the alienated nature of student school work itself and the relentless competition that exists among students (Lynch, 1989), prepares students to accept their role in the hierarchical structure and to better meet the demands of the occupations they are more likely to pursue. Bowles and Gintis further purport that intergenerational transmission of social class and economic privilege is accomplished through unequal educational opportunities (Walker, 2003). Although social class, gender and race play an important role in determining students' social experiences, correspondence theorists reify class location which, in a sense, overshadows other important socially structured relationships such as those associated with race and gender, "although both race and gender have been

found to be theoretically relevant to the trajectory of experience of concrete groups within and outside the educational systems" (Walker, 2003, p. 7).

By drawing on the Marxist base/superstructure model, Bowles and Gintis analyze schools as institutional constructs that operate on a superstructure level. The concepts of "base" and "superstructure" form a metaphor that is central to Marxist theory, particularly as it relates to ideology and the role of schools in producing and reproducing the dominant ideology. Furthermore, the relationship between "base" and "superstructure" and the question of ideology are of key importance in Bowles and Gintis's formulation of the "correspondence thesis," which maintains that schools function to serve the needs of capitalist production (Au, 2008). It is important to clarify, nonetheless, that Karl Marx uses the metaphor of "base" (the mode of production), not only in reference to the economic base in society, which determines social formations, but also to the forms of the state and social consciousness; how people relate to each other in the production of their lives and means of life encompassing all social and ideological structures such as politics, education, religion, or art. The superstructure refers to a state, a legal system and the social institutions through which ideas arise on this base. These elements make up what is referred to as the superstructure, which reflects and strengthens the base.

Bowles and Gintis's "correspondence principle" is often regarded as "too mechanical" and "overly economistic" and thus, has been subject to critical scrutiny as it tends to ignore the role of teachers, culture and

ideology in schools and neglects students' and others' resistance to dominant social relations (as cited in Au, 2008). In fact, structuralist theories offered by Marxists and neo-Marxists are often criticized for being too "crudely deterministic" to capture the complexity of social reproduction because they regard individuals as "effects" or mere "subjects" of a social structure (subjects who are, consequently, "subject" to the structures of society). As such, Bowles and Gintis's arguments lack cultural analysis and overlook the crucial notion of agency or resistance. It is, therefore, assumed in such perspectives that human agents are passive role bearers who are shaped by demands of capital (Giroux, 1984). Although Pierre Bourdieu's conception of an "homologous" relationship between economy and culture may be somewhat reminiscent of Bowles and Gintis's "correspondence principle" (Henry, Knight, Lingard, & Taylor, 2004), Bourdieu and Passeron certainly provide a deeper theoretical analysis of how cultural reproduction functions within schools in their homonymous book *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*.

*Theories of Cultural Reproduction*

While Bowles and Gintis focus particularly on how the social dynamics of school life "correspond" to the reproduction of the hierarchical demands of the workplace, they have failed to develop a theory of consciousness and culture. Hence, theories of cultural reproduction begin precisely where social-economic reproduction theories end (Giroux, 2001).

Aside from being concerned with how capitalist societies reproduce themselves, cultural reproduction theories develop a sociology of schooling that links culture, class and domination (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1987). More specifically, theories of cultural reproduction analyze the principles that underlie the structure and transmission of the cultural field of schools and question how school culture is produced, selected and legitimized (Giroux, 2001). While correspondence theories place a greater emphasis on economic capital, theories of cultural reproduction privilege symbolic capital in the form of cultural and social capital (Walker, 2003). Bourdieu and Passeron affirm that while economic capital is a dominant principle of domination within capitalist society, Bourdieu takes it a step further and argues that even exchanges of economic capital have a symbolic significance. Therefore, their theory of cultural reproduction advances the understanding that domination is not only a reflection of economic power but is, rather, constituted by a more subtle power (symbolic power), imposed by the ruling class; that power is consistent and in favour of the ruling class's interests or ideology (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977).

The epistemological launching point for cultural and social reproduction theories is the tendency for societies to reproduce themselves. Bourdieu and Passeron maintain that although societies claim to recognize that individuals are equal in right, the educational system only contributes to disguise, and thus, legitimize, in more subtle ways, the arbitrariness of the distribution of powers and privileges, that are perpetuated through the

socially uneven allocation of school titles and degrees (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). According to Bourdieu and Passeron's cultural reproduction model, the education system does not necessarily mirror the structure of the labour market; it is the cultural events and processes – which essentially predate the education system – that have a fairly influential impact on the education system. The dominant classes exercise symbolic violence by imbuing their cultural arbitrariness on the dominated classes "contributing, thereby, to the reproduction of the structure of power relations within a social formation in which the dominant system of education tends to secure monopoly of legitimate symbolic violence" (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977, p. 6). Bourdieu and Passeron state that the educational system is a very important agent when it comes to exercising symbolic violence and functions, as such, to legitimize the dominant power structures:

> Every institutionalized educational system *(ES)* owes the specific characteristics of its structure and functioning to the fact that, by the means proper to the institution, it has to produce and reproduce the institutional conditions whose existence and persistence (self-reproduction of the system) are necessary both to the exercise of its essential function of inculcation and to the fulfillment of its function of reproducing a cultural arbitrary which it does not produce (cultural reproduction), the reproduction of which contributes

> to the reproduction of the relations between the groups or classes (social reproduction) (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977, p. 54).

By ingraining or legitimizing the existing social structures, which are objectively recognized as legitimate authority, dominant classes are able to uphold power and control, while subordinated groups remain disempowered (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977). Bourdieu and Passeron further purport that the arbitrariness and illegitimacy of the dominant culture is misrecognized (only to be recognized as a legitimate authority), both by subordinated groups and schools (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977, p. 13). The dominant culture (that which reinforces the arbitrary power) uses cultural capital in a covert way to inculcate their arbitrary truths and thus replicate the existing social structures. It is the imposition and legitimating of these very systems that reinforces the arbitrary power of symbolic violence and schools inculcate cultural and social reproduction by granting legitimacy and universality to the arbitrary cultures of the dominant group (Walker, 2003). Educational institutions and schools uncritically and unabashedly accept the cultural codes of the dominant classes, assuming, of course that students from these classes enter schools receptive to learning, while viewing students from dominated classes as possessing habitus inimical to learning (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). Unlike, correspondence theorists, who postulate educational systems as being over determined by the economy and the state, cultural theorists tend to posit a dialectical relationship between

these systems and social class mediated by habitus (as cited in Walker, 2003).

This brings us to, perhaps, the most important contribution to cultural reproduction theory, which is none other than Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital. The habitus, or the system of durable, transposable dispositions that influence practice congruent with the structural principles of the social world, is fundamental to the reproductive process (as cited in Walker, 2003). It is through the inculcation of these dispositions by the family, educational system and social class, that the imposition of ideologies and the fluid operation of social life are able to occur (Shirley, 1986, as cited in Walker, 2003). Thus, if a social structure is characterized by inequalities amongst groups, the dominant groups, who are also the privileged groups, will seek to perpetuate their privilege by drawing upon their cultural and social capital, which is much greater than that possessed by underprivileged groups (Shirley, 1986, as cited in Walker, 2003). As a consequence, dominant classes are able to exercise symbolic violence by transforming their cultural arbitrariness into universal forms of meaning (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977). Of course, cultural reproduction theories are not free from criticism, primarily since they fail to address the intricacy of individual agency. Moreover, they tend to ignore the ideological and cultural spaces that make resistance and/or change – that can be carried out by individuals or groups within systems – possible. Indeed, the obfuscation of individual choice and a theory of social action render cultural

reproduction theories problematic in that they fall short of providing any convincing explanation of how individuals, socially positioned with the same habitus, may develop personal trajectories that are dissimilar (Walker, 2003).

Bourdieu believes that schools do not mirror the dominant culture, but are relatively autonomous institutions that are influenced both directly and indirectly by other powerful institutions (Stanley, 1992). Furthermore, schools do not necessarily directly impose the dominant order but function as one part of a wider group or symbolic social institutions (Stanley, 1992). While the process of social reproduction is in fact very real, it is subtle. In his revisionist approach to the Marxist distinction between infrastructure and superstructure, Althusser theorizes that in certain historical situations, superstructural instances such as culture, ideology, religion and politics, can obtain relative autonomy from infrastructure and play an important role in shaping class relations (Swartz, 1997). At the end of the day, however, the economy is always determinative.

But what is the relationship between education and economic and cultural reproduction? Michael Apple (1982) purports that the relationship is one confronting anyone who attempts to unpack the complex ties that connect economics and culture together (Apple, 1982). Because society is a complex and contradictory whole within which dominant institutions serve to reproduce the basic form of social order, reproduction would require extensive changes in society and culture that may involve a series of major

reforms (Morrow & Torres, 2003). Histories of education typically present the celebratory history of policy making as a "progressive process" based on reforms, but reforms often conceal ongoing social problems and dominant interests (Morrow & Torres, 2003). The ideological "package" of educational reforms that swept over the Alberta educational landscape in the mid 90s was certainly driven by top-down policies. Under neoliberalism, these reforms were aimed at overriding the promotion of educational equity and opportunity.

*Neoliberalism and Free-Market Reforms*

Neoliberal or neoconservative[14] political ideologies have flourished within the context of school reforms (charter schools, vouchers, school choice etc.). Many of these reforms are, more or less, blatant manifestations of the influence of neoliberal capital that dictates the principle aims of education serving, merely, to protect the status quo and galvanize the ongoing injustices that doggedly persist within our education systems. The implications of such reforms, as a series of ongoing (experimental) projects have been rooted in the systematic failure to provide educational equity and equality and have been devised, merely, to uphold and further perpetuate the capitalist order, while operating under the guise of "pro-active change" (Schugurensky, 2002) and a blurred vision of school improvement.

[14] Whereby neoconservatism only perpetuates the neoliberalization of schools and society.

The general acceptance of neoliberalism as "common sense" has, essentially, legitimized and normalized the opening of all public sectors to trade[15] and market competition. The political right has coaxed us into considering – at least within the last thirty years – that there has been a qualitative shift in the nature of the global economic order. Neoliberal global capitalism has been presented as "natural"; as the *only* realistic means of attaining social wellbeing and prosperity for all (Cooper, 2009). In fact, the "New Right[16]" rhetoric – that education should play a more active role in the regeneration of the economy to meet the changing demands of the labour market – has, ultimately, been concerned with restructuring and redirecting education that will allow schools and universities maximum flexibility to compete with one another. Within the "New Right" ideology, educational provision is thought of in the same way as a commercial business and schools have become subject to market demands through which they aim to provide better "services" of a particular standard to their "clients." And of course, "better" services are usually provided to clients who carry "bigger" wallets. Such demands have come to

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[15] Education remains one of the least committed sectors to the GATS (General Agreement on Trades and Services) and pressure is mounting to change this. The U.S. has identified the liberalization of education services as one of its top four priorities in the current round and has called for the removal of obstacles to international trade that American officials say prevent foreign institutions from operating in other countries.

[16] Influenced by the work of economist and philosopher Friedrich Hayek (classical liberalism and free market capitalism against socialism and collectivist thought), Margaret Thatcher (TINA "there is no alternative" to the status quo of their economic system and neoliberalism) and Ronald Reagan implemented their (conservative) ideas of unfettered free markets, deregulation, dismantling of the welfare state, privatization, lower taxes and less state involvement in the economy, and restructuring of the national workforce in order to increase industrial and economic flexibility in an increasingly global market. They were also responsible for the redirecting in school policy.

heavily influence every sphere of educational planning and reform (Leicester, Modgil & Modgil, 2000).

The Tory governments of the richest provinces, Ontario and Alberta, under the populist leadership of Premiers Mike Harris and Ralph Klein, respectively (Albo, 2002), had fallen under the spell of neoliberalism. In fact, Alberta constitutes a prime example of neoliberal ideology personified. The penetration of market logic into the school systems has led to a series of educational reforms in the province of Alberta that were specifically targeted at increasing the competitiveness of schools so that they could "catch up" with the radical economic competition across the globe and to improve equality in "access" to education. But instead of providing greater access, reforms of standardized testing, accountability, school choice and self-management are felt to be more exclusionary and more so concerned with global economic competitiveness rather than educational equity and equality (Scoppio, 2002). And while many of these reforms were expected to restore the economy and reduce deficits in the federal budget and foreign trade (Fujita, 2000), it is certainly arguable whether or not these reforms were, actually, designed with student equity and/or equality in mind.

In Alberta, the Klein reforms in 1994 were met with little resistance, while Alberta is, in fact, one of the few provinces where such great variety of school choice exists. Not only did the infamous Ralph Klein scorn public service industry, altogether, by relocating power from the public to the private sector, from public officials to private experts, from labour to

capital, and from nation states to international institutions, he also severely tampered with public education. In *Contested Classrooms*, Jerrold Kachur (1999) boldly states that: "The Alberta government followed up its belief with action, slashed with great severity in the public sector and 'reinvented' education. The 'new student' was to be delivered to market through an appropriate mix of programs and new linkages to industry (Kachur 1999, p. 62). Are schools, then, determined by the economy? In the case of Alberta, the school reforms that took place in the mid 90s were, in many ways, precisely mirroring the economy of the time and continue to do so today.

To make education more "efficient," schools and universities have been forced to adopt market models of education, thus moving away from the traditional concept of education as a publicly provided social good. This process has not only exacerbated – rather than ameliorated oppression and powerlessness – but has further reinforced the reproduction of class inequalities. The pursuit of "excellence," along with promoting the deregulation and marketization of education, were set as twin objectives of reforms which advocated "choice." These objectives gave more control to market mechanisms and local authorities and were characterized by neo-conservative and neoliberal orientations (Fujita, 2000). And while advocates of market-based reforms may claim that such reforms have managed to enhance efficiency, responsiveness, diversity and choice (and even this remains highly questionable), at the end of the day, education

systems operate as such to ensure that inequalities are constantly being reproduced.

Theories of social reproduction have been heavily criticized for their deterministic characteristics. Most often related to structuralist Marxism – particularly manifest in the correspondence principle where there is an underlying "structuralist link" (isomorphism) between economic and educational structures (Torres & Mitchell, 1998) – reproduction theories tend to overlook the significance of relative autonomy at the cultural level and the human experience of domination and resistance (MacLeod, 2008), while – as previously noted – cultural reproduction theories are inherently problematic because they fail to address the intricacy of individual agency but also because they tend to favour Neo Marxist orientations that privilege class structures as determinants of life. Henry Giroux (1983) proposes that there is a need to thoroughly examine ideology, consciousness and culture in order to move reproduction theory past the theoretical impasses imposed by the structure-agency dualism (Giroux, 1983, as cited in MacLeod, 2008) and perhaps adopt more "activistic" approaches. Theories of resistance, as seen in Paul Willis's (1981) famous ethnographic study of British lads in *Learning to Labour: How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs*, certainly draw attention to how students resist school authority and hegemonic practices through conflict. And while theories of resistance have their fair share of inherent problems, perhaps the "constraint principle" of reproduction may be supplemented by another principle of possibility that

outlines theories of resistance (Gallagher, 1992). But before we can move to "the principles of possibility," it is important to examine the "asymmetrical relations of power," which are implied by both reproduction and resistance theories (Gallagher, 1992), but this is another paper, altogether.

*Contesting and Resisting Neoliberal Education*

Resistance is a refreshing, perhaps, optimistic response to the current education system (that is imbued with neoliberal rationality). Resistance does not necessarily imply all forms of oppositional behaviour, nor do violations of school rules constitute an act of resistance, unless it is committed by a student or students who, for example, see through the school's achievement ideology and therefore act on that basis. Resistance calls for struggle against, rather than submission to domination (MacLeod, 2008). Furthermore, resistance theorists in education urge educators to evaluate the moral and political potential of opposition in schools (Abowitz, 2000); they are perhaps, tools for helping us understand and intervene within structures of power by pointing to the possibility of intervening into those educational contexts where reality is being continually transformed into power (Giroux, 2001). Resistance calls upon the examination of oppositional acts of students in school settings as moral and political expressions of oppression that will, perhaps, deepen our understanding of relative autonomy.

Without necessarily trying to romanticize the idea of resistance, it may, perhaps, allow us to evaluate nonconformity and offer strategies against the "common sense" "forced normality" of neoliberalism. Neoliberal policies in education have been detrimental, while the changes in recent years in education policy have severely damaged public institutions, particularly, schools and universities. It is important to underscore the urgency for strategies of resistance or resistance campaigns against neoliberal organizing in education. But resistance is a multilayered phenomenon and not necessarily a magic bullet that "can be invoked whenever one wants to assert his or her political credentials" (Giroux, 2001, p. xxiv).

*Summary*

Throughout this chapter I have established how the dominant ideology is produced, secured, legitimized and reproduced through the education systems. One of the main questions left to ponder, however, is just how dominant is the dominant neoliberal ideology? Are there competing ideologies to the dominant ideology and can we, somehow, confront ideology "head on" by counteracting the force of dominant control in society? De-ideologization "presupposes a political commitment which is to promote interests of the oppressed and to put their interests above any other" (Fox & Prilleltensky, 1997, p. 362). Fox and Prillenltensky (1997) suggest public opinion polls and using questions such as whose interests are

being served to act as catalysts for change as de-ideologizing tools. By probing the nature of the results and examining their connection to the prevalent ideology, public opinion polls can raise consciousness and change the dominant ideology (Fox & Prillenltsky, 1997). I am necessarily reluctant to accept that opinion polls are a true reflection of people's views, not only because they are underrepresented, but also because the impact of the dominant ideology is so great that people adapt to the dominant political and economic power which certainly impacts their views in opinion polls. Furthermore, the dominant ideology is, essentially, concerned with controlling the ideological level of the public mind, while at the same time influences and thus alters the images that emerge in everyday life (Shlapentokh, 2001).

Neoliberal ideology, manifested through the theoretical process and practices has had an immense influence on public education and neoliberalism has become the dominant paradigm through the process of cultural and social reproduction. Market practices, business theories, private enterprises have become directly associated with education, as the welfare state has become threatened by rising costs, economic efficiency, and increasing competitions. In better understanding the ideological underpinnings we may, perhaps, be able to offer a framework for reflection on the current state of public education on a global scale. I have drawn from the works of Althusser, Bourdieu, Bowles and Gintis and Lacan to establish an understanding of the dominant structures and how they work.

This thesis finds that neoliberalism, and the neoliberal approach to education is highly is comprised of several intricate concepts, visions and moral underpinnings. It is apparent that the dominance of neoliberal ideology in education affects the nature and purpose of education, by commodifying education, and by replacing the very notions of the common good, democracy, justice and public education with individualistic consumer affluence, no matter what the cost.

Based on the research and theoretical analysis presented in this thesis, it is clear that there is a need to delve deeper into the pragmatic consequences of applying neoliberal policies and practices to education. This thesis can perhaps, serve as a basis to examine, in the future, these pragmatic underpinnings by adopting different methodological approaches, perhaps, reflected in an action research model, complemented by empirical case studies, which may facilitate in cultivating the seed of the (theoretically) critical perspective by allowing myself, as an insider, to consider the possible as well as the actual in the social world (Kemmis and McTaggart, 2000, p. 590). Furthermore, action research may allow me to further locate myself, critically, as a participant, in contesting neoliberal reforms and policies at a national and international level and celebrate the potential of these contestations.

# Chapter 5 - Conclusions & Recommendations

## *Introduction*

Based on the preceding observations and analysis, we may safely declare that neoliberalism has, undoubtedly, triumphed as the dominant ideology and its greatest victory lies in its ability to attract and convince, many of us, that the concentration of ownership and control of resources in the hands of the few and the powerful is a *natural* process under the "free" market, capitalist "dogma." After all, do we not live in a meritocratic society that appropriately rewards educational excellence and economic ingenuity? So why then should inequality be unfair for neoliberals? Neoliberalism has convinced us that the extension of neoliberal policy and reform implementation is *inevitable*; it has convinced us that self-regulation and private enrichment is *beneficial*; it has convinced us to accept neoliberalism as *the only alternative*. But for those who are, perhaps, not blinded by neoliberalism's extravagant reallocation of resources to "West End glitz[17]" and who can peer through the facets of the shine and gilded façade of bland consumerism; behind the façade of the "humanitarian" actions taken by the WTO, IMF and the World Bank; behind the façade of educational reform and the smokescreen of school choice (Moore, 2009) may, perhaps, aim to convince others that neoliberalism is *not* the *natural* human condition, it is not the *only* alternative, it is *not* supernatural and it

[17] Borrowed from "In Focus: The British Film Institute," *edited by Toby Miller,* in a different context.

*can* be challenged and replaced because its own failures urgently require such course of action (George, 1999).

The self-serving, hypocritical dogma of neoliberalism and its "gurus" – who clearly support the conspicuously "selective" application of free market policies (Edelman & Haugerud, 2006) – aimed at serving and filling the insatiable appetites of the "selected" few – has revealed its inherent flaws which, ultimately, elicit ideas of revolt and resistance; resistance against systemic injustice, human degradation and increased social class inequalities. There is an unrelenting urgency to re-examine the whole philosophy of education in order to resist market reforms and policies in education, now, more than ever. While the present global economic crisis has, perhaps, awakened a need to employ policies that cut against the very market logic of neoliberalism, the inherent conflict that has long presented itself between capital accumulation and the satisfaction of human needs continues to hold sway; this conflicting interaction is very difficult to avert.

It is imperative – as educators, students, parents, policy makers, citizens – that we utilize pedagogical tools of social critique which can be made possible through critical thinking, emphasized within an educational framework. It is through and within these very schools and education systems that the dominant ideology is produced, fostered and eventually reproduced. At the same time, it is the schools and education systems, then, that may engender forms of critical consciousness so that students can recognize ethical imperatives, which includes support for grassroots,

political participation, social justice, human growth, ecological awareness, conflict resolution, and human conciliation and cooperation (Schwerin, 1995) which may, eventually, lead to transformation through empowerment and action. Critical thought bares the danger of becoming endangered, obsolete, simply because neoliberal policies and reforms attempt to stifle critical thought not only by compressing and repressing critical space in education (Hill & Kumar, 2008), but by focusing, closely and diligently, upon unleashing innovation, profitability and economic growth (Devetak, Burke & George, 2007). And while there is no denying that critical thought, creativity and imagination are certainly valued within education systems, they are only "valued" insofar as they are constrained within a capitalist framework that is, ultimately, focused on the development of relatively compliant human capital (Hill & Kumar, 2008). Of course, there are no magical solutions or cures no and no short cuts because transformation or change must be rooted in a realistic hope that is firmly anchored in democratic values and animate possibilities embedded in our capacities to act collectively and critically "so that we do not reproduce a present that cancels our future" (Morris, 2008, para. 4).

Some strategies already taking place today include global resistance movements against the GATS; campaigns for teacher education reform built on a radical Left/Green agenda; the adoption of pedagogical practices that foster collaboration; education action zones and private sector involvement in schooling; anti-racism and free speech movements in the US (Cooper,

2008) and many, many more social movements and strategies that are organized locally, nationally and globally that are working to resist any further damage caused by neoliberal capitalism. Antoni Verger and Xavier Bonal (2006) discuss the numerous protests that have taken place against the WTO and the GATS in opposition to the commercialization of services that the Uruguay Round was advocating. Specifically, teachers unions, student movements and non-governmental organizations with a critical view of North-South have actively taken part in campaigns against the inclusion of education in the GATS (Verger & Bonal, 2006). On the other hand, public universities – rather than opposing the internationalization of education – oppose the commercial approach to the internationalization of education promoted by the GATS (ibid). Verger and Bonal maintain that in 2001, different associations of public universities, along with other organizations, signed an agreement that said:

> Higher education exists to serve the public interest and is not a "commodity" (...). Our member institutions are committed to reducing obstacles to internationalization of higher education using conventions and agreements outside of a trade policy regime. This commitment includes, but is not limited to, improving communications, expanding the exchange of information, and developing agreements concerning higher education institutions, programs, degrees or qualifications and quality reviewing practices (...)

> authority to regulate higher education must remain in the hands of competent bodies as designated by any given country (...) Nothing in international trade agreements should restrict or limit this authority in any way (Verger & Bonal, 2006, para. 16).

But, after all is said and done, it should be important to note that many universities today, both public and private, see more opportunities, rather than threats in the GATS.

*Recommendations*

Neoliberal educational policies and reforms have been shrouded in controversy about competing initiatives, tension, bruised egos, dysfunction, and a sense on the part of educators as being victimized and disrespected. Although none of those feelings are intended or comfortable, they might be worth the price if educators were seeing reforms that resulted in successful changes that led toward equality, equity and in creating a strong educational culture guided by critical thought. The scenario sounds all too familiar, but taking action on all the issues that affect our educational system is easier said than done and this presents a weakness. Much of the work and efforts taken to contest neoliberal policies remains at the level of analysis and critique, which is a process that I have undertaken throughout the writing of this thesis.

From the point of view of an educator, student and parent, I have briefly, but scrupulously explored some of the leading constraints on policy reform implementation and have, certainly, thought through the recommendations and rational approaches to educational reform. Although the implementation of desirable educational reform processes *is* possible, they are likely to remain limited however much lip service is paid to them if appropriate action is not taken for their execution. Part of the difficulty, as discussed throughout the thesis, lies in the system as a whole, which includes government, district, teachers, administrators and other agencies that devolve the onus and place blame on one another for the educational woes that exist today, rather than teaming together to find solutions.

Are we simply armchair warriors fighting a delusional war against an ideology that has saturated our very sense of being? Perhaps if we pay closer attention to the practical aspects of pedagogy for social transformation we may then be able to achieve more just societal outcomes. It is through critical examinations of the pragmatics of pedagogy and organizing for social transformation; through writing and analysis of neoliberal educational reform that we may contribute in multiple ways to critical scholarship and possibly influence educators and activists working for education and schools to help serve the broader interests of the public against damaging capitalist educational practices.

As such, I would suggest the following specific recommendations to lessen the neoliberal effects on the educational terrain. It is imperative that

education remain focused on student needs and not on merit-based equity that necessarily serve the needs of the market. If education is to be considered a "public good," it must serve to benefit all students, equally, and provided by all for all. Furthermore, the value of education must be based on holistic development that is not only limited to curriculum but that further nurtures the development of the person as a whole. It revolves around relationships between learners and educators; learners and adults. It is concerned with life experience and not with narrowly defined "basic skills" that suit the marketplace. Education should be about growth, discovery, and a widening of horizons; it is an engagement with the world, a quest for understanding and meaning, enabling learners to critically approach the cultural, moral, and political contexts of their lives (Miller, 1990).

Educators, parents, citizens must be involved agents of transformation, rather than agents of reproduction that only serves the durability of the status quo. This can only be accomplished by allowing voices to be heard; voices that are permitted to speak their own histories, experiences and social positions in an affirmative and critical way (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1991). Current education systems have managed to globalize ideas, people's needs and ways of life in the developing world. The "unholy trinity" – the IMF, World Bank and the World Trade Organization – have become fortresses of neoliberalism as they have sought to impose their sanctions "by pushing forward their imperialist interests on

poor nations, with their various bullying antics, to open up their services, industry and agriculture to the rich countries, privatize their industries and make their natural resources freely available to foreign looters" (Brooks, 2008, para. 20). The delivery of education is woefully unsuited to the demands of globalization in many Third World countries as are the systems that are currently in place (Jones, McCarney & Skolnik, 2005). Therefore, it is our duty as citizens of the world, to help contribute to democratic provision, because the distribution of wealth and the distribution and access of knowledge in this planet is highly inequitable. States and societies must challenge the educational prescriptions in GATS; education cannot be commodified with the assumption that "all will pay". For those who can afford it, this will be developmentally liable, and policy-wise, tantamount to the now agreed-upon failure of World Bank educational prescriptions, especially for the developing world (Abdi, 2006).

Neoliberal education is counter-cultural, and the realities of its de-contextualization have created a multitude of problems for learners and educators, alike, by weakening their cultural capital and, consequently, not allowing them to achieve their true potentials or to explore potential possibilities; possibilities of becoming successful and complete citizens in society.

*Final Remarks*

Might we see the end of the pernicious ideological wave of neoliberal capitalism and a dawn of a new democratic age? The election of Barak Obama for the presidency of the United States may have signaled the beginning of "change" and a "promise" to create a political economy of the people, by the people and for the people with an emphasis on educational improvement. Many have predicted the decline of neoliberalism, while the current banking crisis has certainly exposed the emptiness of neoliberal rhetoric and the "evils of neoliberal voodoo economics" (Giroux & Giroux, 2009). Will Obama's call to put an end to "unforgiving capitalism" follow through or is it all smoke and mirrors? President Obama's main focus appears to be on "college access" and college "affordability," but in a recent speech on education, Obama's support for vouchers appears to buy right into the neoliberal, right wing structures, yet again. This serves as a reminder – as Obama himself has said repeatedly – that there is "a long road ahead" in the pursuit of equality. Only time will tell if he will follow suit. The Obama administration does not (thus far) appear to be making any radical moves away from the neoliberal model of economic governance that serves to uphold and protect the ruling class ideology, while "in the mean time, the temporal rhythms of political, economic and social reproduction continue to deepen the chasm between divergent plans and their realization" (Bear, 2009, para. 1). So, as I said, it is high time that educators, even without the presence of the political center, recognize their spatial power

(i.e. with respect to their classrooms), and redouble their efforts to make sure that their pedagogical dispensations are not employed in ways that minimally serve the interests of learners who are the future citizens of our world, and future custodians of planet earth.

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